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SECOND EDITORIAL

## “HIS WORKERS LOVED TO CALL HIM JOHN.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE philanthropy of the National Cash Register Company was very similar to the fanning with its wings which a vampire carries on while it sucks its victim's blood. The vampire has but one object: to drain the sleeper's veins. The National Cash Register Company has but one object: to increase its profits.

The antiquated way of dealing with the working class was to jump on it and crush profits out. The capitalist did not care how much his employes flaunted their poverty and wretchedness in the face of the world. Were they not “free American citizens” who had exercised their right of contract? Had they not exchanged their labor for poor food, and a poorer dwelling? Had they not joined their labor to the employer's capital, and was not each drawing its share? And the press of the land lifted up its largest sized heads and shouted that it was so.

But it was found inexpedient to crush the men out too quickly. It would be as dangerous for the capitalist if this happened, as it would be dangerous for the vampire if the sleeper was awakened. So a new method was introduced, and it was called “betterment of the workers.” That was the vampire-wing fanning. The National Cash Register Company was the chief exponent of the new idea, and magazines, newspapers, lecturers, and pamphlets all applauded. It does not matter whether or not Mr. Patterson, president of the company, paid the lecturers to praise him, or whether he gave the magazines and papers an adequate return for their appreciation; the fact remains that he was pointed out as the model business man, and others were told to go and do likewise.

Lately there has been a rift in the lute, but the rift has made the music sound familiar. Mr. Patterson, “John as his devoted workers dearly love to call him,” like another Michael, has driven 2,400 offending men, women, and children, mostly women and children, from Paradise. Instead of the old talk, Patterson now insists that he will stand no “dictation.” And what may be the dictation that he will not stand? Why, simply dictation as to the amount of profits that he will squeeze from his 2,400 men, women, and children, mostly women and children.

He gave them baths once a week, and he gave them cheap food once a day, but he did not give them wages enough, evidently, to buy the baths and food for themselves. He gave them lessons in agriculture, and he taught them to build streets, and make gardens. Then he sold them house-lots, and what was once a waste, now blooms from the work, not of Mr. Patterson, “whom his devoted workers dearly love to call John,” but from the energy expended, after hours, by those workers. And as a result of the lockout, hundreds of “happy little homes” will be lost forever, not to “John,” but to the men to whom he sold them “on easy terms.”

So the whole scheme of the National Cash Register Company turns out to have been but an advanced method applied to the great art of making profits. The capitalist of to-day “sacrifices to the graces,” that is, instead of using a club to smash profits out of his workers, he uses the skilful, easy, method of “betterment.” He can do it with larger returns, and with less comment from others. He can increase his profits, because by coddling his help a little, he can get them to work faster. But even coddling does not hide the fact that you are being drained, and when the employes of the National Cash Register Company realized it, they naturally protested. “John” did not wait long for the discontent to gather head. He instantly locked out the whole force, and announced his intention of running his business to suit himself.

The lockout is opportune, as it nails forever the lie that there can be any peace or any friendship between the working class and the capitalist class. It also demonstrates that no matter what may be the avowals and protestations on the part of the capitalist, he always is bent on increasing his profits, and to increase them he must decrease the wages of those who work for him.

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

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