

EDITORIAL

McKINLEY'S LETTER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

The easy imprudence, and the transparent knavery of the Republican administration, and the certainty evinced by the Republican party in the stand taken, are focused in McKinley's letter of acceptance. He touches incidentally on many things, and defends them all. The silver question, prosperity, foreign trade, Cuba, and the Philippines all come in for words of congratulation and praise for the party attitude on the subject. There are also many assertions to the



WILLIAM McKINLEY (1843-1901)

effect that the Republican party, through the wisdom and goodness of its followers, has been able to raise the country from a position of dejected suffering to one of calm, affluence, and magnificence.

The policy in the Philippines and in Cuba, was the natural result of the stand taken when the war commenced. That policy did not shape itself as exigencies arose, but it was outlined when the rebellion against Spain commenced, and it was put into operation the instant the first howl went up for armed intervention "in order to put an end to the dastardly career of Spain in the New World."

From the attitude assumed by the President, and from the defence he now gives forth on the subject of the acts of the administration, we can draw several {two?} conclusions. First: we have only commenced operations as a holder of colonies. Second: the colonies, and the trade opportunities we have already acquired are of so much importance that nothing will shake the fixed determination to hold and to extend them.

The silver question and the tariff question do not even interest the Democrats. They have been placed upon the shelf, to be taken down to amuse a few wayward voters now and then, but the central matters are the trusts, and the foreign policy of the United States. Even these are virtually settled, in so far as those most

interested from a capitalist standpoint are concerned. The Democrats who would smash the trust have their brothers of the Republican party engaged in the same wholesale demolition. Those who object to any forcible domination of foreign and uncivilized lands, find that both the great parties hold firmly to that issue.

The working class could afford to ignore the whole message as a piece of weak-minded bombast, and an evidence that there is more dirt in the Republican party than came out at the convention, were it not for the following bit of phrasing:

“For labor, a short day is better than a short dollar; one will lighten the burdens; the other lessens the rewards of toil. The one will promote contentment and independence; the other penury and want. The wages of labor should be adequate to keep the home in comfort, educate the children, and, with thrift and economy, lay something by for the days of infirmity and old age.”

That bit of alliteration will blaze in letters of tinsel on many a campaign banner, and on many a lithograph of the wordless, brainless, tobacco-heartless President. It means nothing, but a message or a letter of acceptance must have some quotable items in it, and the “short-day,” and the “short-dollar” will be remembered by men who are so accustomed to going without, that they frequently forget whether or not they had a breakfast.

The short day has not affected so many that they work few hours. It has, however, affected many so that they do not work at all. The “short-dollar” of Bryanism is one of the myths of American politics, but there is a really short dollar, and many a man has met it in his envelope on Saturday night. It is the short dollar that comes from fines—“unconstitutional” in almost every state in the Union;—for dues to black-mailing trades unions; for campaign squeezings—illegal in every state;—cheating on day and piece work; the numberless little “mistakes made by the bookkeeper,” against which workers dared not protest; and the numberless other little incidents which prove that the American employer is not yet content with the share he is already receiving.

McKinley's solicitude for “labor” will not last over election day. The fact that he has it at all is strange in the light of the legislation that bears his signature, and of the legislation introduced by him when he was a member of the House. His campaign manager is a trust owner. His partners in politics are trust owners. Their money pays his bills, the money that retains him as a servant comes from the trusts. Yet he would restrict the trust! He has simply caught up a cry that misleads

many people as to the true nature of the ills that afflict them. One ill that afflicts the country most grievously is this same McKinley, yet he has nothing but praise for him in the letter.

Where the whole thing is not a transparent tissue of falsehoods and misleading statements, it is a flabby, ill-digested piece of hyperbolic nonsense and conceit. We have never had a more egregious mass of asininity, even from Harrison when the whole country was in the throes of a panic.

The boasted prosperity threw the working class lower than they were before it started. The liberty which is trotted out is liberty to submit. The bright outlook in the Philippines is the outlook for investments, and all the workers invest is labor power at a lower and ever lower wage. The outlook for the capitalist is an increased market. That market can do no good to us, because now with the ability to produce too much, we have not the ability to purchase. Wherein are we benefited because men of whom we know nothing consume what we have not the privilege of consuming?

To Republican convention was an insult to intelligence and honesty. The notification speech and proceedings were a jibe and a jeer at the degradation of the working class. The letter of acceptance clinches the whole round of mis-conduct and crime. There is but one way open to resent it, and that is at the ballot box. There we can bring home to McKinley new issues, new ideas, and a chance to live an honest life, and to retire from politics where he is an abject indication of capitalist indifference and cruelty.

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

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