

EDITORIAL

DIRT CHEAPNESS OF WORKERS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE details of the elevator accident in the building of Solomon Polsky and Sons, causing three girls to sustain fractures of the legs, and several other young women operatives to be seriously injured, starts the question, What about the Factory Acts? and, if the Factory Acts do not cover the case of accidents on an elevator used in factories, What about the numerous acts that order the inspection of such contrivances?

The answer that Factory Acts and such other laws are scare-crows which scare no crows may seem exaggeratedly severe. Is it?

The Hinkel elevator safety device, for instance, is no contrivance “made to sell.” It is an ingenious mechanism, well tested, and which renders the “dropping” of an elevator, or any such accident as the one which has just proved so tragical, absolutely impossible. None of the large elevator companies have the Hinkel apparatus. Aware of the large number of elevators in operation in a city like this; aware of the hundreds of thousands of human beings who daily entrust their lives and limbs to these modern necessities for communication; finally, aware of the frequency of accidents, the agent of the Hinkel device came to New York. The experience he made here was but a repetition, with up-to-date New York variations, of the experience he made at a mine where,—being asked by the man in charge how much it would cost to install the appliance, and answering \$300—he was bluntly dismissed with the remark: “Three hundred dollars! For that I can get 300 ‘Guineys’.” The life-and-limb safeguarding ability of the Hinkel device had no fascination for the New York landlords, or their capitalist tenants. “Accident to the people who use our elevators? We are insured against such accidents.”

If the property-holding class care so little for the personal safety of its own ele-

vators-using members as to reject safety devices on elevators, feeling itself safe by insurance, what can be expected of that class in general with regard to the safety of the working class?

To the capitalist the worker is “dirt cheap.”

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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