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EDITORIAL

FREEDOM AND SELF-RESPECT.

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THE *Square Deal*, official organ of Post Toasties, quotes, and smacks its lips over the dainty morsel, the dictum of the *Century Magazine*, that workers may strike, but “They must not go about to rob even their employers of freedom and self-respect.”

As to the self-respect of the employing class, after the Allds affair, the Pittsburg revelations, the Pittsburg Steel Trust banquet, the Sugar frauds, the Cudahy carving, the Reno divorce colony, and the Astor, Gould and Brokaw decrees—after all these and many more of the same kind, it is easy to see that the working class should not waste time attempting to deprive their employers of any self-respect. It would be trying to pull feathers from a plucked goose. But as to their freedom—that is another matter.

No worker, by striking, ever sought to compel his employer to dwell in one city any more than in any other. No workwoman, by striking, ever thought of dictating to her employer what color clothes he should wear, or what style he should get his hair cut in, or whether he should get it cut at all. There is only one sort of freedom, possessed by the employer, ever aimed at by the striker, and that is the freedom to exploit.

It needs no argument to prove that production to-day can not be carried on individually. The man who tries it simply robs himself by spending hours of labor-time upon a product which can only be exchanged for goods costing minutes of labor time, since it itself can be produced in so many minutes elsewhere, by collective labor. Hence production is to-day a social act.

The tools of production, on the contrary, the vast machinery which all the workers need to live by, are not socially owned by the workers. They are owned by an extraneous class, which fills no useful place in the industrial cycle. Access to the

tools can only be had by compliance with this class's dictates as to wages, hours and intensity of labor. This class is the employing class. Its power to dictate working terms constitutes its freedom to exploit.

It is that freedom to exploit which every strike, if bona fide, is aimed at. Unless a strike is directly called to put some curb upon that freedom to exploit, it has no earthly right to existence or consideration. To tell workers they may strike, but by striking must not aim at this freedom, is equivalent to telling them they may eat, but must put no food in their stomachs.

More than this. The longer the employers are allowed to retain any at all of this freedom, the worse must grow the lot of the workers. It is only by the complete overthrow of the employers' freedom to exploit—its overthrow by making the tools of production social property—that the workers can lift themselves out of the depths of their misery.

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