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EDITORIAL

“Cultivating Feelings of Friendship Among the Craft.”

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Patrick Rocks, a striking marble polisher of the Marble Polishers' Union, lies dead in New York from a wound inflicted upon him by Theodore Hoffman, a non-union member of the craft; both tried to get the job that only one could have; in the conflict that ensued one killed the other.

At Virden, Ill., negro miners from the South and miners of the locality itself are in a hand-to-hand conflict; the jobs that the ones have the others are after; in the scramble, a dozen lives or more were extinguished, and the end is not yet.

An illustration is proverbially the best definition. The illustration, dripping in blood, furnished here and in Virden, defines to perfection the theory of the “pure and simple” trades union that it “cultivates feelings of friendship among the craft.”

The “pure and simple” trades union proceeds from the theory that the Working Class can deal with the Capitalist Class as kindred forces. It does not recognize that the two are mortal foes, and that, as time passes, the sharp antagonism between them becomes intenser, by reason of the increasing power of Capital and the correspondingly deceasing weakness of Labor. Blind upon this, it fails to take cognizance of the fact that the decreasing power of Labor lies in the increase of its numbers on the labor market, and that, as a result thereof, “feelings of enmity” instead of “feelings of friendship” among the craft is the only legitimate fruit of the “pure and simple” policy that allows Capitalism to exist.

Space, natural opportunities, in plenty, lie at hand ready to yield to human labor a plenteous crop; machinery, social opportunities, in abundance are at hand with the aid of which to utilize the bounties of nature. No claim can be made that there is not enough possible for all. Yet the illustrations quoted above would imply such a state of over-crowdedness that life for all had become impossible.

And that is just the condition that now confronts our people. A social system, perverse and un-natural, shrivels both natural and social opportunities, reducing the working class to the condition of shipwrecked mariners too numerous to be saved by one log. That social system is the Capitalist System of production, that places into private, individual hands the land on and the tool with which to work, that places individual hands the collective forces of production.

What, then, is the attitude, in face of that of the “pure and simple” union? It is the responsible agent for the ills that the workers suffer of, it is a breeder of enmity among the craft, it is the club and hand of Cain.

Relations of friendship among the craft can be established only by such labor organizations as are not responsible for the conditions that bring on strife for a living. Such organizations can be none other than those that cease to be purely and simply economic, and that couple to their programme the class-conscious political action of the working class. Only such organizations as demand the overthrow of the Capitalist Social System, and that on election day march to the polls in solid body and cast a Socialist Labor party ballot,—only such can claim respect, because only such have their hands clean of their brothers’ blood.

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