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EDITORIAL

WHICH WAS THE SOCIALIST, AND WHICH THE NON-SOCIALIST?

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A PULLMAN, Wash., correspondent, F.J. Baymiller, reports in the *Seattle Socialist* of March 29 a meeting, held in his town, of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic party, at which a member of that party, Dr. Titus, made a speech, and answered questions. A certain passage of the report is an “ingot from the quarry.” It won’t do to condense it, lest its flavor evaporate, or the condenser be charged with unfairness. Here it is, literally:

“Dr. Titus also said that Jim Hill, being an expert, would probably be chosen superintendent of the transportation department, and a non-socialist asked the doctor if he thought Jim Hill would be satisfied with the same remuneration that an ordinary train-hand or section man got? Dr. Titus replied that JIM HILL WOULD PROBABLY BE PAID MORE THAN THE ORDINARY PERSON GOT.”

The non-Socialist’s question was a graphic bit of self-photography on the part of the habits of thought acquired under capitalist conditions and environment. The gentleman did not know, not being a Socialist, either the material root of “inequality of pay,” or the mental graft on that root that renders such inequality mentally distasteful. What is it that, to-day, renders ludicrous the bare idea of “a Jim Hill receiving the same remuneration as an ordinary train-hand”? Consciously or unconsciously, the non-Socialist locates the reason in the mind; he probably calls it “a feature of human nature,” inherent, incarnate. It is nothing of the sort.

Man is no natural born monstrosity. A person capable of rendering valuable or exceptional services, say, a Jim Hill, does not find satisfaction in the depression of others. Small pay to others is not the sauce to his large pay. But he is a sane man; and

his sanity will compel him to adapt his methods of self-preservation to his environment. In a mining camp, where pistols and bowie-knives are the rule, the sane man will equip himself with the same,—and he will use them, and make himself an expert in their use. Thus, without being a natural born monstrosity, he will turn himself into a perambulating lump of potential manslaughter. Would he do the same in a settled community? Only he who would think a man would do that, would think it preposterous for a Jim Hill to be “satisfied with the same remuneration as an ordinary train-hand”, despite the removal of the conditions that capitalism creates, and the establishment of the civilized conditions that Socialism implies. The reason for a Jim Hill’s present conduct is, accordingly, to be looked for, not in his mind, but in his material surroundings. What are these?

The volume of wealth, actually produced to-day, is not plentiful enough to afford to all equality of pay, with civilized conditions to all. To-day, accordingly, equality of pay would imply uncivilized conditions for all; to-day, so that some may enjoy the comforts of civilized life, and the mental freedom from want, needed for mental and spiritual expansion, others must fall below, far below that line. Is the reason for such a mining-camp social state the thanklessness of the soil, or the incapacity of our people? Neither of the two. Our soil teems with potential wealth, and the capacity of the race has constructed such wizard-like tools of production that our people could produce a volume of wealth so phenomenal that equality of pay to all, with civilized conditions for all, is possible, is within reach. What is it that bars the race from stepping out of its present shocking mining-camp social state, and into civilized conditions?—CAPITALISM: the private ownership of the natural (land) and the social (machinery) opportunities, without both of which, in the presence of the class that holds them, man is like a unarmed waif in a Roaring Camp.

To the question, put by a non-Socialist:

“Would Jim Hill be satisfied with the same remuneration that an ordinary train-hand or section man got?”

a Socialist would never recoil before, and dodge the mischievous, capitalist-bred superstition thus fired at him. He would boldly grapple with the error, and answer:

“Most assuredly, because, under Socialism, the pay of the ‘ordinary train-hand or section man,’ without whose co-operation a Jim Hill could not exercise his abilities, would be higher, deservedly so, than the pay that a Jim Hill gets, or perforce needs to-day!”

Of course, it takes a SOCIALIST for that.

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

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