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EDITORIAL

“LABOR REPRESENTED”?

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AMONG the points that Hanna’s labor lieutenant, John Mitchell, seeks to score in his endeavor to make it appear that the crushing defeat he led the miners to was a victory, is that, through his insistence, the operators’ personnel on the Arbitration Committee was so changed as to have Labor represented on it. The representative of Labor to whom Mr. Mitchell “points with pride” is Mr. Clark of the Brotherhood of Railroad Conductors. Does Mr. Clark represent Labor?

What is “Labor”?

Labor is that element in capitalist society that produces all wealth. Labor, accordingly, is the element that feeds both itself and the idle or capitalist class. But not yet is that a sufficient definition of Labor. The cow that furnishes milk, or draws the plow and that finally yields steaks, shoes and buttons, incidentally also vaccine,—that cow also both feeds herself and her master. Does the cow come under the category of “Labor”? Obviously not. Not work and, by his work, feed not only himself but another also, is accordingly a sufficient definition of “Labor.” The square-jointed definition embraces one more thought,—the human being nature of the worker.

“Labor,” accordingly, is that human-being element in capitalist society that, through the capitalist system, is degraded and held down to the cattle level. It follows, as night does day, that “Labor,” consciously or unconsciously, strains to raise itself from the beast level, which capitalism dooms it to, upwards to the dignity of man; it follows that to yield the smallest fraction of its product to the idle capitalist master is to give up the principle that alone can raise Labor to man’s estate; it follows that the idle capitalist class has no rights that Labor may respect without the instantaneous surrender of Labor’s case; it follows that an irrepressible conflict rages between Labor and Capitalist; finally, it follows that the test of the “Labor Representative” is that he recognize the

bottomless folly and the supreme crime of seeking for peace, peace, where there is no peace. There is one more important conclusion;—it follows that only a representative of capitalism can seek for “peaceful business relations,” and a “harmonious status” between the operators and their victims, the miners, because only such a man could lend himself to the work of pulling the wool over the eyes of the workingman.

Under which of these two definitions does Mr. Clark fall, the former or the latter? Does he fall under the definition of a “Labor Representative” or under that of a “Representative of Capitalism”?

Mr. Clark plumps wholly under the latter category.

Whatever may be represented on the Arbitration Committee, Labor is not.

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