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EDITORIAL

LISTEN TO R. HOE & CO.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ABOUT 1,100, the entire force of machinists in the shops of R. Hoe & Co. printing press manufacturers, Grand and Sheriff streets, in this city, having gone out upon being refused the eight hour day, the firm issued an “explanatory letter to its customers” in which this passage occurs.

“We have reduced the prices of our presses by taking advantage of every improved method and appliance in manufacturing until the lowest possible point has been reached, and any further shortening of the working day would necessitate a corresponding increase in the selling prices of presses.”

Which, put in other words, means that higher pay to the workers would wipe out the firm’s profits; and since the firm must make some profits, higher pay to the men must be borne by the customers in the shape of higher prices of presses.

A more fraudulent theory never came from pious bourgeois labor skimmers.

The secret of the fraud lies in the total silence concerning the percentage, or the amount, of the profits that Messrs. R. Hoe & Co. are making. Fact is that the firm is making profits, pretty good profits, stiff profits. It matters not that the profits never can be stiff enough to satisfy Messrs. R. Hoe & Co. Their opinion of the case does not change facts.

The innocent will think that such a fraudulent statement can have no effect with R. Hoe & Co.’s customers. All of these, being capitalists themselves, know what it means when a capitalist declares he can not raise wages on the ground that a raise would wipe out profits. All of them know, from their own conduct, that such statements are only a play to the capitalist gallery, intended to enlist public capitalist support. For that very reason the R. Hoe & Co.’s statement is “clever.” It amounts to a bugle call to the rest of the labor-skimmers, notifying them: “We must

hang together, or hang separately.-”

These bugle calls, once understood by the labor-skinned, are in the nature of a double-edged sword. They serve as a notice to the labor-skinned that the alleged “Brotherhood of Capital and Labor” is false pretense; that the “Brotherhood” is only of Capitalists and Capitalists. Hence, that the combination of that unhallowed “Brotherhood” can be broken only by the healthy Brotherhood of the Working Class—the latter having nothing to expect from the former but lower wages and lower conditions, until the former are overthrown.

The striking machinists of R. Hoe & Co. are furnished by the firm with a document that caves in the head of the capitalist class.

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