

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 176.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

TO GET RID OF TRAMPS.

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WITH a candor that is charming the Commissioners of Charities of the State of New York announce that they contemplate the securing of legislation that will compel the “habitually unemployed” to work, and that their plan has been “introduced in and has rid many countries in Europe of the tramp.”

Indeed, the “plan” is well known in Europe. It is a historic plan. Historic also is the source of the tramp.

The tramp does not fall from the skies. He is a direct product of expropriation. He sprang up all over Europe when the land was seized by its present lordly holders, and its then occupants were set adrift. Particularly full is the history of England on the subject, also the history of Germany at the time of the Peasants War. The tramp being thus brought into existence, there was in plain view a class of “habitually unemployed,” presenting a problem that taxed the heart and head of all the “charitable” folks of those days. The problem was finally “solved” by grabbing these “ne’er do weals” by the scruff of their necks and transporting them to colonies where they were made to work.

The New York Commissioners of Charities are a twentieth century American reproduction of the charitable folks of several hundred years ago in Europe. Before them is the identical problem—a large mass of expropriated people. The only difference is that large capital now takes the place of the sword. Smoked out of their havings of large concentrations of capital, small holders, jointly with proletarians whom machinery has displaced, roam about—a veritable herd of “habitually unemployed.” What more natural but that the identical class of charitables, facing the same problem, should apply the same remedy? The “plan,” accordingly, is to set up Colony farms, seize the “habitually unemployed,” and force them to work,

probably under an overseer's whip—just as it was done in the Virginias, or Botany Bay.

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Uploaded April 2010

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