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EDITORIAL

THE BLACKLIST ON THE ZONE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

CIRCULAR No. 315, issued by the Isthmian Canal Commission, from Office of Chairman and Chief Engineer, and dated Culebra, Canal Zone, March 24, 1910, sets forth as follows:

“It is reported that employes discharged for cause by the different Central American Railroads, particularly in Costa Rica, are making a practice of coming to the Isthmus to obtain work with either the Commission or Panama Railroad. Such practice is detrimental to all concerned. Hereafter any such applicants for work on the Isthmus shall require to show their service records, and if they have been discharged for cause by any Central American railroad they shall not be employed.

“GEO. W. GOETHALS,
“Chairman and Chief Engineer.”

Canalling and the like certainly is more obviously an “industry” than the Army, the Navy, or even the Post Office. The Canal Zone industry is pre-eminently a nationalized affair. By the X-rays that it sheds the inwards of things capitalistic are exhibited to sight. Circular 315 answers the purpose of such an X-ray.

The blacklist, applied within the country itself, is a penal offence on the statute books of many a State. Of course, the statute is more honored in the breach than in the observance. Nevertheless, for one thing, it acts somewhat as a check; for another thing, and above all, the very enactment of such a statute places the seal of condemnation upon the practice of blacklisting: it enters the blacklist on the scroll of public offences. This notwithstanding, the Chairman and Chief Engineer of such a national industry as the Isthmian Canal is seen calmly, coolly, and as a matter of high morality, affixing his signature to a blacklisting decree; and thereby creating not an ordinary, but an extraordinary blacklist. The blacklist, reprobated in the country, is the blacklist set up by home concerns in aid of one another. It is an

internal blacklist. And that is considered iniquitous enough. The blacklist conjured into existence by the Chairman and Engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission is international in scope. On territory over which the United States has jurisdiction workingmen are to be refused work and thus punished for having been “discharged for cause” on foreign territory.

Of course the whyness of the wherefore is that these foreign railroads are owned by American capitalists; by, not merely the same class, but essentially the identical handful of individuals who also own de facto the Canal industry. All the same the whyness of the wherefore illuminates the fact that the Fugitive Slave Act, thought to have been pulled up by the roots through the Civil War, is now a flourishing practice, instituted and enforced by the Federal arm itself, intentionally, at that.

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