

EDITORIAL

RAILROADS AS SAM WELLERS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

RAILROAD accidents in the East have for more than two years been eclipsing anything of that sort that the “wild and woolly West” was supposed to have a monopoly of.

The “toniest” of lightning passenger expresses have been derailed and thrown into ditches; trains have leaped from bridges; bridges have collapsed under trains; “head-on,” and rear-end collisions have almost become the order of the day. And now comes the catastrophe of the crossover at Green Farms, Conn., where the “crack” limited express between New York and Boston was “derailed,” the event reaping its crop of fatalities, near the spot where only a few weeks ago the worst wreck in the history of the New Haven road was recorded. In most all instances several employes were killed, and, as if to add insult to injury, these victims were made to shoulder the blame.

What the cause of these disasters has been everybody knows, despite the more or less successful efforts of the railroad Companies in causing their leading papers to misrepresent the affairs, and, of course, to whitewash the Companies.

The cause of the disaster was the penury of the Companies; their stinging on necessities in order to make large dividends.

The manifestations of this policy are various. One manifestation is the overworking of employes, in order to save on wages. Another manifestation is like unto this; it is the reduction of trackmen and other railroad hands, also to reduce the payroll. A third manifestation, flowing partly from the latter, is the improper condition of the road beds: an insufficiency of trackmen renders impossible the requisite information at headquarters for repairs. A fourth manifestation is the slowness of headquarters to make repairs, even when known to be needed. And so forth.

Of these facts and causes none have fuller information than, or even as full in-

formation as, the officers of the Companies themselves. They know all about it. They are thoroughly posted. Every accident, they know full well, is a bit of contrariness on the part of Fate. The cracked jar had gone for water once too often.

This notwithstanding, the Eastern carriers within whose “realms” the late disasters have multiplied, have decided to make, themselves, “a comprehensive investigation into the cause of these frequent wrecks.” Poor innocents! They know what the cause of these fatalities be. They have to “investigate”—and the investigation will be “searching,” in directions where nothing will be found, nothing to the purpose.

So did Sam Weller when, at the trial of his master Mr. Pickwick, his father interrupted from the audience with remarks that rendered him subject to contempt of court. Being ordered by the court to point out the culprit, Sam looked up to the ceiling and said he saw nothing.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2014

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