

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Waves

For the past twenty years—that is, ever since the crisis of 1874—there seems to have been a number of discontented persons, alternately flopping over from the Republicans to the Democrats and from the Democrats to the Republicans, just sufficient to reverse at every Presidential election the verdict rendered at the preceding one.

In 1876, on the retirement of Grant, Tilden was elected, but legally cheated out of his seat through the chief instrumentality of his fellow Democrat and society savior, Abraham S. Hewitt. No one doubted that in 1880 the American people would resent the “unprecedented outrage” committed on this occasion by the Republican party. But the facetious fellows who had given the Presidency to Tilden for the reason that he was a Democrat, now gave it to Garfield, because he was a Republican. Garfield’s assassination caused such a display of sympathy for this second “martyr President,” and everybody felt so thankful for the revival of business under a Republican Administration, that no one seriously doubted the continuation of Republican rule by a large majority in 1884. Yet Cleveland was elected, and the jocose minds of Typographic Union No. 6 duly claimed the credit of having buried Blaine the Great under 1,200 pica votes and 400 pounds of Buffalo beef. Again, Mrs. Cleveland proved such an attraction in the White House, where for the first time a Presidential baby was born, that the gallant American people were expected to give her a second term. But the ungallant kickers would not have it, and Harrison the Little was brought

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in from the Western woods under the hat of his grandfather. So prosperous under that hat, South and North, were the American free men—the men who own America, body and soul—that but few doubted its re-election. Yet Harrison was knocked into it, and Cleveland, heavier than ever, sat upon it.

In every case, then, the result for the election was more or less of a general surprise, until the clock work regularity of our political pendulum afforded some ground to superficial observers for the absurd conclusion that the American people of the present age had somehow acquired a peculiar fondness for kicking out the party in power. But, as already stated, the actual kicking was done in Presidential years by a comparatively insignificant fraction of the people, while the mass remained about equally divided between the two great boodle parties. In several of the other years, however, there was a more or less general kicking, called “wave,” and everybody looked happy on election night, with the exception of such officeholders as had been kicked out and were still sober. We need not observe that on the following day the rank and file of the kickers looked miserable, and for cause. They had simply kicked themselves and each other from the frying pan into the fire.

We had such a “wave” last week, and for the phenomenal size of it we must give due credit to our professional wave makers. Never was the wind of honesty blown so strongly by artful bellows. Never was the cry of “reform” so cunningly raised for the purpose of greater abomination. Never was the misery of the people so powerfully used to turn there just wrath from the actual authors of their sufferings.

But he who sows the wind must some day reap the whirlwind. By the action of such waves numbers of men are finally detached from their traditional and superstitious allegiance, and one by one—drop by drop, as it were—swell the coming Socialistic torrent.

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