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ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

IT IS COMING!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE is never a lie told but it comes back. The “prosperity” lie is well on its return trip. For the last years glowing reports of the nation’s wealth have been current. As against the rest of the world, the United States has been importing less than it exports in nearly every commodity on the market. It is displacing native shoes in South America, native nails in Germany, native locomotives in France, and native woollens in England. The money-metal movement shows an export excess of over \$147,900,000 for the last ten years, while for the same time the trade balance of merchandise is over \$3,534,700,000. Evidently enormous streams of wealth have been flowing into the country—but where has it gone to?

That it is not burning holes in the pockets of the wage-workers is evidenced by the reports from the steel, coal, and almost all other coke fields. Over three-fifths of the steel blast furnaces are cold, and the number is being augmented daily. Most of the steel plants in operation are finishing plants, hastily using up stock bought at high prices, so that their products can be sold before the market drops any lower. Of the 150 thousand men employed by the steel trust great numbers are idle, and those that still work are doing it for from 5 to 20 per cent. less wages.

No steel wanted, no coke wanted. The coke production has been steadily dropping off, week by week, till last month’s figures show a drop of 50 per cent. from those of a year ago. This means absolute idleness for many coke-burners, and reduced hours for the rest.

The lack of steel shipments is affecting the railroads. Thousands of freight cars are rotting in the weather, useless. All through the coal regions, wage-reductions, strikes, and lock-outs are the order of the day. So common are they, that the union officers are using them to scare recalcitrant miners back into the ranks.

These are but a few industries—but they are the leading, the pace-setting ones. The others are in like condition. In all, the workingman is hard pinched. He is either on short allowance or none at all. Evidently, then, those aforesaid streams of wealth did not flow into the portmanteaus of the laborers. Where did they go, then?

The answer will be found in the report, published elsewhere in these columns, of the state of affairs in the Pittsburg district,¹ a state of affairs that will remind readers of *The People* of the prediction recently made by Mark Hanna, and published in these columns only, that “before a year was over, soup houses would be seen in all the large industrial centers.”²

It is coming—thank you, ye labor fakirs, professors and pulpiteers in the pay of the class that alone can ever enjoy prosperity under capitalism!

¹ [See Steel Strike news item, page 3.—R.B.]

² [See [“A New Application of ‘Graft,’”](#) *Daily People*, October 25, 1903.—R.B.]

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NEWS ARTICLE

STEEL STRIKE

EMPLOYEES OF CORPORATION REVOLT AGAINST CUT.

Notices of Sweeping Reductions Posted at Carnegie Mills —Homestead Men Threaten to Strike in Five Days—3,000 Out at Glassport and Canonsburg.

Pittsburg, Pa., Jan. 4.—Indications point to a general strike at the Homestead mills of the Carnegie Steel Company. The men are not organized, but they have suddenly assumed an organized form within the plant and committees have been appointed to issue an ultimatum to the company.

A.H. Hunt, the superintendent, has received five days' notice to meet a scale of wages formulated by the tonnage men. Unless a compromise is agreed upon the Homestead plant will be idle.

There is no doubt that the strike will extend to the Duquesne mills, the Edgar Thompson plant in Braddock, and the other plants controlled by the Carnegie Steel Company. All the employes of the concern except some of the lowest wage earners have had their wages reduced. From railroad men up to the head rollers everybody is disgruntled.

In presenting their grievances to Hunt, the committee disavowed any intention of interfering with the company's plans for operating their plants if they refused to accept the reductions. With the closing down of the Carnegie steel mills, the plans of the United States Steel Corporation would be knocked awry, as the corporation intended to update the European markets with its products.

The action of the Homestead workers set the Duquesne and Braddock workers talking. Meetings were held in these

towns to-day, and action will be taken by each crew as the men return to work to-night and to-morrow. The mill men were not organized, but each crew hastily created an organization, and strike sentiment is unanimous, as each man in the mill sign(ed) an ultimatum which was sent to Superintendent Hunt.

The men believe the big cut is uncalled for, and are willing to accept a graded cut of from 10 to 15 percent., but in some cases the reductions have been as large as 50 per cent.

The trouble was started at the forty-inch mill in Homestead, when the three crews, numbering about 450 men, stopped work on Saturday. The crews of every other mill held meetings and sent committees to A.R. Hunt with counter propositions, and advised him that the company's wages would not be accepted. The heaters and rollers, who have been paid \$2.72 for every 100 tons in the big mills, have been cut to \$1.74. The men agree to accept a reduction to \$2 for every 100 tons.

The unanimity with which the men have acted has surprised the company. The submissive manner in which the steel workers have accepted all changes led the superintendents to believe that all they had to do was to announce the wages that the company is willing to pay and the men would resume work.

The executive committee of the Amalgamated Association of Steel Workers ordered 3,000 men employed in two of the Steel Trust's factories to go out on strike to-day.

This action was taken because the men declared they would no longer work at reduced wages, while the Trust's profits remained unaffected. The men who were ordered out were employed in the plants of the Canonsburg Sheet and Tin Company and the Glassport Hoop Mills, of the Pittsburg Steel Company.

There is a generally expressed opinion here that this is the beginning of a strike

that will reach the proportions attained by the steel strike of 1902. Steel officials profess to believe, however, that there is no danger of the strike spreading.

The United States Steel Corporation figured on inundating foreign markets with Carnegie Steel Company products through this cut in wages. If these mills are idle all foreign business which has been obtained during the last three months for delivery during the next three months will be held up, and it will be serious blow at the export trade.

The dissatisfaction has spread to Chicago, where the Illinois Steel Company has posted notices of a reduction similar to that in Homestead.

The Carnegie Steel Company holds more than \$2,000,000 of the savings of its employes, on which 6 per cent. is paid. There is scarcely a mill man who does not own one or more shares of the United Steel stock, partly paid for.

The Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Sheet Workers is interested in the outcome of the controversy. If the non-union men accept the reduction, all the Amalgamated men will be forced to accept similar reductions in the next wage conference.

The steel works say that in their experience they have never seen such big cuts. They are much greater than those

made in 1892.

Owing to the reduction in wages of the Carnegie Coal Company employes the landlords in Homestead, Braddock and Duquesne, who have been receiving high rentals for their houses, have reduced rents voluntarily from 10 to 15 per cent.

This will force the smaller landlords to make similar reductions. Ordinary four and five room houses along the Monongahela Valley, without any improvements, have been renting at from \$25 to \$27 a month.

The United States Steel Company, to offset the influence of the Amalgamated Association, is sending officers among the workmen explaining the situation. General Superintendent A.R. Hunt is given credit for the resumption of work in the forty-inch mill. He is "close to the men," and is said to have promised to submit to the company a compromise scale. He did not hold out much hope of success.

The men employed by the Pittsburg Steel Company at its Monessen mills are all at work to-day. Officers of the company say that a large majority of the men in all departments agreed to the re-adjustment of wages without hesitation.

Through dropping of men, cuts in wages and consolidation of various departments, the United States Steel Corporation, it is figured, begins the new year with a salary and wage cut of about \$22,000,000.

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

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