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EDITORIAL

ON THE PICKET-LINE.

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THE *Arizona Socialist*, just started in Phoenix, Ariz., is the latest sour berry that has been ripened on the barren thorn of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party. Making its bow to the public as an educator, the paper advances the following hoary-headed populist delusion as “Socialist philosophy”:

“There are only two classes in this country—those who have to work and those who don’t—the workers and the capitalists.”

Socialist philosophy is neither the fruit of that involuntary mental strabismus that confuses facts, nor of that trained moral strabismus that sees the facts clearly enough, but finds its tactical account in confusing them.

No doubt WORK is a feature of the Working Class, but that feature is not a cause, it is a result of the actual class-mark of the proletariat. Running is a feature of the horse; but running is not the mark of the species horse. Other animals also run, the coyote, for instance. To fix upon running, as the test of classification, would land the horse and the coyote in the same category—a zoologic absurdity. It is an equal error, landing into a similar economic or sociologic absurdity of gravest consequences, to fix upon WORK as the badge of a class distinction.

Class distinctions are planted upon a material fact, not upon a consequence therefrom. The material fact that marks the economic classes is THE POSSESSION OF THE REQUISITES FOR WORK—the possession of natural opportunities, the land on, and of the social opportunities, the capital, with which to labor. This is the line of cleavage. The social element that is stripped of these requisites for labor is the proletariat, the Working Class; on the other side of the line stand all the social elements that are possessed of these requisites for labor—and they are the

Capitalist Class.

Obviously, the Working Class must work. Stripped as it is of the requisites for labor, it can not live upon the work of others, it must sell itself, the only thing it has to sell, into wage-bondage, and that means that it must submit to be fleeced by the Capitalist Class. It does not, however, follow that the Capitalist Class is a homogeneous element, a “happy family” among itself. Far from it.

The class-mark of the Capitalist Class is the possession of the requisites for work. But the members of the Capitalist Class are not as equally equipped with the weapons of production as the members of the Working Class are stripped thereof. The members of the Working Class are wholly stripped of the requisites for work; among the members of the Capitalist Class, however, the requisites for work are unequally distributed. As a consequence of this fact, the Capitalist Class itself falls into several sub-classes. The Lawson revelations illustrate what here in America may come to be known as the “Frenzied Finance”, known in Europe as the “Haute (high) Finance”, quite commonly designated in English as the “Plutocracy”: this sub-class deals in liquid or sublimated capital—Money. Of course, it does not work. Below the Plutocracy is the capitalist proper, the man who still is in more or less touch with his plant. Although a powerful sub-class, and also a non-worker, this element is extensively parasited upon by the upper sub-class of the Plutocrat. The third well marked sub-class of the Capitalist Class consists of the element that has some of the requisites for work, but in so small a quantity that it can not live wholly upon the Working Class, as its other two capitalist sub-classes can and do; this sub-class must itself put its shoulders to the wheel; it must work; this is the “Middle Class”, composed of small farmers, small traders, small producers generally.

Now, all this has a grave bearing upon the practical work for the abolition of capitalism. It determines the tactics that alone can lead to success. It throws the X-rays upon the fact that the class interests of the Middle Class will ever set it at war against the upper sub-classes of its own Capitalist Class, but NEVER AT WAR AGAINST CAPITALISM. The Middle Class, even where it does not directly employ workingmen, and fleece them of course, profits by the exploitation of Labor. Cheap transportation rates, for instance, is a day-dream that delights the Middle Class. But cheap rates mean an exploited railroad workingmen personnel. It follows that,

although the Middle Class, whom the *Arizona Socialist* places in “the same economic position with the wage-worker”, does “work”, its class and, consequently, its class interests, are inherently the opposite of and diametrically opposed to the class and the class interests of the Working Class.

Does the *Arizona Socialist* know all this and yet holds the fly-paper language that it does? If so, then the *Arizona Socialist* is deliberately trying to wheedle the workingman into another populist trap.

Does the *Arizona Socialist* not know all this? Then it is guilty of blameworthy levity for darkening counsel with ignorance, instead of schooling itself before attempting to school others, upon an issue of deepest gravity to the Working Class of the land.

The Socialist Labor Party knows that the reasoning in this article is “mudslinging”, “tyranny”, “Gradgrind Socialism”, “intolerance”, “narrowness”, “viperous poison”, etc., etc. Nevertheless, unfaltering in its mission of educating and drilling the American Working Class for its emancipation, the S.L.P. will serenely face all such “terrific bolts”, and, not as a Jesus to be sacrificed for the salvation of others, nor as a Winkelried pressing the enemy’s lances into his own breast, and with his prostrate body opening a path for the abject rear, the Socialist Labor Party will still push forward, hewing a wide swath through the jungle, and triumphantly carrying to the goal its banner of Redemption, to the cry of “The Unconditional Surrender 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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