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EDITORIAL

THE COUNTRY'S FOES.

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THE Ogden, Utah, *Standard*, with date of last September 19, gave unwilling testimony against that sham patriotic element in the country that declaims against the foreigner as an “undesirable element in the commonwealth,” and yet turns that very element into a lever by which to hasten the downfall of American wages. The *Standard* had this item:

“The Union Pacific last evening, at Cheyenne, paid off 140 laborers in that city, not one of whom could sign his name. The men were Italians, and were imported into this country under the padrone system. **THE ONLY MEANS OF IDENTIFYING THEM WAS BY A NUMBERED BRASS TAG WHICH WAS SEALED ABOUT THE NECK OF EACH** by the foreman of the gang in which they were working.”

America is large enough to be the paradisaical home of many millions more than the country now contains. This notwithstanding, the country yields a paradisaical home for a number many and many millions smaller than its present population, and the many millions to whom it yields but a step-motherly home range, from all gradations, down to that described in the *Standard's* news item. Those who are too slow-witted to detect by pure reasoning the reason why of this paradox, may be aided in finding the answer by contemplating the wretched Italians described above.

How came these men here? Did they willingly abandon their individuality, and yield to the prison disgrace of being known by numbers only? Did they gladly turn their backs to the country and the customs and the language they were at home with, and become waifs in a strange land? Did they recklessly, like people in despair, jump from the frying-pan of poverty in Italy into the raging fire of poverty plus mutilation of limb and loss of life in America? Certainly not. These are all men of such elemental information that, left to themselves, they would not have known of such a country as America, and less yet of how to get there. And that was their

misfortune: that rendered them ideal prey for the American capitalist class.

The profits that the capitalist makes out of American labor are on the increase. This is brought on by improved machinery, which not only intensifies the productivity of the worker, but also lowers his actual earnings through the increase in the supply of labor. All these causes combined increase in the hands of the capitalist the plunder he is able to take from the workers, and lowers the condition of these in the scale of wellbeing.

While this process is going on the capitalist fleecer is not quite happy. In the first place, the process does not go on fast enough to suit him: he is not satisfied with 5 and 10 per cent. larger fleecings: nothing will suit him short of 40 or 50 or 60 per cent. more; in the second place, the process, slow tho' it be, does not suit the fleeced: they grow restless: they threaten things: they may do things. In view of all this the American capitalist turns his eyes abroad and by means of false promises and lying prospectuses decoys into the country the most helpless European labor he can lay hands on. Thus he pounces upon the Italian, and, at least for a time, solves the difficulties that gather before him. The presence of the Italian competitors for work throws off the scent the American workingman; he imputes to the foreigner the hardships that have befallen him; he looks for redress in quarters so unresponsive to the real cause that, strange as it may seem, he lands right into the clutches of the American capitalist, who with false political promises and by playing him off against this Italian fellow-slave, keeps the workers divided and at loggerheads, while all the while he leads the country—that is, its working population—deeper and deeper into the mire.

Not the unhappy Italian, numbered and dumb, is the foe whom the American workingmen should fasten their eyes on; they should look higher; they there will find the American capitalist, entrenched behind the Democratic and Republican parties, with their outposts of reform parties, and himself with his eyes fixed upon the only source of danger to his felonious rule,—the Socialist Labor Party.

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

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