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EDITORIAL

## CAPITALISM=BLACKMAIL.

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**A**DVANCE extracts of Andrew Carnegie's much advertised article in the *World's Work* on profit sharing as "the final and enduring solution of the labor question," contain matter enough to demonstrate the thesis that capitalism is but a modern and international application of the old and Scotch practice of blackmail.

Says Carnegie of the workingman and the capitalist: "each is indispensable."

Who is workingman? He who works: he with whom a leading feature is that one of the things that are requisite to production, labor-power, is part and parcel of his anatomy. No workingman, no labor-power; no labor-power, no workingman. Obviously, the workingman IS "indispensable."

What about the capitalist? Who is he? Which of the things that are requisite to production does he contribute? The plant or machinery of production. Is that part and parcel of his anatomy? Not in the least. The machinery of production is something separate and apart from the capitalist. It is like the crown on a king's head. There can be a crown without a king, and the anatomic entity king without a crown. Europe, for instance, has several of the former in its museums, and keeps not a few of the latter in its fashionable watering places. Exactly so with the capitalist. There can be the anatomic entity of a "capitalist" without "capital"; and there can be the plant of production without the "capitalist." Equally obvious, therefore, the anatomical entity capitalist is NOT "indispensable."

In view of the physical fact that the anatomic entity workingman is indispensable, and "the anatomic capitalist is not, and yet production cannot be carried on to-day without the co-operation of both, Mr. Carnegie's readers have a poser placed before them—how comes it that a thing, wholly dispensable, like the anatomic entity capitalist, can at all be "INDispensable"?

The Scotch nativity of the presenter of the poser helps to solve the riddle.

Blackmail was not originally what it is to-day. Originally “black-mail” was the payment in kind (not in cash, hence the name), received by some Scotch highlanders for the service of rounding up cattle that had strayed, or been stolen. Gradually the payment became extortion. When no cattle strayed away or was stolen, the blackmailers themselves stole or drove cattle astray, thereby furnishing themselves occupation. The cattle being absent from where it should be, the black-mailer was hired, had to be hired, and he did his work—rounded up and found the cattle he had himself driven off. Given the conditions under which black-mailing was possible, the black-mailer became “INdispensable.”

Ditto, ditto with the capitalist.

Capitalism is the modern adaptation of the old Scotch system of “blackmail.” The capitalist is the modern manifestation of the old Scotch “black-mailer.” Only in the sense that the old Scotch “black-mailer” was indispensable is his modern avatar also “indispensable.” As conditions changed in Scotland, so that the one-time indispensable blackmailer could be and was gladly dispensed with, so will improved modern conditions wipe out the “indispensability” of the capitalist—and allow society to move on unencumbered by its present breed of blackmailers.

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

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