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EDITORIAL

THE STUMBLING BLOCK TO EDUCATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

H.P. BAUMER, a Columbia University law student living on bread and milk in order to complete his course—such is the sight afforded by this best of all possible systems, capitalism.

Who is Baumer? He is a young licensed coastwise pilot, who has served his time before the mast in different waters, and who now wishes to become an admiralty lawyer. As such he typifies the rising young generation of America, disinherited wage-earners by birth, who find every door of opportunity shut against them by the economic usurpation of the master class. Occasionally one such, by self-denial, by bitter skimping and starving is able successfully to pursue the studies which open up to him another field than that of manual drudgery. The fat dividends made in the correspondence school swindle indicate the volume of ambition which vainly beats itself out against the walls of economic dependence. When, for very rarity, one succeeds in getting through, the capitalist class pats him on the back, and smugly urges the other struggling millions to go and do likewise. Not only that, but having first carefully rendered it as difficult as possible for a young workingman to secure an education, this same capitalist class looks upon itself as the one supreme educator; and credits to the very obstacles it throws in the way of progress, the progress which is made over those obstacles. Progress is made over the obstacles, 'tis true, but that progress would be a thousandfold more were the obstacles not there. Baumer may complete his course. Let us hope that he will. But for every Baumer who succeeds, a thousand equally ambitious, equally diligent, equally deserving, are made to fall by the way.

It is Prof. L. Thorndike, of the Teachers' College of this same Columbia University, who has recently shown even more strikingly the sort of an educator capitalism makes. His figures, painstakingly collected over a large number of the

great cities of the country, disclose the saddening fact that only one third of the child population of school age is ever graduated from even an elementary school. Only one in ten ever sees a high-school diploma. Only a quarter receive even the rudiments of the “three R’s.” The lowness of the parents’ wages, rendering them unable to support their children during the proper period of their studies, is the cause of this. Capitalism, robbing the parents of four-fifths of their produce, causes their poverty. What claim has capitalism to the title so proudly claimed by it, the Disseminator of Education?

None, whatever. It is rather the Stumbling Block to Education, and the Disseminator of Ignorance.

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

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