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EDITORIAL

TWO FLIES, NAY THREE, AT ONE SLAP.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MR. Edward M. Shepard, speaking in favor of candidate for Mayor Seth Low during the municipal campaign of 1897, said:

“The Tammany Ticket represents a program of vulgar spoliation.”

Such an utterance, from so brilliant a luminary, on the Democratic quarter section of the political skies, and in favor of such another brilliant luminary as Seth Low, on the Republican quarter section of the political sky, should make good campaign argument for the Socialist Labor Party: it should be an eye and ear opener for all workingmen with eyes to see and ears to hear, and furnished with a thinking tank capable of understanding what they see and hear.

Shepard's statement is not a denunciation of spoliation; it is a denunciation of VULGAR spoliation; it is, accordingly, a commendation of REFINED spoliation. Mr. Shepard is given credit by friend and foe for great felicity of expression. The utterance under consideration justifies the opinion held of him. The utterance is an economic, it is a sociologic and it is a political declaration of principles.

It is an economic and sociologic declaration in that it announces “spoliation” as a principle, firm and immovable, in the social system of capitalism which both the “refined” spoliators of the Shepard and the Low type and the “vulgar” spoliators of the Croker-Devery type uphold. This certainly is elegantly put, and as sound as it is elegant. Certainly, to plunder street-walkers, to lay gambling dens under contribution, to crack open the heads of workingmen on strike for pay, to levy petty blackmail on groceries, saloons and pushcarts,—these and such other spoliation methods of the Croker-Devery combine are just reverse of “refined”: they are positively “vulgar.” On the contrary, to squeeze the wages of working girls down below the starvation point and give them the broad hint as to how they need not starve, to manipulate stocks on the exchanges and plunder the would-be rapidly

rich through gambling speculations, to keep in pay labor lieutenants who will incite strikes when the Trusts wish to lay off the men, to smoke out the corner groceries, saloons and petty traders and cause them to fail as plentifully as flies die in November,—these and such other spoliation methods of the Shepard and Low tweedledee-tweedledumism are just the reverse of “vulgar”: they are unquestionably “refined.”—Correct!

Mr. Shepard’s utterance is also a political declaration. It is a synopsis of the two political parties that are called “The old parties.” It tells better than volumes could the history back and the future in front of them,—so long as they are allowed to exist. It is accordingly a notice broad and clear to the workers that, across the whole political gamut, from basso profundo Devery, Croker, etc., up to the high treble of Shepard and Low, Spoliation is what the workers have to expect: either the refined spoliation of the one, or the vulgar spoliation of the latter.

Mr. Shepard’s utterance should be a slap that crushes two, nay three flies: it should crush Shepard, it should crush the labor lieutenants, of “Organized Scabbism,” it should crush Low. At any rate, if it does not crush them now it will crush them eventually, if not sooner, and if not all in one, then one after the other.

Forward, Fighting S.L.P., fall to all along the line!

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

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