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EDITORIAL

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE WORKERS.

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THE *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine* for October contains the speech of Edward A. Moseley, secretary of the Interstate Commerce Commission, delivered at the recent Buffalo convention of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. In this speech Moseley shows the following: (1) that only 17 per cent. of the 56,000 locomotive firemen of this country ever realize their aspirations to become locomotive engineers, because of the inability of the 83 per cent. to stand the tremendous physical and nervous strain of the occupation; (2) that owing to the fact that vastly heavier engines are now being built than formerly, it is "not uncommon for firemen to shovel sixty tons of coal into the firebox of a locomotive during a single trip over the division on which he was employed, the trip, by the way, occupying a period of from twenty to twenty-four hours"; (3) that ten years ago, "the average freight train load was 180 tons. It is now 311 tons. The number of tons carried for each trainman employed was then 5,085. It is now 6,703, an increase of 1,618 tons a man. The number of tons carried one mile for each trainman employed was then 638,635. The figures are now 890,205, an increase of 251,570 tons per mile. These figures but faintly indicate the increased burdens that have been placed upon the locomotive firemen of this country"; (4) that the reports of the Interstate Commerce Commission show that in spite of the alleged favorable enforcement of the coupler and air brake laws, "in 1903 the number of employes killed was more than 600 greater than the number killed in 1902, and the number of injured was nearly 22,000 greater. Among trainmen the ratio of killed was 1 in 135 in 1902, while in 1903 it was 1 in 123."

Having thus substantially delivered himself, Mr. Moseley asks why "the casualty list shows little diminution as compared to the record of ten years ago, and for the past two years seems actually to be on the increase." He answers the

question thusly: “The increase in the number of casualties is more apparent than real”, contending, at the same time, that it is due to fuller reports on the part of the railroads, under the accident law of 1901, as enforced by the Interstate Commerce Commission.

This explanation is characteristic. It imputes to the Interstate Commerce Commission tail the power to wag the railroad transportation dog, a power that expert railroad writers have shown exists mainly in Mr. Moseley’s mind. It is also typical of many of the recent explanations of capitalist public officials in that it would substitute technical reasons for actual ones. The frequently recurring and appalling railroad disasters of recent years have impressed the minds of all with the knowledge that railroad accidents are not merely growing in railroad reports, but in fact as well. These disasters have also made clear, what Mr. Moseley’s statement of facts has helped to prove, viz., that the increase in accidents keeps pace with the increase in the physical hardships imposed on railroad employes by the increase in the size of locomotives, cars and traffic.

Of course, behind all this is another cause, which was brought out in a series of notable articles in the *Evening Post* about two years ago, anent the same subject as that discussed by Mr. Moseley. The railroads of this country are directed by capitalists who are not railroad men, that is, by brewers, dry goods merchants, pork packers, etc., whose investments have given them seats in the directorates, and whose main endeavor is to increase dividends, regardless of the safety to their employes or the public. With this end in view, tasks are piled on and labor intensified out of all proportion to human endurance, bringing about the increase of accidents which Mr. Moseley would fain explain away on technical grounds.

Were these capitalists replaced by expert railroad men, matters would not be vitally changed, for those railroad directing brewers, etc., are simply following a tendency of present day capitalism, which compels an increase of profits through the slaughter of the workers—a tendency that is reflected in the increased death rate among the workers.

These capitalists and the system of capitalism—which breeds them and their murderous tendencies—must be replaced by Socialism. Only then will the workers have less hardships and less deaths, for then, the present system of industry and

transportation for profit, will give way to that for use, to the great advantage of the workers, railroad and otherwise.

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