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QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY.

As the campaign approaches, and thereby comes more and more fully under the shadow of next year's presidential contest, the feverishness increases among the capitalist politicians, not only, but also among the ranks of the various divisions that have left the camp of the Philistines, and that, although without as yet any clear idea on the law of their motion, follow the promptings of a higher instinct. Notably is this the case with the People's party; strenuous are its endeavors to obtain a foot-hold in the State of New York; and many its well meant manœuvres to draw to its support the industrial element, whom its original agricultural coloring seemed to exclude. The latest step in this direction has been a call issued to the people of this State setting forth its aims, objects, and also methods. The document deserves attention.

As to the ultimate aims of that party, they may be condensed in its own words: The establishment of the "great principles of human freedom, with equal rights to all and special privileges to none"; as to its means and methods towards such admirable ends, they may, in turn, be condensed in the plank that demands loans to the people "at not more than 2 per cent. per annum upon non-perishable products, as indicated in the sub-treasury plan", thereby extending to the industries the privileges originally provided for agriculturalists only.

The question arises. What benefit will the hundreds of thousands of working people in the industrial States derive from this latter plank, and to what extent will it afford them the benefits of "human freedom", and "equal rights," and remove the "special privileges" that to-day bear down upon them? This question implies another, to wit: "To what degree are these industrial classes in possession of the "non-perishable products" upon which to entitle them to the 2 per cent. per annum loans?" To put this second question is to answer the first; and with the answer, down comes the plank of the 2 per cent. loans on unperishable articles, together with all the grandiloquent promises of "human freedom", "equal rights", etc., that are expected from it.

The workingman has no coats to pawn besides the one he carries on his back, the workingwoman no clothing but the scanty supply she uses; no chairs, stoves, shirts, knee-pants, bricks, none of these and the like are owned by them except, if at all, in the paltry measure of their smallest and most pressing needs. The working people are the producers of all these articles, but before these could reach them, enabling them to realize cash thereupon, the capitalist system of production monkeys that wealth away, and leaves the worker empty-handed. To offer 2 per cent. loans to the industrial proletariat on the product of their labor, surely is not meant for, but has all the semblance of grim sarcasm.

It is not the quantity but the quality of the planks offered to Labor that can win its love. Not all the promises of eventual freedom, not all the planks more or less distinctly holding forth the prospect of the collective ownership of social industries, and thereby the wiping out of some of Labor's most conspicuous foes, can win its support. In fact a total absence of all these, but the simple recognition of the truth that private industry leads inevitably to monopoly, monopoly to popular enslavement, and that the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth is the ultimate aim of the movement, as the only solution to the social problem—that would go farther, reach deeper, accomplish more, and draw the proletariat soonest and closest together.

Nevertheless, the efforts of the People's party are cheering, and deserve applause. The men within its rank are groping their way on; an honest endeavor is perceptible, though as yet unguided by the needed quantum in information. The symptoms all point to the probability that the mountain stream, coming down by leaps and starts, through tortuous cracks and crevices, will, as it gathers experience, eventually find its way to the valley, and, mixing its waters with the broad current, flow on steadily, irresistibly, in the channels shaped by economic evolution.

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