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EDITORIAL

VIOLETION (SIC.) OF AGREEMENT (SIC.).

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THE Interborough employes, now on strike for the Rights of Man, are making experience, Among the experience that they are making is this: **LABOR HAS NO RIGHTS THAT THE CAPITALIST CLASS NEED RESPECT.** This fact transpires from the answer made by the Interborough Company to the Mayor, and the thunderous applause with which the answer has been greeted by the capitalist press.

The Interborough Company claims that its motormen “wantonly violated their agreement of September 7, 1904.” This view of the subject, taken in connection with the admissions contained in the answer, demonstrates the capitalist position that “Labor has no rights that the capitalist class need respect.”

For one thing, the answer contains intrinsic evidence that the Company did not respect the agreement, and deliberately violated it. The exaction of over 100 miles a day from its motormen wrought an insidious violation of the agreement. If equality of rights between the workingman and the capitalist existed in the decalogue of the capitalist class, the agreement was violated by the Company. By what process of reasoning is the capitalist held free and the workingmen charged with “wanton violation of agreement”?—We shall see.

For another thing, the so-called agreement was null and void and from its inception a badge of fraud, it was a violation of law perpetrated by the Company. The capitalist press is bubbling over with praises for the Company. They call the Company’s conduct “common sense”—aye, the common sense that consists in looking upon the workingman as there only to be plucked; they say the Company’s conduct “has the sanction of economic principle”—aye, the economic principles of the buccaneer; they say the Company’s conduct “rests upon human nature”—aye, the human nature of capitalist society, whose motto is: “Do others or you will be

done by them”; they pronounce the Company’s conduct “sane”—aye, the sanity of the beast in the jungle whose mental and moral horizon is bounded by rapine. These attempts at white-washing the contract are hollow. They have been wiped away by equity jurisprudence long before they were uttered. Mountain high is the heap of legal decisions that stamp as fraudulent any contract into which one of the contracting parties is forced. A contract, or agreement, as the word implies, must be a document entered into by free men. If one of the contracting parties is under duress, the contract is a fraud upon him, a fraud that the other, and free contracting party is guilty of. The workingman is not free. The very “law of supply and demand” to which the capitalists appeal tells the tale that the workingman is under duress. Under capitalism, he is forced to sign any thing that the capitalist may dictate. The lash of hunger, held over him by the capitalist class, deprives him of the necessary freedom towards the individual capitalist. The “contract” or “agreement” that the capitalist draws from the workingman is an act of fraud committed by the capitalist, and stands branded as such both by reason and justice, both in theory and in practice. Looked at from that side, the Company stands branded as the violator of that social contract that is implied in all civilized society. By what process of reasoning can, then, the defrauded workingman be charged with breach of agreement, and the capitalist, the initial violator of contract, be held up as the model of legality?—We shall see.

The answer is plain: Under capitalism, justice, legality, and morality are but a mask behind which to practice injustice, law-breaking and immorality. The Spirit of the Age has to be rendered homage to. The days have passed when the criminal class may brazenly vaunt its criminality. It must affect justice, legality and morality; even the autocrat of Russia feels the constraint; but while rendering external homage to Justice, Legality, and Morality capitalism practices its own creed. Its contract creed is this:

“The workingman has no right that Capitalism need respect. The capitalist’s law of contract between the Capitalist and the Workingman orders that the workingman shall shut up and cough up. If he don’t then he is a wanton violator of agreement.”

Capitalism must be overthrown. The ballot of the Socialist Labor Party is

inscribed—“We demand the unconditional surrender of the Capitalist Class!”

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

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