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EDITORIAL

“INCREASED EFFICIENCY.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT would seem the working class were perfectly willing to have its head cut off, provided only the ax that does it be gilded, so carefully do the capitalists hunt for honeyed terms in which to express their increasing exploitation of the workers.

One of these honeyed terms, lately to be heard on every hand, is “increased efficiency.” “Efficiency” means ability, capability, power to get things done. Who would not desire an increase in these desirable qualities!

But in the capitalist’s mouth, “efficiency” means something very different and vastly less innocent. The word also signifies competency to attain a certain result. And what result is it, above all others—nay, exclusive of all others—that the employer seeks from his employes? Why, the production of surplus value—value over and above what it costs the workers to live while producing it, which the employer can then pocket as “profits.”

Behind all talk of “increased efficiency” in the mouth of the employing class this idea lurks. Not so often is it frankly stated. Occasionally it slips out. This it did in St. Louis recently, at the annual meeting of the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers, when one Henry L. Ganth climaxed a long account of how he worked for “increased efficiency” in his cotton mill, with the statement:

“About five hundred of these operatives are now earning an average of 40 per cent. more than when I began to train them, and are turning out over 100 per cent. more work.”

Over a hundred per cent. more work—that means more than double the strain, more than double the intensity, more than double the physical and mental exhaustion at the close of the day’s toil. For this the operatives receive an increase

in earnings of forty per cent. Whence goes all the rest of the fruit of their doubled toil, of their two days' labor in one, for only a little over the pay of one? Into the pockets of Mr. Ganth.

To disguise exploitation thus intensified, under the taffyified name of “increased efficiency,” is but to pour gilt paint upon the ax that chops the wage workers into profits. So long as by submission they invite the ax, the employer will see that they get it. So soon as they rise in intelligent revolt and establish the industrial commonwealth, the day of the ax will end

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