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EDITORIAL

“TURKEY” AND “CROW.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE “Brotherhood of Capital and Labor” is a theme of peculiar illustration. Are orders plenty and the demand brisk for a certain article, the capitalist sees millions just ahead of him, and the sight has the effect of a whip from behind that drives him on to make hay while the sun shines. In this effort on the part of the capitalist, Brother Labor is the immediate sufferer. The experience is an everyday one that the brighter the opportunities seem to the capitalist, the harder he is upon the workingman. If normally the capitalist can make 25 per cent. profits, a brighter outlook promising 30 per cent. whets his appetite for 40 per cent., and the prospect of getting that drives him on to reach out for 50 per cent. Labor is the sufferer. Out of its hide comes the increased profit. In a score of different ways the capitalist reduces the earnings of his workers and adds to his own profits. That’s what happens when “times are good.”—The point was recently illustrated by the reduction of wages among the steel workers during a phenomenally prosperous season for the steel magnates.

Are orders few and straggling, and the sales less numerous, then however large the profits he made just before and heaped up in bank, the capitalist announces to his Brother Labor that there is a business depression that hurts him, and consequently “Labor must take its share of the bad times.” The “share” of bad times allotted to Labor is the whole burden. Not a penny will the capitalist take away from the hoard laid up when times were good. Labor, which, under good times, was kept with its nose to the grindstone of poverty, now has its nose held still closer. Its wages go down, its jobs become less steady, its opportunities fewer. That’s what happens when “times are bad.”—The point was recently illustrated by E.P. Ripley, President of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. Mr. Ripley announced cold-bloodedly that the hard times would necessitate a reduction in wages, unless

higher rates were allowed.

Horace Greeley tells the story of a Yankee and an Indian who went out hunting. The net proceeds of their joint efforts was a turkey and a crow. Said the Yankee to the Indian: “Let us divide share and share alike—you may have the crow and I shall take the turkey; or, if you prefer, I shall have the turkey and you may take the crow.” Quoth the Indian: “You don’t say turkey once to me!”

The brotherhood of capitalist and workingman is the brotherhood between the Yankee and the Indian in the story. “Crow” ever is the share of Bro. Labor, “Turkey” the share of Bro. Capital. Turn it around as Bro. Capital may, he never once says “turkey” to Bro. Labor—and never will.

The social system of the turkey-taking and crow-giving capitalist system is not mendable—it must be ended.

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

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