

Face to Face (September 1904)

No voter, however ignorant, need be deceived as to what the two great national parties stand for this year. The workingman who votes for Roosevelt or Parker does so knowing that he is voting for capitalist rule and working class slavery; he is satisfied with things as they are and wants no change; he does not take the trouble to think and that is where trouble begins.

Eight years ago and again four years ago the situation differed decidedly from that of today. The Democratic Party, having kicked over its Wall Street traces, was braying lustily as the champion of the "common people." With Bryan as the Moses of the "common people," the trusts would be uprooted, monopoly destroyed, the gold bugs put to flight, and the trusting children led triumphantly into the promised land.

It apparently did not occur to most of those who voted for Bryan that there are two kinds of "common people," viz., capitalists and wage-workers; nor did the workingmen who rallied with the "common people" understand that they were being buncoed and that the triumph of the "common people" could mean wage-slavery for them and nothing more.

Four years ago it was difficult to make the workers understand that there was no fundamental difference between the two old parties. They were taken in by the delusive slogan about "the masses and the classes," and they were sure that with Bryan's election the day of jubilee would dawn and they would cavort in the Elysian fields forever.

Amidst such din and confusion, such ignorance and bliss, the Socialist Party,¹ standing serenely on its scientific principles, was given but scant attention and it had only to await the reaction when the rushing mob should butt its unthinking head against the inevitable wall.

The Democratic Party did not succeed in breaking into office, its paramount issue, as the champion of the "common people," so it bolted back to Wall Street and is again in the tried old traces, with Grover Cleveland at the ribbons and Alton Parker on the box.² The only thing democratic about this moribund aggregation is its name. The harmonizer in its chameleon councils is its chronic appetite for spoils.

The Republican Party has great solicitude for its Democratic dummy. If anything should happen to its sharing partner, what would become of the quadrennial sham battle that divides labor and insures capitalist supremacy?

The Republican leaders and Democratic leaders want to defeat each other only to get the rich picking on the inside, but neither of them wants anything serious to happen to the other. Each of these capitalist parties knows that the other party is necessary to its business. They must be kept evenly matched or the game is off.

Socialism will drive both of them into the same party in the near future and they will then look alike to all workingmen as they do now to socialists who see them as they are.

It would save considerable expense if Roosevelt and Parker would shake the dice for the presidency. Both men are precisely alike in their qualifications to serve the capitalist class and that is all they have been nominated for. Their principles are the same and only an imaginary line and a real appetite divide their parties.

The workingman who supports either Roosevelt or Parker renounces his reason, abdicates his manhood, surrenders his self-respect, and grovels in the dirt at the feet of his chosen master, who will reward his fawning cowardice with kicks of contempt.

In this campaign, the Republican-Democratic Party is avowedly the party of the capitalist class, of the trusts, the gold-grabbers, coupon cutters, brokers, sharks, confidence operators, private yachts, Seeley dinners,³ high life and low morals, decrepit dudes, feathered and bejeweled dunces, international bargain counter marriages, plutocratic revelry, wage-slavery, poverty, misery, prostitution, suicide, bullpens, injunctions, riots, clubbings, deportations, boodle, quackery, mental servility and moral depravity, frenzied finance and putrefied politics, Roosevelt and Davis, Parker and Fairbanks, Cleveland and Bryan, Belmont⁴ and Tillman,⁵ Peabody and Parry.

Standing against this political aggregation is the Socialist Party, the party of the working class, the only party that stands for industrial freedom, political equality, and social justice, and this party, revolutionary to the core, will conquer capitalism and emancipate man.

¹ The Socialist Party of America was not established until the summer of 1901 and thus is a name used anachronistically here. The 1900 campaign was a coalition effort of two independent parties, the Social Democratic Party with headquarters in Chicago and the Social Democratic Party with headquarters in Springfield, Massachusetts.

² Nineteenth century slang for a horse-drawn carriage; one who was “at the ribbons” held the reins, one “on the box” sat beside the driver.

³ The “Seeley dinner” was a legendary stag party held Dec. 20, 1896, at a New York club called Sherry’s for socialite Clinton B. Seeley. According to newspaper feature story published a quarter century later, the Seeley bachelor party “left a permanent name in the annals of New York wickedness.” The cause of shock to polite society was an oriental dancer named “Little Egypt,” who “unclad, save for a few almost superfluous pieces of gauze,” danced the lascivious “hootchy kootchy” for the event’s champagne-swilling guests, prompting a sensational police raid which ended in her arrest. (See: “Shadows of the Famous Seeley Dinner,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 11, 1920, p. 7.)

⁴ Apparently a reference to August Belmont II (1853-1924), a New York financier. His younger brother Oliver Belmont (1858-1908) was a one-term member of Congress.

⁵ Benjamin Tillman (1847-1918) was a racist and reactionary Democratic United States senator from South Carolina.