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EDITORIAL

A RETROSPECT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE “Great Steel Strike” is now dead. More than that, a tall and broad tombstone with large lettering has been raised over it. Let’s approach and read the lay:

“The United States Steel Corporation reports for the six months ended September 30 a net earning of \$54,954,871.”

An officer of the Corporation discussing on the 2d instant the six months’ statement published the day before said:

“The fact that in the strike months our earnings were so large may mystify many people, but as a matter of fact the strike was in no sense of the word a hurt to us for the reason that it enabled us to make at a minimum cost many necessary repairs, always incident to the midsummer season, while a number of the plants, forced to close by the strikers, would have been shut down in any event to effect these repairs.”

“Repairs,” “Necessary Repairs”—the words have a familiar sound. They are the usual precursors or excuse for shut-downs. Sometimes they are at the bottom of a strike. This was one of those times. There having been produced more goods than a Corporation or firm can readily dispose of or care to carry, shut-downs are usually resorted to, and last until the goods have been marketed. So as to furnish no club with which to stave in the head of the myth that Capitalism offers an incentive to the workers to produce at their best, the fact that there is over-production is concealed and the shut-down is imputed to “necessary repairs.” But even this excuse or pretence is disagreeable. The throwing of men upon the street empty handed, even under the pretext of “repairs,” also is an object lesson against Capitalism. It also caves in the head of a capitalist myth, the myth of the big wages made: Long before the “repairs” are made want stalks visibly among the men. It is for this reason that the “repairs” dodge, once quite common, is heard less and less. Its place

is now generally taken by a strike. Obedient to the orders of the “Captain of Industry,” his “Labor-Lieutenants,” or enough of them, incite the rank and file to strike. The “obdurate capitalist” is reported in all his obduracy to the rank and file; and a strike is decided on. Thus the distress of the men is laid to their own doors, and Capitalism escapes uncovering some of its ulcers.

This is the milk in the coca-nut of the late “Great Steel Strike.” The inscriptions on the tombstone make the case clear. And thus one more illustration is furnished of the criminal character of the labor fakir, and his imbecility. It is now, in view of the “inscriptions,” quite likely that Shaffer was not himself in the conspiracy. Fellow fakirs of his were. They promised him, as did Organizer Lynch of the A.F. of L., \$500,000 a week in support of the strike; the vermin of the Kangaroo Social Democratic “borers from within” turned his head with phrases about fighting the exploiters, phrases that they borrow from the Socialist Labor Party and are intellectually unable to understand, but that played right into the hands of the Lynches, and intoxicated the perversely ignorant pure and simpler Shaffer. Thus the rank and file were deceived with false prospects, were led by the nose, were buoyed up with false promises, and—were finally dropped, with a sickening thud.

The Socialist Labor Party and its sister organization the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance alone, among all the bodies figuring in the camp of Labor, can look back upon the late Great Steel Strike without blushing. They and they alone warned the steel striker that he was being humbugged. It is now known just what was the purpose of the game. Nor will any voice other than that of the S.L.P. and the S.T. & L.A. ever go out of the wilderness of modern conditions to warn, direct and encourage the workers.

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

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