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EDITORIAL

“TOO POOR.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE railroad workers of the west—the men without whose daily toil not a wheel could turn or a pound of freight be moved—have asked for an increase of wages.

The railroads, having of late been diligently crowing over the “return of prosperity,” and having interspersed those crows with repeated asseverations of the “identity of interests of labor and capital,” should now feel but one duty incumbent upon them. Their interests being labor’s interests, their welfare being labor’s welfare, and they being now admittedly on the high tide of prosperity, they should be lying awake nights devising methods to make labor—“brother” labor, “identically interested” labor—a co-sharer in the milk of that prosperity-cocoon. And yet, oh perversity incarnate! what does one find those railroads actually doing? To their employes’ request for living wages they reply, “The railroads are too poor, as they are purchasing equipment and making extensions, after a period of depression.”

That reads: During the period of depression the roads were “too poor to pay living wages, because business was bad.” And now that the period of depression is over, the roads are still “too poor, as they are investing in new equipment.” And in the future they will be continuedly “too poor, as capital will demand returns on its heavy investments.” And after that newer and ever newer pretexts will be found for pulling the poor mouth—and keeping wages down to the lowest possible level. Pinckney’s noble defiance: “Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute,” becomes, in the mouth of the capitalist, railroad or other, “Millions for riotous profits, but not a cent for wages.”

Foolish is the workingman who attempts by requests, by wheedlings, or by pure and simple unionism with its “identity of interests” humbug, to gain an increase in wages. Up with the hammer of the Socialist Labor Party and industrial unionism,

smash the whole crew of labor's plunderers, and erect in their stead the Co-operative Commonwealth.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org