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EDITORIAL

## THE FISH IS LANDED.

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**F**OR some time, the Populist Lincoln, Neb., *Independent* has been “taking falls” out of the attitude of Socialism on money. Its conduct in the matter very much resembled that of a veteran fish that would not take hold too hard of the alluring bait, knowing that there was a hook inside. It nibbled and pulled away. Finally, however, it bit, and bit well, with the result that we now have the fish landed.

In its issue of last June 25, and under the head “Independent School of Political Economy,” the paper publishes over the signature of Charles Q. de France what purports to be an answer and refutation of the Socialist Labor Party pamphlet *Money*. We may leave Mr. Q. de France aside, and deal with Mr. Independent de Nebraska, seeking that the latter makes the answer its own.

First, considerable space is spent in the article with tiresome iterations of the statement that “legal tender” has “nothing whatever to do with exchange.” Seeing that the said pamphlet *Money* spends considerable space, not in STATING but in PROVING that very thing—that the “legal tender” feature of money is one thing, its “medium of exchange” another—all these statements are superfluous.—The landed fish that flops landward and not waterward but utterly wastes its energies: the further it goes in that direction the worse for it.

Second, another chunk of space is taken up with the assertion that “the power of the ‘tender’ exists nowhere in the United States outside of the public offices and the courts,” and with supplemental assertions that “it [legal tender] has to do with paying taxes and cancelling judgments rendered in the courts.” Proof is hereby furnished of a fact, which to mention even in terms the most courteous one can think of sounds offensive, but which nevertheless must be mentioned. That fact is that the “free coinagist” is ignorant of facts, and, consequently, can not choose but

fall into error. When a tenant, a mortgagee, a drawer of a note that becomes due, a purchaser on credit—in short, any one who assumes a money obligation that matures at a future date—lays down before, tenders to his creditor the amount due, the creditor is bound to accept the payment in cancellation of the debt, IF THE MONEY TENDERED IS PRONOUNCED “LEGAL TENDER” by the Government. If, in such a case, the creditor, for whatever reason, refuses to accept, suspects the money, or what not, HE CANNOT SUE, AND IF HE DOES HE LOSES AND HAS TO PAY THE COSTS. The reason is that tender, legal tender, was made to him. All these transactions happen out of court, they do not concern “public offices,” they have nothing to do with “taxes,” there is no “cancelling of judgments” about them. Of course, “legal tender” figures in these latter and governmental transactions also, but for every once that it figures there, it figures fully a hundred times in those others mentioned above, where the transaction is purely private,—and there is no “voluntary adaptation” about it.

Third, but even in these respects, obvious as they are, the complete landing of the fish is not as palpable as in those passages where it is “denied in toto” that labor is the sole producer of wealth. It is in this that the fish is landed. We are not told who it is that produces wealth. Even the landed fish knows enough to be silent on that. It would not do to say that the silver mine barons, who live on the sweat of the brow of their miners, and then have them shot down, either produce or help to produce wealth; it would not do to say that the small farmer, who engages farmhands and not infrequently does not pay them at all, and who pays them so trifling a wage for so short a season that they become tramps the moment they are discharged and then are chased away with dogs, is the producer of wealth; it will not do to say that the several American duchesses abroad, whose silver mine inheritance the Populist Newlands superintends, are the producers of wealth. No! But murder will out. And it is out. All this talk about “legal tender,” “medium of exchange,” “Government fiat,” etc., etc., on the part of a Populist leader is but so much dust raised to give an appearance of science and of opposing existing conditions to nothing but bourgeois “reform.” Free coinagism takes its place, together with the “gold bug,” the “octopus,” etc., on that side of the line that believes in and proposes to continue the system of fleecing the working class—the sole

producer of all wealth.

If the free-coinagists and all other “reform” fishes in the capitalist pool would but start their arguments with the denial that labor produces all wealth, they would be understood so much more easily. But, of course, they don’t like to be understood.

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