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EDITORIAL

PANIC WAGES VS. PROSPERITY WAGES.

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IN attempting to combat the Socialist truth that the interests of capitalists and laborers are antagonistic and irreconcilable, the capitalist class resort to the presentation of a very plausible theory. According to this theory, the interests of capitalists and laborers are one and inseparable, and the prosperity of the latter rises and declines with that of the former. Accordingly, laborers are urged to devote themselves to advancing the interests of their employers by every means in their power—by opposing trades unionism, the restriction of output and any curtailment of capitalist industry and privileges—for in so doing they increase the capitalists' profits and their own wages.

How does this theory square with facts? Do the facts make in favor of it to the detriment of Socialist contention? Let us see.

It is a well-known fact, quite extensively advertised as proof of "our" prosperity and a demonstration of the value of American securities, that the railroad earnings of the recent "prosperous" years show great gains over those of preceding years. *Dun's Review*, for instance, reported that for the first two weeks in March railroad earnings increased 12.8 per cent. over last year and 22.9 per cent. over 1901. With the usual large wheat movement from the West, due to the big winter crop, that is now under way, this remarkable showing is apt to be exceeded in the near future.

Do the wages of the railroad employes show an advance in proportion to the increase of railroad earnings, as this capitalist theory would lead us to expect? Not by any means. Those wages show a decrease below that of panic years.

According to the statistics issued by the Interstate Commission on the 9th inst., the wages of railroad employes were better during the depression of 1893 than during recent more prosperous years. Between 1892 and 1902 the wages of ordinary officials

decreased from \$7.83 to \$5.56; general office clerks, from \$2.25 to \$2.19; station agents, from \$1.83 to \$1.77, and other station men from \$1.65 to \$1.60; carpenters, from \$2.10 to \$2.06; switchmen, flagmen and watchmen, from \$1.82 to \$1.74; general employes and laborers, from \$1.70 to \$1.69.

During this period the only increases noted are in the salaries of higher officials, from \$7.82 to \$10.97 a day. As these higher officials are generally themselves capitalists, this increase cannot be said to have been bestowed on laborers.

Here, then, we have figures showing that the increased prosperity of the capitalists has not been shared by the laborers; a fact that the increased cost of living, added to the large number of threatened and actual strikes on the railroads, emphasizes in no unmistakable manner.

With profits greater than those of panic years, and with prosperity wages less than those of panic wages, who will say that the interests of capitalists and laborers rise and fall together, and that the laborer should support the system through which his wages grow ever less?

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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