

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 13, NO. 112.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1912.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

BRANDEIS AND EFFICIENCY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN *Collier's Weekly* for September 14 Louis D. Brandeis utters the maxim that "efficiency does not grow indefinitely with increasing size," in a capitalist plant. Whereby Mr. Brandeis tells a truth, but one of that most dangerous type which consists in suppressing, or ignoring, the other half of the truth.

Efficiency is not an inseparable accompaniment of increasing size. Size may increase without efficiency; efficiency may increase without size. The illustrations of these facts are too numerous to need mention. Nor is that the fact of importance. The matter of importance is whether that Efficiency that human Progress demands can be reached without Size.

Progress demands large production of wealth. The volume of wealth is the measure of the possibilities for Progress. The measure of Efficiency is the volume of wealth produced with least waste, and with the least amount of toil possible. Is such Efficiency possible without Size? It is not.

Physically, the perfection of electricity, for instance, may diminish the size necessary for a machine to do its work. The elephantine steam engine may be, and is being, supplanted by the relatively diminutive motor. But that is not what is meant by Size.

The Size of a plant is its value—the amount of crystallized socially necessary labor for its production. Size, accordingly, implies value. Nor yet does Efficiency necessarily grow with Size, properly understood. But the Efficiency that Society demands IS inseparable from properly understood Size.

It is in this matter as with armies. A small army skillfully managed may rout a larger one in the hands of skill-less captains. But that is not to say that a large army cannot have a skilled captain, or that, so captained, a larger army need not out-class a smaller, and scatter it.

The analogy of the army may be pursued further. The larger an army all the larger are the demands upon the captain's skill; and the point is imaginable where the army becomes too large for any one captain, in which case the army's efficiency would not keep step with its size. At the same time the increased size of an army beyond its immediate management by one captain does not preclude, on the contrary, it dictates, the army's subdivisions under immediate captains, who, in turn are under one field marshal.

The limit to the Size of an army, Efficient for its purposes, is purely speculative. Likewise speculative is the Size of a plant of production, Efficient for its purpose. For the same reason that Efficiency can keep step with an army's increasing Size, the Efficiency of a plant of production need not suffer, and can grow, and will grow with the plant's increasing growth.

There is no help to be looked for by Capitalism from a prospective "break down" of Efficiency due to size. Size is incited by Efficiency, Efficiency flows from Size. And Size will wax and wax to the point when Capitalism will "break down," not because of the stoppage of Efficiency, but because the human agency of Efficiency, the wage-slave class,—in whose hands, from captainships down to "high privateships," the administration of the plants will be found more and more completely lodged—will discontinue administering for a parasite class, and will administer for themselves.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2014

slpns@slp.org