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EDITORIAL

A HINT TO RAILROADERS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

VIENNA despatches tell the tale of a novel sort of strike. It is called a “passive strike.” Curious name that is for a strike! What may it mean? The details answer the question fully; they do even more than that: they “throw light upon the scene.”

The Vienna “passive strike” is a strike of the railroad workers employed by a privately owned railroad line. Having failed to obtain redress for grievances the men struck. The method of the strike was, however, not the usual one of quitting work, but of punctual attention of all the rules of the Company. Each of the scores of rules which the Company had established was punctually observed—signals for departure, distance between train and train, etc., etc., not one was overlooked. The consequence was an almost immediate blockade. The service was demoralized.

The Vienna “passive strike” was an ingenious move in the skirmish that is now going on between the Capitalist and the Working Class. For one thing it accomplished, without loss of wages, what strikes usually accomplish for a while—paralyze the exploiters; for another thing, it accomplished what no strike, surely no railroad strike, has yet accomplished—it revealed the secret of “Company’s Rules.” It revealed the secret that these rules are not laid down for the observance of the employees but for the protection of the Company in cases of accidents. It revealed the fact that those rules are meant for ready pretexts to saddle the employees with the blame for accidents and hold the Company free. It revealed the secret that the flow of dividends is banked upon the breach of rules.

The Austrian “passive strike” of the railroaders should not be lost upon the railroaders of America. A good, thoroughpaced “passive strike” on the railroads of the land presents itself as the readiest means to hit at once both the railroad capitalist skimmers and their labor lieutenants, the Grand Superlative Upper Chief

Stones. In all cases of ordinary strikes the Stones have the power to “call off” and “call on” and supply scabs. There is no such opportunity in the case of a “passive strike.” Both capitalists and their labor lieutenants would be demoralized. The former being thoroughly shaken up and the latter shaken off, a long step will have been taken towards the organization of that important branch of Labor as a link in the integrally industrial organization of the Working Class.

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

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