

Socialism and Hatred

By Daniel De Leon

Our esteemed contemporary, the Pleasantville, N.Y., *Compass*, having one day declared that John D. Rockefeller was a gentleman “who knew when he was wrong,” a statement which, seeing Mr. Rockefeller is not an idiot, could only mean that he would not if he could, and could not if he would, persist in the wrong; and the same paper having shortly after thrown broad hints that the influence of the Rockefeller millions was being used to defeat certain desirable legislation at Albany; and the *Daily People* having called the attention of the paper to these slips and to the sociologic error that was father to the slips—the *Compass* expresses on the 10th of this month the opinion that the *Daily People* is animated by personal hatred of Rockefeller.

No doubt our esteemed contemporary is sincere in his opinion. Equally certain the opinion, a mistaken one, flows from our esteemed contemporary’s misconception of socialism.

Hatred for men is a sentiment conspicuously absent from the Socialist, whereas it is bound to be a characteristic of the non-Socialist—from the plutocrat down to the plutocrat’s shadow, the anarchist.

Socialist science protects the Socialist’s breast from nursing personal hatred; absence of socialist science with the non-Socialist leaves his breast exposed to the visitation.

The non-Socialist who, for instance, meets with financial reverses, and finds himself in the coils of a banker, imputes his ruin to the banker personally, and kills him, as has often happened in the land. The Socialist who finds himself similarly situated never will be carried away by hatred. Socialism gives him a full sweep

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of the horizon: before his eyes the workings of economic laws are unfolded: he is aware the banker played no conscious role, was merely a pawn moved by conditions, or social environment.

Whereas the non-Socialist imputes iniquity to personal and inherited depravity, the Socialist knows that heredity itself is transmitted environment, and that there is an immediate environment that shapes the acts of most of us, roughhew them how the transmitted environment may.

The difference of starting point works a wondrous difference in the conduct of the Socialist and the non-Socialist.

The Socialist hates the iniquity, but pities the perpetrator and bends his efforts to remove the conditions that made the iniquity possible—the Socialist, accordingly, attacks the evil at its root. The non-Socialist hates the perpetrator and visits punishment upon him, yet cultivates the social conditions that bred the iniquity—the non-Socialist, accordingly, waters the roots of the iniquity itself.

The Socialist holds capitalist society responsible for Rockefeller, not Rockefeller for capitalist society; the non-Socialist holds Rockefeller guilty, and acquits capitalist society.

The Socialist is firm, relentless, aggressive. But there is no malice or personal hatred in his firmness, relentlessness or aggressiveness—any more than there is malice or personal hatred in the act of the surgeon who plunges his scalpel deep into the abscess that he treats.

Our esteemed contemporary, truly esteemed, wields a strong aggressive pen. Pity the pen wastes its energies upon the iniquity-doers in the country, and by so much leaves the iniquity itself unscathed.

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