

EDITORIAL

PACE-SETTING IN THE NEW ZEALAND PARADISE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT would be a pity if the recurrence of the malady of a “Labor Cabinet” in Australia, just recurred in that country, were so completely to blanket the paradisaical conditions of that other “Paradise of Labor,” New Zealand, as to cause a certain “Labor” decision, just rendered in the latter “Paradise,” to be lost sight of.

Vol. X., Part 7, issued this year by the New Zealand Department of Labor, and containing the “Awards, Agreements and Decisions” rendered under the celebrated “Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act,” records on its page 807 the following regulation:

“6 (a.) Any worker who considers himself incapable of earning the minimum wage fixed by this award may be paid such lower wage as may from time to time be fixed,” etc., etc.

This is taking thirty-nine words to express what here in America is expressed by just one compound word—“Pace-Setting.”

When here in America the employer and his labor lieutenant in the Union have made a contract, “schedule,” on wages, for appearance’s sake, and have agreed to violate the “schedule,” in fact, what is done is this: One of the “Union men,” equipped with a paid-card and in the game with both employer and lieutenant, is picked out (and paid) to hustle. The other workers are expected to keep up the pace set by the picked man. A good many succeed, although in succeeding their tongues hang out of their mouth’s parched. These “successes” receive the “schedule” wages; the “failures” don’t. The consequence of the manoeuvre is—

First, the “successful” employes receive, in point of fact, less wages than they bargained for: they bargained for a certain wage, having in mind a certain amount

of tissue-consuming exertion: they receive the amount, but upon a much larger tissue-consuming exertion;

Second the “failures” among the employes receive a smaller wage than that bargained for: they are brow-beaten into silent acceptance with the plausible pretext that they have not worked as hard as they agreed to do, as proved by the hustling of the “successes”;

Thirdly, the employer rakes in larger profits: he rakes in the surplus wealth that normal exertion on the part of the employes would anyhow pour into his pocket; he rakes in the additional surplus wealth that flows from the tenser toil of the “successes”; and he rakes in, in addition to the surplus wealth yielded by the “failures,” the difference between the “schedule” wages, and the wage actually paid to them.

That is called Pace-Setting in America. The employers’ class in New Zealand wraps up the process in a 39-term phraseology. Does the “Paradise” feature of New Zealand consist in a verbosity that intoxicates the worker, and the absence of which, in America, leaves the worker sober to contemplate the sober fact?

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Uploaded April 2011

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