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EDITORIAL

## WHO TAKES THE RISK?

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HERE lies before us the report for this year of the Bureau of Statistics of New Jersey and also the report of the Interstate Commerce Commission for the year ending June 30, 1900.

These dry figures speak with a horrible eloquence. They tell, among many, two things:

First, the awful treatment of the railroad men by the capitalists;

Second, the incompetence and criminality of pure and simple trades unionism.

On the first point, the Bureau tells us that there are 32,405 men employed by the New Jersey railroads, getting an average of \$1.82 a day—which means for the worker about \$1.25, when the enormous “salaries” of high officials are taken into account. This is only the portion of an ox—his feed. For the frightful risks the worker takes he gets nothing, although we have been taught that the capitalist is entitled to his profits because of the “risk” he takes. The risk the capitalist takes has been incontrovertibly demonstrated by the S.L.P. to be merely the criminal business of “risking” other people’s, the working class’s, money, together with the risk of dying of apoplexy, the gout, or some unmentionable disease. But how about the worker’s risk? According to the Interstate Commerce Report above mentioned in Jersey the risks **FORCED** upon the railroad worker by the capitalist are so murderous that last year 709 were killed and 9,391 injured, a total of 10,100 out of an entire force of 32,405! That is to say, one chance against two that the worker will be murdered or crippled! What a fearful pressure capitalism in general rests upon the worker that he must leave his shanty or tenement to work upon the railroad in face of almost certain mutilation and murder! Starved out of his home, to be murdered on the railroad, his family in daily dread—these are the risks of the worker, that all the gold of Golconda cannot repay.

Such is the railroad workers' great need. What weapons do they use to fight these murderous capitalists with? The broken and corrupt reed of pure and simpledom. A reed whose impotency is self-evident from the fact that, in spite of the fearful dangers above mentioned, railroad men are "eager," as a capitalist sheet says—that is, starving,—to work on railroads. Pure and simpledom is also corrupt: through Gompers before the Interstate Commerce Commission, it has endorsed the railroads in their violation of the car-coupler and automatic brake law, thus endorsing the resulting murder and crippling of the railroad men; and through its Brotherhoods, as in the recent Jersey Central trouble, it endorses the scabbing of some organizations (the engineers, firemen and conductors), against others, (the trainmen and telegraphers), and thus destroys the great weapon of solidarity. So long as the railroad men's interests are in such corrupt and incapable hands, so long will their wages decrease and their slaughter increase. But one thing is to do: join the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance to fight honestly and class consciously, and therefore efficiently, against the railroad capitalists on the economic field, and to join and vote for the Socialist Labor Party on the political field, whose program—the complete abolition of the capitalist—the terrible condition of the railroad men shows to be the imperious necessity of the hour.

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