

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 240.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

RECOGNITION OF BRAVERY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“YOU have been a brave man,” said the officer of a German regiment to a common soldier who lay all bandaged up on his pallet in a hospital during the Franco-German war; “I am making my report. I shall recommend you for bravery. What do you prefer to have, the Iron Cross or twenty-five marks?” As soon as the soldier could find his voice he answered amid moans caused by the pain of his wounds: “How much is the Iron Cross worth?” “Intrinsically it is worth nine marks.” “Then,” replied the soldier amid some more moans, “let me have the Iron Cross and sixteen marks.”

Small as was the comfort to the poor soldier for the wounds that no doubt crippled him for life, and, no doubt, shortened his days by many a year, it was just sixteen marks, or \$3.20, more than the Congress of the United States is ready to bestow upon railroad employees in recognition of the bravery that they may exhibit. An act has just been passed “to encourage extreme daring to be exhibited in saving life upon the railroads.” It authorizes the President to bestow bronze medals, rosettes, or knots upon the daring. In point of cash the “honors” are worthless. Even if the Government should accede to the singular suggestion of the German soldier, nothing but coppers would be coming to the mutilated railroad hero.

More than 2,000 trainmen were killed and 25,676 injured during the fiscal year of 1903. Not one of these men but was a hero. It is an act of heroism, that surpasses by far the volunteering to war, the act of taking a job on the railroads. The work is essential to the country’s life, and the chances of death or accident are infinitely greater than in battle. Such are the murderous conditions under which the railroader is forced to work by the capitalist class. And in atonement for such stupendous crime, bronze medals, rosettes and knots are to be issued to the crippled men who may be considered to have exposed their lives most recklessly in

endeavoring “to save life”, that is, in endeavoring to beat down their masters’ liabilities for damages to passengers.

Capitalism looked from this side presents the picture of niggardliness grafted on crime.

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

Uploaded November 2007

slpns@slp.org