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EDITORIAL

THE NATIONAL SCAPE-GOAT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WILL there ever be a limit to the uses and abuses that “The Public” is put to?

Railroad companies, with the Wabash Railroad Company at their head, have petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission for an extension of time for putting into effect the nine-hour law, which applies to railway employes who have the direction of movements of trains. The Wabash road is quite specific. Gladly would it obey the law—but, if it did, “the public would suffer greatly.” One stops breathing with wonderment in what way would the public suffer, greatly or otherwise, if the Company were to reduce the hours of work of its employes, and hire additional men to do the work of the shortened hours. The wonderer is speedily set at ease by the answer. It is this—“if the hours are shortened the only alternative will be to close a large number of stations.” In other words, the profits of the Company are a fixed, a sacred, an unchangeable magnitude, not to be tampered with. “The Public” and the Company’s profits must not be conflicting interests. If “The Public” is to be seen to, and more men employed in order to make up for the shortened time of the others, then the Company’s profits would have to go down. That must not be. Again, if the Company’s profits are to be upheld as sacrosanct, then, “the only alternative” would be to employ fewer men, that would compel the closing of a large number of stations, and then “The Public” would suffer. That must not be either? What to do? Why, ’tis dead easy—to take it out of the hide of that element of the population that is not found in the Company and that is not considered in “The Public.”

The Company must not suffer; “The Public” must not suffer; somebody has to suffer in a social system where one man’s joy must be paid with another man’s

sorrows. Who shall that somebody be? Who else can it be but that national scape-goat—the Working Class?

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