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EDITORIAL

## A COLONEL'S HALF-TRUTHS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**N the course of his address to the seventy-two young men who received the degree of mechanical engineer at this year's commencement of Steven's Institute of Technology, Col. Robert M. Thompson said:

"The making of money or losing of money in a business is a fair test of efficiency."

The Colonel must have sat up all night to frame a sentence so full of half-truths, hence so false in social technology.

No doubt, if a capitalist is grossly inefficient, whether through mental incapacity, or by reason of addiction to any or many of the several vices that capitalists are celebrated for patronizing,—most probably, under such circumstances his inefficiency will interfere with his making money.

At the same time, inefficiency is by no means a positive preventive to the making of money. Capitalists are not a few who, though wearing the marks of inefficiency on every line in their face, make money, plenty of it. The mechanism of capitalism is such that, once a capitalist, the money is made regardless of any quality of the capitalist. Capitalistic plumbing so arranges things that the money flows into the art capitalist's pockets work or no work, efficiency or no efficiency .

Obversely, it does not at all follow that if a workingman is efficient he will "make money." In exceptional instances, other and fortuitous circumstances aiding, an efficient workingman may get to where he can profit by the capitalistic plumbing, and make money. The rule is to the contrary.

That very capitalistic plumbing that turns the current of money into the pockets of the capitalist, whether he be efficient or not, whether he at all work{s} or not, keeps the money from being made by the vast majority of workingmen.

Efficiency in any shape on the part of the workingman does not mean money for

him; it means more money for his capitalist employer.

Efficiency on the part of the workingman is like wool on the sheep's back. The more plentiful the wool and the better its quality, all the more plentiful and profitable the clip for the sheep's owner. The greater the efficiency of the worker, all the more plentiful is the efficiency's proceeds for the workingman's employer.

That is the trick of the plumbing of the capitalistic social system. The trick works to such perfection that wealth is, under capitalism, defined as the product of Labor and the reward of Idleness, or inefficiency.

The young men of Stevens who graduated in mechanical technology, and who had the misfortune of hearing, and may have had the greater misfortune of taking stock in Col. Thompson, were launched with a technologic conception of modern society that will long prevent them from acquiring the efficiency necessary to render their mechanical efficiency fruitful to themselves—the efficiency in economics that will render them militants in the movement to tear up the existing capitalist, and substitute for it Socialist, plumbing, the plumbing that insures to the worker the reward of his efficiency.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)