

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Is It the Last Ditch?

Readers of THE PEOPLE are certainly acquainted with the great statistical acrobat of capitalism Mr. Mallock of England. They know how Mallock has been working himself to a bone to the end of beating down the swelling profits or stealings of capital, and of raising the sinking share of the working class in the wealth of their own product, so as to make things look lovely, and to “justify the ways of the God capital to man.” This Mallock, it now appears, has found the job of lying with figures too hard; he has given that up; and he has leaped back into another ditch—the last it is to be hoped.

He now grants the enormous wealth enjoyed by the capitalist class, but he seeks to justify it on the ground of the “Ability,” as he calls it, expended by the capitalist in production.

The Socialist reads Mallock’s work on this subject with unqualified pleasure. Nothing can contribute more towards calling attention to and proving the important Socialist tenet that the capitalist is an idler, a parasite, a being who contributes nothing towards production, but only sponges up the wealth of the producers, than to make in his behalf the preposterous claim that he “expends ability;” nothing can more fully bring under the glare of the light of truth his absolute lack of “ability,” and consequently his utter incapacity to expend any of that sort of thing, than to set up such a claim. A man may have a cast in his eye and the same may pass unnoticed, but let some unwise admirer proclaim him a cross between an Apollo and an Adonis and the eyes of the people, focalized upon him, will soon realize his physical defect.

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Conspicuously the capitalist does no manner of work; conspicuously he exerts himself in no wise in lines that promote production; conspicuously, consequently, even tho' he had "ability" to expend, he does not do so. But conspicuously too the capitalist is a dullard, bereft of sense as he is of heart and of morality, unable to expend "ability" in any but ways condemned since in thunder notes the decalogue was proclaimed to man.

This latest manoeuvre of Mallock's smacks of the desperation that causes a foe, beaten back, to leap into a last ditch.

Our ranks break loose in cheers at so encouraging a sight.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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