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EDITORIAL

DRESSED UP AND BARE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A YEAR ago, when strikes, new wage scale agitation, and cessations of work were in the air in the coal fields, a composite photograph of the capitalist press would have looked something like this:

“Miners don’t know when they’re well off! Despite palatial wages for no work to speak of, yet they kick! Due to heaven-born sliding-scale which operators, under stern compulsion of the Roosevelt Investigating Commission, conferred on the men, the mining population is at present flowing in luxury. Every skilled miner makes from \$30 to 35 per week, and owns his own home. No cause for discontent. Men will alienate public opinion if they strike.”

And then would follow laborious tables of figures purporting to prove the “palatial wages” against which the “discontented” men were daring to think of striking, even at the dire risk of “alienating public opinion.”

The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine, even in State Labor Bureaus At last, a full year after the figures should have been out, the said bureau for the State of Indiana has issued its report on coal mines for 1909. Buried under columns of verbiage and irrelevant details, stand out just three entries which may well cause Labor to sit up and take notice. They are:

Total no. mine employes	18,908
Grand total wages	\$11,380,051.04
and their necessary concomitant: AVERAGE EARNING PER MINE EMPLOYE FOR THE YEAR	\$601.86

Thirty-five dollars per week = \$1,820 per year; even thirty dollars per week = \$1,560 per year. Instead of these figures, brazenly asserted a year ago, as the average mine-worker’s earnings, the official statement of a State bureau, itself run and engineered by capitalist representatives, now concedes those earnings to be less

than half the lowest figure previously stated—\$11.57 per week instead of \$30 and \$35. The sort of home to be “owned” on that can well be imagined.

The fact that an exceptional miner, under exceptional circumstances, by furious exertion and inhuman overtime, may succeed in wringing out \$35 in any given week does not lighten the gloom cast by the facts. It only intensifies it. If some miners actually do get \$35, how low must some others’ wages have to sink in order to reduce those \$35 to the acknowledged low average of \$11.57!

The \$35 is miners’ pay dressed up for show, to do puppet service in the interest of those who would squeeze wages ever lower. The sum of \$11.57 represents that same pay stripped bare, as it actually tinkles into the gulf of a workingman’s needs. ’Tis time the workers saw through the sham.

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