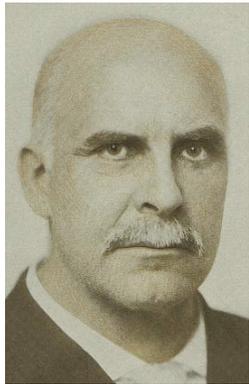


EDITORIAL

WATER AN ALCOHOLIC?

By DANIEL DE LEON

EUGENE W. CHAFIN, presidential candidate of the Prohibition party, announces in the October 24 *New York Independent* that Prohibitionism will “solve the problem of the high cost of living.” Mr. Chafin does not merely make the assertion; he gives his reasons. They are:



EUGENE W. CHAFIN
(1852–1920)

“There are nearly one million men engaged in making, distributing and selling liquor. These, together with their families, make an army of nearly five millions of people who produce no wealth, but are in the class of consumers only.” The inference is that, as a consequence, the supply of food is pressed down while the demand is proportionally raised,—hence, high prices. Mr. Chafin forgets that if these nearly one million men, together with their families, were to be withdrawn from one field of capitalist production and turned into another without first overthrowing the capitalist system itself upon which he himself thrives, the consequence would be to increase the supply of labor in the other industries, to such an extent that the price of labor-power in them, or wages, would go tumbling down, and that Mr. Chafin, capitalist that he is, would be among the first to profit by the fact, and pay lower wages to the wage slaves whom he exploits.—Mr. Chafin forgets that.

Mr. Chafin reasons further that more than one hundred and six millions of bushels of grain are each year consumed in the making of intoxicating liquors. The inference is that if this grain were turned into the bread market, food would be more plentiful, hence, cheaper.—Mr. Chafin forgets that when the supply of food stuffs is large, too large for the interests of his capitalist class, what happens is, not that prices fall, but that large quantities of the stuff are destroyed—wilfully destroyed—coffee is ordered burned in Brazil, peaches are dumped into the Raritan

Bay, etc., etc.—in order to keep up prices. Corn has fared no otherwise.

We charitably impute Mr. Chafin's economic blunders to forgetfulness. If they are not to be charged to forgetfulness then, what conclusion is there to be arrived at other than that water is an alcoholic, a dangerous intoxicant that bereaves the quaffer thereof of ordinary thinking powers, and of the memory necessary to do the thinking?

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