

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: An Open Letter to the 'Evening Post'

Sir:—Your issue of the 13th instant, contains an article remarkable for its silliness, and entitled “The Socialist’s Opportunity{,}” in which this passage occurs:

“There are, in fact, two great assumptions at the bottom of the whole (Socialist) theory: one is that the resources of the state are mysterious and inexhaustible, and the other is that the present well-to-do class would under Socialism continue to exist, and not only pay workingmen whatever wages they asked, but” etc.

We do not now care to discuss the first of these alleged “assumptions” as to the “mysterious and inexhaustible resources” of the state; your allegation is too general; besides your well established ignorance of sociology and political economy in general, and of the teachings of Socialism on these subjects in particular, may amply account for the error you fall into on your first “assumption”; your error on this head may simply reflect the chaotic condition of your mind and exemplify the truth of the Socialist maxim regarding the intellectual bankruptcy of the capitalist class; it would not necessarily imply malignity or moral turpitude on your part as deliberately attempting to foist falsehood on your readers. We can well understand how, without any intellectual training on the politico-economic significance and development of the “State,” you may have got all mixed up on so extensive a subject. For these reasons—the vagueness of the charge, the broadness of

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the subject, the lack of information for which you are famous—we shall confine ourselves at this time to referring you to the large body of Socialist literature, that you admit there is in existence, with the recommendation that you try to become acquainted with something more than the title-pages of those works.

But the matter lies differently with your second alleged Socialist “assumption,” to wit, that the present well-to-do class would continue in existence under Socialism, and pay the workingmen the wages they may demand. The domain upon which this assumption falls is much more circumscribed than that to which your first assumption belongs; the charge is more concrete; and ignorance on your part could, in so concrete a charge, hardly account for the falsehood.

The large body of Socialist literature in existence is a unit upon the subject, and proves with clearness, that no man will work for another if he himself owns the things necessary for production; that by reason of these things necessary for production—the land and the capital—having been gradually stolen from the masses by a few the former are pauperized and are dependent upon the latter, while the latter roll in their luxurious plunder and constitute our “well-to-do”; that, under the Socialist or Co-operative Commonwealth, where all the things that are necessary for production belong collectively to the whole people, nobody would care to work for another as a wage slave, but would work for himself, thereby keeping the full products of his efforts; and, finally, that *our present well-to-do class would vanish like mist before the sun, or stench before a breath of fresh air*: deprived of the monopoly of that that had enabled it to keep the workers in subjection, it would go down; seeing it could no longer fleece the workers, it would be forced to work for its own living (a thing the well-to-do have a constitutional dislike for), or starve to its heart’s content.

In stating that Socialism assumes the continuance of the present well-to-do employing class you state a falsehood of the whole cloth. Your whole conduct justifies the inference.

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Notwithstanding all your affectation of “journalistic purity,” you are well known to be a leading perverter and suppresser of the truth, in the foolish belief that you can thereby avert the doom of the robber capitalist class that hires you. In most instances your lies are of the fishy sort that eludes the grasp. But in this instance the lie is concrete enough to nail.

Come now, New York *Evening Post*, hurry up and place your finger upon that clause in any Socialist work that justifies the “assumption” that “the present well-to-do class would under Socialism continue in existence, and not only pay workingmen whatever wages they asked, but” etc.; let us see what Socialist statement it is that you so interpret; give the American public an opportunity of fathoming either the depths of your stupidity, or the depths of your moral turpitude.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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