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In Desperate Straits

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More than two weeks have passed since the silver-mine baron wing of the capitalist class locked horns, through the Democratic National convention, with the goldbug wing of the capitalist class, intrenched in the Republican party. During this time the two combatants have been frantically assailing each other. Indeed, the conclusion seems at times justified that they are in bitter earnest, each seeking to throw the other, and thus gaining for itself the exclusive right to the whole skin of the working class. Nevertheless, at times, the conflict assumes a queer aspect.

The issue of money, more so than the issue of the tariff, splits up the capitalist camp into warring factions. A reconciliation of their clashing interests is possible with the tariff issue: things can, by a tariff, be so arranged as to give each capitalist bloodhound a chance at the worker's flesh; though by a compromise none may get as big a slice of the worker's carcass as he craves, none need go without a good bit thereof in his fangs. With the money issue it seems different. There no compromise seems possible. There, it seems "whole hog or none," must be each competitor's motto. Hence, it would seem that, for once, we would have the spectacle of a bona fide war between the labor-exploiting or capitalist classes, a war to the knife; that, elections being over, they would not as Carnegie once bluntly admitted they had done heretofore, shake hands and laugh at the way they managed to divide the Labor vote among themselves and keep it from uniting in its own interest; and that the close of the campaign would leave one of the two stretched dead on the arena. Despite all this, it does at times look as though, even on the issue of money, the capitalist political warfare this year is to be as much of a sham battle as ever, and, as ever, is meant to bamboozle the working class. The following circumstances point to this conclusion:

The toiling masses of our people are decidedly restless; the talk about their increasing prosperity has lost much of its deceptive power owing to their increasing hunger, nakedness and dependence; the why of their misery is very generally unknown to them, thanks to the ignorance which the capitalist class has nursed among them; free coinage of silver, an increase of the volume of money, will, it is true, no more

increase the volume of money, which they will get, than the increase in the volume of shoes, clothes, houses, food during the last thirty years has increased in their hands the volume of these desirable things: under the capitalist system of production, the larger the volume of good things the larger will be the share of the idle capitalist and the smaller will be the pittance of the toiling workers, the only increased per capita Labor can expect under capitalism is an increased per capita of wretchedness. The goldbugs know this full well, but they also seem to apprehend that, tutored by experience, the working millions of the land may get it this year into their heads to do what their {the?} wage slaves of Europe are doing—flock to the party of their own class interests, the Socialist Labor party, and boost their combined fleecers out of office. Conscious that its own gold standard, under whose yellow sheen the proletariat of America has sunk to their present low level, cannot fascinate them, and apprehensive that these, its hitherto dumb voting cattle, may kick the traces, it does at times look as if the gold bug capitalist class, through its press and speakers, has made up its mind to choose of two evils the lesser, and SEEK TO STAMPEDE THE WORKINGMEN INTO THE CAMP OF THE SILVER CAPITALISTS: A Socialist victory would mean death to both the silver and the gold crucifiers of labor; a silver capitalist victory would be a calamity to the gold capitalists, but then the spoils would “remain in the family,” so to speak, and the gold bugs may get a better chance later on.

It is only in the light of this theory that one can explain the hysterical efforts of the gold capitalists in certain quarters to paint their silver pals as “revolutionary.” The mood in which the masses of our population now are renders Revolution highly sympathetic to their ears; a population ready for revolution may take the infection of the revolutionary movement of Socialism now going on in Europe, and sure soon to sweep this country. In sight of this, it is not bad strategy on the part of the gold capitalists to utilize the general ignorance of our proletariat touching economic questions and what really is revolutionary; to present a reactionary capitalist movement, such as the free silver movement is, as “revolutionary”; and thus seek to switch the workingman voters from the truly revolutionary camp, and causing them to waste their suffrage-ammunition in behalf of the silver capitalist class.

Whether this be so or not, no intelligent man can deny that the bandit class of capitalism feels in dreadful straits and that it knows the people are giving it the slip. Nor, whatever the issue of this campaign may be, can the signs of the times be interpreted otherwise than that the Social Revolution is at hand—the Revolution that will crush the rule of capitalist inhumanity and felony into a heap of ruins, strike the shackles off the limbs of the wage-working slave, raise science and art from the prostitute slums in which it is kept and build up the Co-operative Commonwealth, where he who works may eat, and he won't shall die.

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

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