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EDITORIAL

KICKING EACH OTHER TO PIECES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the course of a certain speech by a certain speaker, delivered against certain other speeches made by certain other speakers in this country of ours, a quotation was made from the report of a certain investigation of the condition of the working people of England. The quotation was this:

“If women and boys who labor in the fields suffer in their health at all, it is not from the work they perform but the want of food. The food they eat is not bad of its kind, but they have not enough of it, and more animal food would be most desirable; but with the present rate of wages it is impossible. Their low diet exposes them to certain kinds of diseases, more particularly to those of the stomach.”

Who can it be that would in this country of ours shoot the bolt of such a quotation—of such a quotation, having such a bone in it as that of justly tracing the poverty and slow starvation of the working class to the smallness of the wages?

It must be some Socialist! It is the Socialist alone that ever dives to the bottom of all economic and political questions—to wages; he alone it is who cares nothing for phrases.

If a protectionist, for instance, tells of the miseries of the working people, say in free trade Holland, and building upon the mountains of his rhetorical wail proceeds to try and rope in the workingmen to vote for protection in America, the Socialist forthwith discounts all the orator's sentimental criticisms, and asks in what way will protection so upset the capitalist laws of wages as to increase them? Wages depend upon the price of labor in the labor market. The laws that finally control the price of beef are the laws that finally control the price of labor. Consequently, so long as labor remains a merchandise its price is bound to decline; labor is a merchandise under capitalism; protectionists uphold capitalism—it follows that,

whatever the miseries of labor may be under free trade, matters will not be improved by protection; wages will and must decline. “Off with you, Sir Protectionist; you are a snare to trap labor with!” is the Socialist’s final conclusion.

If, on some other occasion, it is a free trader or tariff reformer who tells of the miseries of the working people, say in this protectionist country of ours, and building upon the mountains of his rhetorical wail proceeds to try and rope in the workingmen to vote for free trade or tariff reform in America, the Socialist forthwith discounts all the orator’s sentimental criticism and asks in what way will free trade or tariff reform so upset the capitalist laws of wages as to increase them? Wages depend upon the price of labor in the labor market. The laws that finally control the price of beef are the laws that finally control the price of labor. Consequently, so long as labor remains a merchandise its price is bound to decline; labor is a merchandise under capitalism; Democratic free traders or tariff reformers uphold capitalism,—it follows that, whatever the miseries of labor may be under protection, matters will not be improved by free trade or tariff reform; wages will and must decline. “Off with you, Sir Free Trader or Tariff Reformer; you are a snare to trap labor with!” is the Socialist’s final conclusion.

Thus reasons the Socialist, always going back to wages and the laws that regulate that, and reasoning up from that basis. Then it was a Socialist, after all, who made the certain speech quoted from? Bless your heart, no—it was the Hon. Adam M. Byrd, a Democratic free trader in a wrangle with Republican protectionists in Congress.

Whenever free trade and protectionist capitalists lock horns they kick each other to pieces. The bolts that each shoots are bolts shot into capitalism. These innocents do not know it. They will realize the fact some day.

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

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