

The People.

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SECOND EDITORIAL

Lo, Their Work!

By DANIEL DE LEON

The miners of Rathmel are enjoying the opportunity to find out what capitalism means and what the results of capitalism's "practical" assistant, "pure and simpledom," are.

The bosses, after having mercilessly squeezed life out of the men, shut down; they claimed they had more coal than they knew what to do with; that times were bad, and no demand for coal; that they would gladly give the men work if they could find a market, but that, having none, they, much as it grieved them, had to shut down; and much more of this sort of thing.

The men submitted; they waited patiently; they hoped the markets would open, and started starving. They pulled their belts tighter one hole after another, and might have gone on indefinitely with this exhilarating process until the buckles struck their backbones, were it not that their wives and children began to give unmistakable signs of collapse and starvation. Driven by such a ghastly sight they begged and implored the bosses for work, for work at any wages. That was what the bosses were fishing for. Their object was from the start to lower the wages without the appearance of cruelty. Their plan was to accomplish their foul design and yet keep up the appearance of being moved only by feelings of humanity and philanthropy. The original wages, 35 cents per ton, were low enough; to reduce that was desirable for the sake of increased profits, but might have brought on the annoyance of a strike; to accomplish their purpose without such trouble, and furthermore to pose, while accomplishing it, as capitalists ready to sacrifice themselves, they hit upon the plan which they initiated when they shut down under the pretext of "no market." The men were allowed to beg and pray for a considerable time, their prayers being answered with: "Gladly, boys, would we give you work, but if we open the mines now, it is at a sacrifice"; finally their families' hunger pressing still more, they besought the bosses for heaven's sake to open the mines, they were ready to work for 30 cents per ton! The bosses had aimed at getting their coal mined for five cents a ton less; the men had been dieted into voluntarily proposing such

reduction, and the fiends of capitalism then “yielded” with an air of martyrs to the cause of humanity.

For several weeks after that the mines were worked at 30 cents a ton, but starvation with work superadded became unbearable. The men met, appointed a committee to request a return to the 35 cents per ton scale, and to urge the increase on the ground of the impossibility to live with less. To this request the company coolly made the answer:

“As we did not propose nor ask the men to go to work at 30 cents, but were importuned by the men themselves to let them do so and acceded to it only as an act of kindness to them, we do not consider ourselves responsible for that rate. If the men do not want to work at 30 cents it will suit us as well if they shall choose to not do so.”

Here we have the mining proletariat of America running its head against the stone wall that blocks the blind alley of pure and simpledom. This is one of the stone walls against which are shattered the “practical” methods of the infamous crew of labor fakirs that have so long been “making our workers think.” This is the abutting point of the British old-style union maxim of “No politics in unions,” i.e., adherence to capitalist politics.

The pure and simple labor fakir must go! New trade unionism, armed with the Socialist ballot, must hew him down and proceed to hew down his paymaster, the capitalist, and overthrow the capitalist system.

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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