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EDITORIAL

CASH, OR PRINCIPLE?

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A TELEPHONE message to Columbia University from Frank Hedley, general manager of the Interborough Company, against which about 5,000 employees are now on strike for human conditions, is reported to have demoralized the University. The telephone message offered the students “pocket money” if they would take the places of the train dispatchers, ticket agents and other positions during the rush hours and while the strike lasted. The effect was electric. By two o’clock, the report runs, “laboratories and the gymnasium were practically deserted, the undergraduates, from seniors to freshmen, having proceeded in small squads to various points along the line with the intention of applying for daily jobs during the continuance of the strike. There was a joyous exuberance among these University recruits.”

Was it the cash that lured these young men to an act of dishonor? Or was it a principle that animated them to an act of cruelty? It was both—the principle throws light upon the greed for cash, the greed for cash illumines the principle.

Only recently we had occasion to point out the fact that the real seats of learning, the real Universities and Colleges of the land to-day are not the institutions that go by that name, and that are patronized mainly by the children of the bourgeois, but the humbler organizations of labor, in which the working class is assembled. We pointed out that, periodically in the history of nations, knowledge of a special category is required for progress, and that where that class assembles, whose class interests make for progress, there is the real place of learning. It was finally pointed out that our bourgeois class being a dead coal class, its revolutionary and progressive mission having been accomplished, noble aspirations must not be looked for in the colleges where the bourgeois youth are trained in dead and deadening lore, but in the organizations of labor, where the working class is trained

in the living knowledge of the age. The demoralization produced among the bulk of the patrons of Columbia University by the General Manager Hedley's telephone message not only proves the points but illumines them.

The bourgeois class is reflected in its "Universities." As in that class are found the rowdies of exuberant wealth and the pinchbeck shoddies who try "to keep up," so in their Universities. Upon the recent incident of Kingdon Gould, the nephew of Anna, the countess of Castellane, with his ready pistol for hazers and plenty of cash in his pockets, nothing more supplemental could happen in Columbia than the desertion of the college benches by students in search of "pocket money" as strike-breakers.

The test of knowledge is that it ennobles. Where that that is called knowledge chills the noble current of the soul, it is the reverse of knowledge. The training received by the Columbia lads who deserted their studies for the places of striking workingmen was not the fanning of the spark of noble aspirations that, as youths, they surely brought in their breasts when they matriculated at college; it was the placing of a leaden snuffer on the spark, heavy enough to extinguish it.

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

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