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EDITORIAL

SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS.

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THE Board of Visitors to West Point, in their recent report, condemn the buildings, condemn the accommodations, and condemn, as too small, the salary which the future officers receive while they are students. Their report is interesting because it serves to show the care which the capitalist class takes of those who are to be its defenders.

The buildings at West Point are antiquated. They contain no baths, and the cadets are forced to carry their water for washing around in jugs and pails. The rooms are small and uncomfortable. The height of condemnation is reached by the Board when it contemptuously asserts that the cadets are housed but little better than the inmates of a poorhouse. Still they are housed better and that is a point to establish.

It is a notorious fact that the average tenement in large cities is of such a nature that it is far inferior to the accommodations at a poorhouse. The poorhouse is not a source of revenue. The tenement is. Therefore as few repairs are made on the latter as possible. This being the case it is evident that the West Pointers are luxuriously situated when compared with the workingman.

The second point is that when the majority of the men get through they are in debt. Their pay is \$540 a year, and they are furnished with a room no better than that in a poorhouse, but far better than that in many tenements, for nothing. They are also fed free. The average wage in this country is \$300 a year, very nearly half as much as that received by the future soldier. Out of that the workingman must find some place to sleep, and he must scrape up enough food to keep body and soul together. He is not allowed to get in debt. His one object in life is to go on working and producing so that his employer may wax fat. His labor is useful labor. The labor of the West Pointer is not.

Despite the scientific course at the Military Academy, despite the supposed intellectual superiority of the men who enter it, the graduates have comparatively

no standing in any science. The men who have, are products of other institutions. West Point turns out but one thing—trained ruffians to defend capitalism. Yet the demand is made that these ruffians be given better accommodations, and more money. After being given \$540 a year, after being furnished with the necessities of life, having no families to support, they still cannot live on twice the sum the average workingman receives.

Such a plight is pitiful. All these workingmen who are ground from day to day in order to live, should rush to the defence of the students at the military academy. Organized Scabbery, with all its work for capitalism, should send a committee to work for higher wages. It should organize them. Here, indeed, is a chance for Gompers. He has often spoken of “dignity,” and of maintaining his “dignity,” of being “impressive,” and cultivating “polish.” Can anything be more “dignified, impressive, and polished” than the hazers up the Hudson? It is a chance that should not be missed.

Organize, organize, organize!

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