

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Capitalism Surrenders

At a dinner given by certain capitalist magnates on the 17th inst., to discuss their plans for the transforming of our republic into a military despotism, Gen. Wager Swain said:

“There are forces tugging at the framework of society which are out of proportion, vaster and more terrible, more persistent and difficult of extirpation, than the force which caused the wars of the past. I mean the rise and development of Socialism. (Sensation.) Yes, gentlemen, in the rise and development of Socialism. * * * In Germany, when Socialism started, there were Socialists and anti-Socialists; when Socialism became strong, the antis all became militarists. That is what it must become—what it is—a straight-out contest between force and Socialism.”

The rise and development of Socialism, justly felt by Gen. Swain to be “vast, persistent and difficult of extirpation,” is brought about by the exercise of what civilization justly considers its chiefest achievement; to wit: the peaceful means of the pen and the word, free speech and free press. An agitation conducted with such tools of civilization appeals to the understanding, the intellect, of man. Its fate depends upon the reason back of it. If nonsense prompts it and backs it up, it may create a commotion here and there, but it can never assume the proportions of “vastness,” nor can it ever acquire the virility of “persistence” and of “difficulty of extirpation.” It carries its own poison with it. Reason will soon overcome and end it. When,

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however, the agitation does grow into “vastness,” when the strength it develops renders it “persistent” and difficult of extirpation,” the circumstance is proof positive that reason is its foundation, that truth lies in its folds and that justice inspires it.

Socialists needed not Gen. Swain’s information to know that such is the case with their cause. In the battle of reason and argument that they have been conducting, they have at every turn felt the intellectual imbecility of their foe, and their propaganda has spread a main. Every “argument” hurled against them only served to bring fresh recruits to their camp; the audience whom the capitalist mouthpieces tried to keep away from Socialism weighed the capitalist with the Socialist arguments, rejected the former and accepted the latter as alone entitled to an intelligent and a decent man’s respect.

But Gen. Swain’s words are valuable, for all that. They betray the fact that capitalism feels worsted on the field of reason and that it is about to make ready to resort to the means of the brute and the ignorant,—FORCE.

We welcome with loud acclaim this valuable bit of information. It means nothing less than that capitalism surrenders. He who gives up arguing and takes to the fist is at the end of his tether. With individuals, the individual fist might prevail. Not so with whole nations. That FORCE that is not animated by reason is an egg-shell. When it comes to popular collisions the effective FORCE will always be found wedded with sense, and justice, and right.

Cheered by Gen. Swain’s revelation, and strengthened by the fiat of history, which utters but one language in the premises, the Socialists will continue their peaceful agitation among the people, calling upon them with increased vigor and power of suasion to rally around the Socialist banner at the ballot box for emancipation from the inhuman, the stupid, the anarchic, the brutal power of capitalism. We shall proceed to wield the weapon of peace with which our Revolutionary fathers first voted King George out of the land, and with which the

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Republican party of Lincoln first voted the Copperhead slaveholder out of power; and when the modern combination of old British tyranny and Southern Copperheadism—the capitalist class—shall break the Constitution and overtly resort to FORCE, we shall, with much less ado than did our Revolutionary fathers and the Lincoln Republicans under similar circumstances, meet force with force, and mop the earth with the criminal class that would hold our people in subjection.

Gen. Swain, say the word, give the signal; the long-fooled toilers of America are ready for you and yours!

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