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EDITORIAL

A MODERN PLEBS LEADER.

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THE press dispatches from Washington announce that Mr. E.E. Clark of Iowa is slated for the position of Assistant Secretary in the cabinet Department of Commerce and Labor. The press dispatches are also kind enough to announce that Mr. Clark is a member of the Coal Strike Commission, and President of the Order of Railway Conductors. These two bits of biography are aidful; only they are not ample enough. Taking them as a cue, the sociologic physiognomy of Mr. Clark may be profitably amplified as follows:

As to Mr. Clark's membership in the Coal Strike Commission, he was one of those who unanimously voted for the clauses in the report that declare the social conditions in the mining regions to be good, and that these conditions do not compare unfavorably with the conditions in other industries. In other words, the conditions that flow from decreasing earnings and increasing death rate among the workingmen are good.

As to Mr. Clark's presidency in the Order of Railway Conductors, in October of last year, the Switchmen's Union being on strike in Denver, the places of the men were taken by members of Mr. Clark's Order. The previous year, during the Switchmen's strike of the Rio Grande, Manager Herbert, being forewarned, arranged with the head of the Order of Railway Conductors to have its members fill the places of the men. In 1894, during the Pullman strike Mr. Clark was in session with the General Managers' Association, and actively aided them in filling the strikers' places.

The above sketch explains, but only partially, why a capitalist government will give a political job to such a man. It is a reward. But is that all of it? The first lecture entitled "Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders" in the pamphlet *Two Pages from Roman History* throws light upon this subject. It shows how the circumstance that the Plebs Leader shared the designation of "plebeian" raised the delusion among the poor plebeian

masses that he had interests in common with them. The delusion secured for the Plebs Leader the confidence of the plebeian masses; it placed in his hands the club that he swung over the head of the patriciate, and with the aid of which he wrenched from the ruling class of Old Rome the special personal privileges which he needed, and which could not be enjoyed except at the expense of his “fellow plebeians.” It is there also shown that strictly parallel is the career of the modern Labor Leader. The common designation of “labor,” which the Labor Leader carefully cultivates, does for him what the common designation of “plebeian” did for the Plebs Leader; it raises the delusion that he, the Labor Leader, is of the class of the toiling and fleeced wage slaves, and places him before them as a “fellow workingman.” Thus he is enabled to use their misery as a club with the aid of which he can wrench from the modern ruling class special privileges for himself, enjoyable only under capitalism, that is to say, enjoyable only at the expense of the working class.

The political job about to be bestowed upon Mr. E.E. Clark by the capitalist class of the land is, in the first place, a concession wrung by him from them by virtue of the delusion among workingmen that he is one of them; and, in the second place, and above all, it is a buffer raised by the capitalist class to perpetuate the system of wage-slavery.

Mr. E.E. Clark is a Plebs Leader in the Rome of to-day.

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