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EDITORIAL

“FAIR TERMS.”

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“When the time comes, the people will take possession of this coal, under fair terms.”—Counselor Darrow of the Miners, before the Arbitration Commission, Philadelphia, Feb. 14.

“**F**AIR terms” is a technical expression. What does it mean?

Here is a man, who owns a plot of land. He holds it “for a rise.” In the meantime the city decides to build, say, a City Hall on that spot. His property is appraised and taken. What he is given may justly be termed “fair terms.” It might and it might not quite suit all his plans; but it approximates them; with the money he may go right ahead, and do business.

Or here is another man, who owns a whole block of houses, which he rents. For any one of a score of reasons, the city decides to build a public park on that very spot. The property is appraised and taken. Here also what the former owner is given may be justly termed “fair terms.” The transaction may greatly incommode him; it may even cause him temporary loss, in the loss of revenue, while he re-adjusts himself in some other investment. Nevertheless, no substantial injury can be said to be done to him. In short, in this and the first instance cited, as in all the instances which the technical term “fair terms” is applied to, the proprietor continues, after as before, to get a living, not by virtue of his working, but by virtue of his ownership of that which others need to work and live. In other words, the transaction does not change his character. Or to be still more specific, his class physiognomy remains unaltered.

Is that the nature of the “transaction” demanded by the emancipation of the Working Class—the people—from the thrall of the Baer class, the Capitalist Class? If the programme of the Working Class is to be “fair terms” for the Capitalist Class, that would mean that the physiognomy of the Capitalist Class is to remain unchanged: after, as before, the Capitalist Class is to continue to live, not by work,

but by virtue of its ownership of that which the people need to work and live. In short, the Capitalist Class would continue to live by the plunder of the workers;—there would be no change for the better.

He who says “fair terms” for the Capitalist Class, either means the right thing for the workers, and then he is holding out a “gold brick” to the capitalist class, or he does not mean it honestly by the workers. If, all the same, he does mean well, then he is the merest flapdoodle.

Nothing will meet the case but the abolition—total and unqualified—of the capitalist class. As a class, the nuisance must stop. No individual or set of individuals, may be allowed to continue to live on the blackmail that Capitalism implies. Their power to so live, their class power, is to be taken away absolutely. Such was the “fair terms” King George was treated to. Thereafter, they will have to work for what they enjoy, as all others, or suffer the penalty. What plunderer will call such treatment “fair terms”?

Whoever prates of “fair terms” to the Capitalist Class is either a many-faced hypocrite or a ninny. In neither case have such folks a standing in the camp of the workingman militant. That camp does not juggle with words. It is, above all things, true to all, seeing it must be true to itself.

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