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EDITORIAL

“THE COMING SLAVERY” ALREADY HERE.

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FROM Pittsburg comes a despatch that is not apt to create much discussion, yet which contains some figures, which, if considered in connection with certain other facts, would reveal a condition of affairs whose deep significance is not generally understood and appreciated. The despatch deals with the official announcement of an advance in the wages of the employes of the United States Steel Corporation (the Steel Trust). In it the statement is made that “The number of employes of the trust to-day is probably larger than at any time in its history. The average in 1902 was 168,127 persons; in 1904, it had fallen nearly 21,000. . . . Wages paid in 1903 were \$120,760,900; last year they were \$21,000,000 less. While no one outside of a few high officials know exactly the extent of the reduction put in force on January 1, 1904, it is generally believed to have been from ten to fifty per cent., for office employes and from eight to thirty-three and one-third per cent. for laborers and skilled workingmen.”

These hundreds of thousands of employes are distributed among the numerous steel and iron, bridge, ore, railroad, coke, gas, lake transportation, building and other corporations which compose the trust. They are organized, according to the trust principle of consolidation—which extends into each and every branch of steel and iron production, from the digging of raw material to the erection of the finished product—into highly centralized departments, each under the direction of an executive and technical staff, drawn from the ranks of the workers and the technical schools of the world. Over these staffs is a board of directors, who take no part in the production of iron and steel, but leave all the functions of superintendence, invention and labor to the workers of all grades below them, being even dependent on the reports and recommendations of the latter for their ability to act as directors. These directors are that peculiar product of modern industrial life, the high

financiers, who view all industries from the standpoint of profit, and leave their actual operation to highly trained subordinates. They are accordingly not essential to the creation of wealth. In fact, they are an obstacle to it, absorbing its greatest results to themselves, thereby producing panics and all that flow therefrom. The Steel Trust directors number twenty-four, and represent more than 200 other corporations. These operate one-half the great railroad, coal and carrying systems; the big industrial and oceanic trusts; the leading telegraph and traction lines; one big express company; five insurance companies; twenty-nine of the biggest financial institutions, and a number of the lesser ones, in the leading financial centers; besides telephone, building, cattle, real estate, mercantile and publishing interests. In all, these twenty-four men represent about one-twelfth (or about nine billion dollars) of the estimated wealth of the country.

In other words, the Steel Trust presents the picture of hundreds of thousands of necessary workingmen, organized into highly centralized departments, and presided over by a useless, though powerful plutocracy. On the one hand, there are hundreds of thousands of workingmen whose average wages, regardless of skill or position, are only \$676 a year, and subject to compulsory reduction ranging from ten to fifty per cent.; on the other hand, there is a microscopically small class, rolling in billions, all-powerful and dominant, who determine the wages and the existence of those who are their superiors from the viewpoint of usefulness and object.

The opponents of Socialism delight in representing Socialism as a system of departmentized industry presided over by a despotic bureaucracy. In this connection, they prate about "the loss of individuality," "the overthrow of democracy," etc. They fail to realize that departmentized industry and bureaucracy are already here. They fail to see that "the coming slavery" which they so eloquently predicted, is right in their midst, denying to the workers a voice in industry and crushing out the unions organized for the protection of their persons and interests; only permitting them, in a paternalistic manner, to own stocks which give them no power of control and make their economic subjection more servile and complete. All the world knows, and experience has taught, that economic subjection is the basis of all oppression and tyranny. Thus, not only are these workers economic slaves, but political ones as well, without one tithe of the voice exercised

by their masters in State and nation. The opponents of Socialism, in battling with a man of straw, have permitted the capitalist class to impose upon them the very thing that they so much dread. When will they awaken to the fact, and, throwing off the economic degradation of the workers in the interest of the capitalist class, declare themselves in favor of the fraternal and democratic ownership of industry in the interests of Society? When will they arouse and overthrow the slavery of Capitalism for the freedom of Socialism?

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