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EDITORIAL

THE BANKERS AND “HUMAN NATURE.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN *System*, “the business magazine,” for July, there is an interesting symposium. It is called “The Crime of Optimism,” and consists of six papers from as many bank officials. These tell how to protect a bank against mistakes of official judgment, misrepresentation by dishonest clients and conspiracies to defraud on the part of tempted employes. This is done, “with a reasonable certainty,” to borrow the phraseology of one of the contributors, by a system of checks. There are checks to the acceptance of bad collateral; the stealing of collateral in the form of bonds; and the falsification of books. In a word, from the highest official to the lowest employe, failure or crime is reduced to a minimum by a method of dovetailed counteracting and counterbalancing on the part of all concerned; all dictated by the necessities of banking as demanded by social evolution.

The Socialist reading this symposium grins broadly. Here are men, practical men, men keen, alert, and not given to dreaming, men who declare Socialism impossible because of the frailties of human nature, demonstrating that a system of society is possible despite those very frailties, when co-operatively conducted. These men, the personification of hard, stern, relentless fact, are proving conclusively that society knows no human nature; and that it makes and unmakes the latter as its necessities and conditions require.

Of course, no Socialist who knows his Socialism as he should, strives for a social system that is one perpetual check. What the true Socialist wants is less checks and more life. He does not close his eyes to the determining factors in society; he bases the realization of his ideals on those factors. The economic necessities and conditions of society having created collective capital, so also will they create collective ownership. The co-operative labor of society will result in co-operative

property and wealth. Then the evils that now arise from the exploitation of collective capital and co-operative labor, by private individuals called capitalists, together with the selfish, brutal individualistic philosophy that is born of it, will disappear. With them will go the checks that their presence makes necessary. Freedom will then be both possible and practical.

Those bankers wrote better than they knew.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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slpns@slp.org