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EDITORIAL

THEY SCENT EACH OTHER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Mr. Robert Fulton Cutting, president of the Citizens' Union, issued last Wednesday a political proclamation. In it occurs this passage:

“France has recently given us a splendid object-lesson of unselfish public spirit exhibited in an extraordinary coalition. When the nation was trembling on the brink of the abyss of military despotism, a republican lawyer, a Royalist general and a leading Socialist united to save the state, and their splendid initiative created a patriotic revival strong enough to accomplish the purpose. When we are ready to follow their example and to add a positive programme to united front, the redemption of the city will be easy. If we would win response, we must discard the trifling expedient of endeavoring to arouse public sentiment by appealing to the tax rate, and base our call to arms upon broad progressive grounds. What the people demand is not retrenchment, but growth; not reform, but progress. Discarding our negative issues, the anti-imperial, anti-silver, anti-trust, yes, even anti-boss, we must adopt a great positive programme, ‘pro bono publico.’”

Who will henceforth deny the existence of a strong elective affinity in social and political movements, as well as among chemical substances?

Millerand, claiming to be a Socialist, accepts a job at the hands of Premier Waldeck-Rousseau, a capitalist: and forthwith proceeds to earn his spurs as just the kind of Socialist fit too, for the distinction of a seat in a capitalist cabinet, by taking his share of responsibility for, thereby approving, the conduct of the cabinet in shooting down workingmen on strike. Mr. Robert Fulton Cutting, a gentleman, whose tenement houses on Cherry street were in such condition that even the Board of Health could not stand them, and had to order them torn down as a menace and nuisance;—these two worthies scent each other across the ocean, and coalesce.

“Pro bono publico” means different things in different mouths. By its fruit a tree is known. So, likewise, is the “publico,” that is meant each time, ascertained by those from whose mouths it drops. With a Millerand, the “public” whose welfare is

sought, can surely not be the workingmen, who, seeking higher wages, are shot down at the command or with the consent of the cabinet. With a Robert Fulton Cutting, the public whose welfare is to be sought can assuredly not be the workers for whom squalid tenements are provided and from whom the rent is extorted for such unsanitary quarters. The “public” with both gentlemen can only mean and be the idle class of capitalism, the brigand class that fleeces the workers.

And that is all it means. We are living in the days of capitalism, and there are just two nations in which capitalism may be properly studied. They are America and France. Other countries may have reached a high capitalist development in industry, but their forms of government still savor of the feudal and thus preserve some principles of self-respect. In America and France alone, the breath of capitalism has invaded the government as well as the shop. Accordingly, in these two nations alone is the phenomenon of the chicanery, practiced by the capitalist in the shop, visible in his political dealings also. The counterpart of the adulteration of goods, practiced by the capitalist in production, is the adulteration of political issues, practiced by the capitalist in government. Thus it happens that capitalism in France and America adulterates its political issues. Instead of bluntly stating what it stands for it conceals itself behind expressions that are in public favor. Thus it happens that an idler and raw-boned fleecer of the workers in America, like Robert Fulton Cutting, falls in line with the modern French capitalist governmental trick. “Socialism” becomes a dear word with him, and “pro bono publico” a first rate ingredient to foist his shoddy political product upon the public.

These are the days that crave wary political walking. Never was it more important than now to look behind phrases and ascertain facts. As a Cutting in America scents across the waters a Millerand in France, recognizes his kin, and adopts his methods, so, likewise, must the working class of America recognize its kin in the well-drilled, class-conscious hosts of the French Socialist Labor Party (Parti Ouvrier Francais), and stand alert as stands this French organization.

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

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