

EDITORIAL

A YELLOW PROCLAMATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHOSOEVER can should secure a copy of the proclamation, or letter, issued by the United States Steel Corporation, from its New York Headquarters, January 3, 1911, to its officers and employes, and to those of its subsidiary companies, inducing the same to avail themselves of the privilege to subscribe for shares of the company's stock.

Two features are salient on the documents physiognomy,—one general, the other special.

As to the special—

The document displays six columns of figures in fat type, dividing the “employes” into classes, according to wages received, and stating the maximum number of shares that the “employes” in each class are allowed to subscribe for. It is the column of wages that constitute the special feature.

According to the latest Census figures available, the total number of employes in the iron and steel industry is 222,490; the average annual wages received are \$543; and the total wages paid \$120,820,276. The column of wages in the document under consideration begins with annual wage of “\$525 or less,” and ascends through twenty-six gradations till it closes with an annual wage of “\$33,060.”

Here is food for thought.

If only one-half the number of employes belonged to the highest class, receiving an annual wage of \$33,060, then that half alone would be getting \$3,677,759,700— or thirty times more than the actual total wages in the whole iron and steel industry.

If only one-half the number of employes belonged to the thirteenth, or middle class on the list, receiving an annual wage of \$8,750, then that half alone would be getting \$973,393,750— or eight times more than the actual total wages.

If only one-half the number of employes belonged to the seventh class, receiving an annual wage of \$3,791, then that half alone would be getting \$421,729,795—or more than three times the actual total wages.

If only one-half the number of employes belonged to the third lowest class, receiving \$1,167, then even that half would still be getting more, about \$9,000,000 more than the actual total wages.

Finally, and to clinch the figures, if the full number of employes belonged to the average of the lowest class but one, receiving even as little as \$846, even then they would be getting \$188,227,232—or \$67,406,956 in excess of the total wages.

From the above analysis the fact leaps forth unmistakable that the number of “employes” receiving \$33,060 in all probability does not exceed one; that the number belonging to the “middle class” on the list is equally negligible; that the number in the seventh class is imperceptible; that the number paraded in the third class is slight; that the number that comes under the second class is insignificant; finally, that the overwhelming number of employes will be found in the lowest class, the class receiving but little over \$500. In other words, the above analysis exposes the long display of wages to be a deception, intended to convey the idea of high wages, and thereby conceal the fact of miserable pay.

As to the general feature on the physiognomy of the document—

The slave-holder who had 50 or more “Niggers” could be talked to on the wrongfulness of slavery; he who had only 10 was less accessible; the ones who had only 1 “Nigger” were wholly unapproachable. They led in tar-and-feathering Abolitionists; and in riding them on rails. It is a psychologic experience that the smaller the holdings all the intenser is their clutch upon the system that breeds them. It is the psychologic fact upon which the Labor lieutenants of the capitalist class build when they add life and other insurance features to their so-called Unions. The prospect of the petty insurance binds most of the men fast to organizations that are essentially millstones to their own necks. Property, large property, marks the property-holding capitalist class; small property, small enough to be but an illusion of property, deceives the holders with the belief that they own something worth having, and thereby people, who should throw their fate with the Socialist Movement, are transformed into mercenaries for capitalism. Not for

nothing does Marx appeal to those who “have nothing to lose but their chains.”

It is by the light of this psychology that the document in consideration is drawn up. The 1 and 2 shares, which the bulk of the Company’s employes are allowed to subscribe for, are expected to be just trifling enough to distort the vision of those men, to paralyze their energies in their own behalf, and to render them all the more dumb supporters of the social system that grinds them down. That is the second or general feature of the document.

Did we say the document had only two features? We erred. There is a third. The document is printed upon the yellowest of yellow paper.

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