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FIRST EDITORIAL

A “BUSINESS-LIKE” DOCUMENT.

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THE general managers of the roads entering into Chicago held this week a meeting to consider the terms in which they should refuse the request for an advance of wages made by their switchmen. It was decided to draw up a document “giving the gross earnings of the roads and the working expenses”, which, it is claimed, will show that the “earnings have decreased” and the “working expenses increased”, on account of which the request must be declined. This answer, it was also decided, shall be given simultaneously to the men and the public; and it is confidently expected that such a “business-like” document will greatly “strengthen the position of the Companies.”

This “business-like” document proceeds tacitly from, it squints at, the idea that there exist partnership, “business” relations between the railroad employers and their employes. Now, then, no sane “business” man would take another “business” man’s word on “business” matters; he will insist upon looking behind the returns, verifying the figures and allegations; neither would any experienced “business” man expect to be taken at his word. A look behind the returns, made in the proposed “business-like” document, a verification of the published figures by the presumptive “partners”, the employes, would, ten to one, reveal many a queer item. To take but one instance, the Adirondack, i.e., New York Central Railroad Company, has just been discovered to have bribed Florence F. Donovan, of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration, with \$500 to make a report in its favor denying the just charges of swindle and maltreatment which its workmen had preferred against it; and this sum no doubt figures among the “working expenses” of the road, and lowers the earnings. Instances of this and kindred sorts, earnings-lowering “expenses” of a downright criminal character, directed against

the interests of the “partner” labor, are numerous in all capitalist concerns. It is unreasonable to expect that, if the “partner” labor, in pursuance of “business” methods, were to verify these figures, it would allow such items to stand; it would surely insist upon their being expunged.

To state this self-evident proposition is to smash into a cocked hat the “business” character of the document which the railroad companies contemplate publishing.

Wholly forgetful of their “business” pretensions, and of the “partnership” relations at which they hypocritically squinted between themselves and their employees, the railroad companies would yell out indignantly: “What, let our hands look into *our* books; verify *our* accounts; pry into *our* business? Not much! We run *our* business to suit *ourselves*. We shall not accept dictation from without; etc., etc.”; then, turning over to the maxim of Superintendent Bennett of the Pennsylvania Road, they will determine to starve, or try to starve, their “partners”, labor, into a skeleton-like submission.

And that is the situation in a nut-shell. There are no partnership, any more than brotherly, relations between Capital and Labor. And none can be. The relations between them, under the capitalist system of production, where the instruments necessary for production are held and owned by private individuals and operated for private profit, are the relations between a usurper and robber against his victim. Victimized Labor will never, can never, be treated as a partner by the usurping and robbing capitalist. Either Capital exploits and oppresses Labor; or Labor must subjugate Capital and operate it for the benefit of the people.

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