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EDITORIAL

THE NEW HARMONY MOVEMENT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Manufacturers' Association "is incensed" at the railroads for proposing to jack up rates. All the charges brought by the Manufacturers' Association against the railroads are true—true it is that Vice-President Brown of the New York Central Railroad is "insincere" when he claims that "rates have been constantly reduced"; true it is that the fact is rates have been soaring almost everywhere, almost uninterruptedly. All this is true. But there is another charge, as true, if not truer, which the manufacturers could have preferred against the railroads and yet do not. Why are they silent? Much hangs thereby.

The railroads are the lineal descendants of the robber-barons of the feudal system. What the "share in production" of robber-barons was is brilliantly portrayed in Eugene Sue's story *The Pilgrim's Shell*. The robber-baron built his burg at strategic spots. He opened roads—such as they were. And then he raked in his "share" of the land's production, or enjoyed his "wages of abstinence," as he would have said had he any political economist among his retainers. This was done by pouncing upon the merchants, who usually were manufacturers themselves, and charging them "all that the traffic would bear," a euphonic modern term for the franker one of "plundering." What the robber-barons did then the railroads do now. What they call "rates" is nothing but tribute that they levy upon the manufacturer. And they levy, like all usurpers do, with a hand that is unkind.

Why do not the manufacturers bring out this fact? For the simple reason that, in the matter of vested right to plunder, capitalism is an enlarged feudal system. The railroads are the lineal descendants of the robber-barons of feudalism—**the manufacturers are the collateral descendants of the identical ancestry.**

What the robber-barons did to the merchant only, that the merchant or manufacturer now does to the proletariat—bleed them of all the blood their

anatomy will bear.

The robber-barons plundered the bourgeois of his product, and, in order to render him all the more acquiescent, very generally put him to the torture, a process in the course of which the bourgeois not infrequently lost his life. The railroads do the identical thing to the modern bourgeois, or manufacturer: plunder him to their hearts' content, and not infrequently put him to the modern rack of threatening his business if he does not yield, a process in the course of which not infrequently suicide follows bankruptcy. All of which the modern bourgeois, or trading capitalist, does to his employes, the number of whom maimed and killed every year in mines and mills and shops exceeds the casualties of many a bloody field of battle.

In view of these facts the posture of the manufacturers towards the railroads is one of unqualified selfishness. They refuse to share with the railroads the plunder which only their kinship to the railroads enables both railroads and manufacturers to levy upon "the public." The railroads do not grudge the manufacturers their "legitimate share" of the workers' fleece: the manufacturers begrudge the railroads their share in the common "vested rights."

Well may the railroads toss their selfish collateral kinsmen contemptuously on their horns.

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

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slpns@slp.org