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EDITORIAL

CAN THIS BE? QUITE LIKELY.

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A STATEMENT is now beginning to appear in papers to the effect that the real contestants in the great Steel Strike are Mark Hanna and Carnegie. That the statement appears in papers dominated by the United States Steel corporation does not detract from its probability. The story certainly is plausible, to say the least; it fits in with many a fact that needs but to be mentioned to become fresh in the public memory; moreover, it is wholly in keeping with the “wheels within wheels” in the mechanism of capitalist society. As such the statement contributes not a little to illuminate the situation: to the observant it aids greatly in treading the path of the Social Question, and in guiding him {to} whom and what to grapple with in the conflict.

In the first place, Andrew Carnegie has for some time been an “enfant terrible” in the Republican camp. Once an emphatic, active and aggressive Republican, and proportionally generous in campaign contributions, he gradually cooled off: his emphasis in behalf of the “glorious Republican principles that have raised the country to the highest pinnacle of glory” became less marked, his activity less strenuous, his aggressiveness less forceful; in equal step and tread his contributions fell off. Nay, he even would occasionally and with increasing frequency indulge in galling bits of advice to his party, at seasons when it was most in need of funds and support. The cause of this transition was the growth in competing power of the Carnegie plant. In the measure that the Carnegie steel works were able to distance competitors, he was less in need of the “glorious Republican principle” of “protection” that aided him in filling his pockets; in that same measure he gravitated towards “free trade.” The time finally came when the Carnegie plant could “go it alone;” from that moment “protection” became a hindrance and the former “glorious Republican principle” lost its charms to the now Steel Wing. A conflict of some sort was inevitable between Carnegie and his former buccaneer associates, especially those whose “business” had not yet reached the Carnegie

stage, or was of a nature permanently to thirst for “protection.” Hanna’s “business” is of this nature. It follows naturally that to smite Carnegie would be in line with the Republican Hanna’s interests. And no mean spirit of barren revenge merely would dictate the policy. For that the capitalists are too dispassionate a set of philosophers. The policy, by sending down the stocks in American Steel, would give the Hannas an opportunity to share in the Carnegie prosperity.

Now, then, how was the “smiting of Carnegie” to be encompassed by the Hannas? Why, by means of their “Labor Lieutenants,” the Labor Fakirs, the officers of the “pure and simple” Unions. It was Senator Hanna himself who coined the felicitous term of “Labor Lieutenants” for the lackeys that he managed to keep as officers in the Unions active in the industries that he ran. Whether, from the start, the Labor Fakirs who run the Amalgamated Ass’n were or were not Hanna’s “Lieutenants,” can not now be stated. Certain it is that beginning with {the} last Presidential campaign, Hanna drew too close to himself some of that gentry. During the campaign President Shaffer appeared on the Chicago Republican platforms in company, and as a “labor” trainbearer of Senator Hanna, the chairman of the Republican National Executive Committee. The sequence certainly is close of a strike, not one that breaks out spontaneously from the rank and file and involving wages, but one no wise involving wages, wholly instigated, planned and brought on by the President of the Amalgamated Ass’n, within ten months of the time when he acted as Labor decoy duck on the platforms from which Hanna was spouting “prosperity.”

Vaguely, yet with ample distinctness, were perceived the outlines of this latest crime on the workers; the statement that Hanna is pulling the wires, obedient to which Shaffer & Co. move, only adds distinctness to the outlines. Whether acting obedient to the orders of capitalist interests, as now, or obedient to their own “picket” and other strike-job interests, as during the late Int’l Cigarmakers’ strike, the “Organized Scabbery’s” every act and breath are at the cost of the life-blood of the rank and file of the working class. A blow to the Fakir, accordingly, is a blow given to a sensitive nerve of the capitalist class.

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

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