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EDITORIAL

INTERSTATE COMMISSION MISSES THE POINT.

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LENGTHY, and, as far as the figures go, convincingly, does the unanimous decision of the Interstate Commerce Commission settle that the demand of the railroads for higher rates, on the ground of the necessity to recoup themselves for the increases in the wages of their employes, is unwarranted. Besides establishing the general statistical principle that one “can not conclusively presume from an increase in operating expense that there should be an increase in transportation charge,” the Commission nails on the brazen brows of the Railroad Companies, with exact figures, that their profits have increased, despite the increases in operating expenses.

This is all good; and yet the Commission misses the point.

The story is told of a gambler who was seen returning home in a bad humor. He was asked what ailed him. The answer was: “I lost to-night \$15,000.” “But I know you have come out \$5,000 the winner.” “What has that got to do with the case!” angrily interjected the gambler; “I expected to win \$20,000. That makes me a loser of \$15,000! —! —!”

This is the psychology of the Railroad Companies whom the Interstate Commerce Commission has been handling—and of all other capitalist concerns. The American capitalist figures, not upon a normal, but upon an abnormal, increase of profits. The source of the abnormal increase lies in the natural, in our instance, abnormal national growth.

The American capitalist figures, accordingly: “Last year I made \$1,000,000; this year, given the nation’s growth I must make \$1,500,000.” Anything he makes below that additional \$500,000 he looks upon and grieves over as a positive loss. This psychology is peculiar to his class. John Stuart Mill already questioned whether

machinery had at all relieved men of any burden. Mill's doubt, amended by Marx, who pointed out that the doubt would be correct if it referred to the working class, explains the point. To the capitalist's mind all improved returns belong to him: the blessings of machinery are not supposed to redound to the benefit of the workers in any manner: the beneficent results of machinery are supposed to redound only to the benefit of the capitalist in the shape of increased profits. Hence, also, the increased profits, coming from a growing Nation, belong, in the capitalists opinion, to him and him alone. As well expect a capitalist to hold that the increase of wealth, yielded by improved machinery, should go at least in part to the workers, as expect of him that the increased profits resulting from a larger population should be shared with his workers. All such increase he holds as his lawful prey. When he fails to pocket the same he considers he has LOST that much.

This point the Interstate Commerce Commission missed. The point is not reducible to statistical figures. It is a point that eludes statistics. It is a purely psychologic point.

And this psychologic point is the rock upon which all Interstate Commerce Commissions, along with all similar cobbler's schemes, are fated to dash themselves.

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