

The People.

VOL. VI, NO. 35

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1896

PRICE 3 CENTS

FIRST EDITORIAL

Love's Labor Lost

By DANIEL DE LEON

At the late Chamber of Commerce banquet, where “glad merchants,” and others who wished they were glad, met to celebrate the “death of revolution,” Mr. Bourke Cockran also made a speech. Translated into plain English, what this Irish adventurer and lickspittler said was this:

“Gentlemen, let us not rock ourselves in delusions. In laying Bryanism low we have laid low a man of straw. We have done worse. We have aided the Socialists, and thereby promoted Revolution. Don't be startled! That's just what we have done. The flail that thrashes the corn does not destroy the kernel; it simply sets the kernel free by freeing it from the husk. Bryanism was a husk. We have done work for the Socialists by removing the husk. Make no mistake upon that. How shall we undo the mischief we have wrought?

“You have a notion that it is only the ignorant who are at work on the lines of revolution. Would it were so! We have all of us talked that way so long that we have come ourselves to believe what we said. The time has come when we should free ourselves from the deception which we try to mislead others with, and which it is well that we set afloat for public consumption. Only don't let us partake of our own viands ourselves. 'Tis not the ignorant whom we have to fear. The ignorant are our own lambkins; they are chicks after our own hearts. We can stuff them with our own chestnuts. We can prate to them about the good times coming, and they will believe us. We can start the songs of praises for Capitalism and they will join the chorus. We can tell them their wages are higher and the lunkheads won't know better. We can assert the sacredness of the right of the capitalist class to enjoy the wealth produced by labor and they will applaud, either of their own accord, or will join the applause of the heelers we distribute among them. They are all right. Never stand in fear of Ignorance. What we have to fear is Knowledge. The Socialists are not ignorant. Just the reverse, they are highly intelligent. They can see through us as we can see through the body of the strikers whom our Pinkertons set daylight through. They have a

perverse way about them of insisting that the men who enact the laws, those who sign them and those who interpret them shall not proceed upon the principle, which we hold dear, and which the National Honor requires, to wit, that to us idlers belong the fruits of the labor of the toilers. They know and prove it conclusively that the privately owned machine and the concentration of capital render future good times impossible for the workers; they know and prove that the working class is getting an ever smaller share of the wealth it produces; they pooh-pooh at our sacred right to live upon the workers, and boldly demand that we be abolished, thrown overboard as we threw King George overboard. Think of it! These pestiferous Socialists know too much by half; 'tis much they dare; and, to that dauntless temper of the mind they have a wisdom that doth guide their valor to act in safety. They are making inroads upon us from all sides. What we must plan is a plan to counteract their propaganda. The duller and more ignorant a man, the less chance has the Socialist to convert him. Let us increase Ignorance. That's our bulwark. We have too many schoolhouses by far. Every child there educated is raw material for Socialists to work upon. Let us make the chances of education smaller than they now are, and let us diminish the evil that our schoolhouses would do, by having the teachers fill the heads of their pupils with the falsest notions upon history, economics and politics. Let's take advice from Russia; let's imitate the Russian Empire by getting up special school books on history in which facts are dealt with to suit us. Only then can the National Honor be preserved."

The papers don't report the private conversations held by the "glad merchants" after the banquet and this speech. But we shrewdly suspect that they were all supplied with the Socialist vote, that they shook their heads, and that they thought it best to see the Presidents of our "Universities," and the Board misnamed "Of Education." We also shrewdly suspect that this will be another case of love's labor being lost.

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

Uploaded August 2003