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SECOND EDITORIAL

GOOD-BYE, NEW PARTY, GOOD-BYE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Last week, the Populist régime of Kansas went out, and Republican rule resumed sway in all the three departments of the Government. With its passing away in Kansas it has virtually passed away everything else. The Populist eclipse is not only total, it is permanent.

This is the season to pass that interesting movement in review. But the work should not be lightly undertaken, nor should the reviewer be limited to an article's space. A good-sized book would be needed to do justice to the subject. A few notes will, however, be here in place.

The cradle song or lullaby of Populism ran to the refrain: "Good-bye, old party; good-bye." The Republican, or Old Party, having sustained some defeats at the hands of Populism, the latter considered itself a permanent victor, and the Republican party permanently overthrown. It has turned out otherwise. And logically so.

In its march onward, Civilization may receive repulses, it may be driven back from points it has reached; but these repulses can only be temporary: a lower grade of Civilization can not in the long run prevail over a higher one. That, and nothing else, was the issue in the conflict between Populism and Republicanism. With all its vices that render it rotten-ripe for overthrow, Republicanism is the highest political expression of the social system founded on the private ownership of the machinery of production. In reaching this highest point in its development, the social system of private ownership in the machinery of production develops within its womb the germs of that higher order where competition for existence, the animal-like struggle for life, can be done away with; where humanity, emancipated from the trammels of individualism, is at last capable, through co-operation, to develop the capabilities of its species. The capitalist system, in its highest expression, is the present conservative form of Social Development, a form whose continuance Civilization peremptorily demands, as the only means to preserve the conquests of the race, until, fully educated to its higher mission, the race itself shall be capable to lay aside that form as a

scaffolding no longer needed from which to climb up to that higher structure—the Socialist Republic. The Republican party is the political upholder of the transitory, though needed, social system of capitalism.

Up against it Populism reared its head. But the programme of Populism was not the programme of the Social Order next in line of progress. It fought the Republican party, not as the political exponent of the social system that had survived its usefulness, but as the political exponent of a social system that had degenerated; it sought, not the overthrow of the capitalist scaffolding so as to reach a high order, it sought its overthrow so as to bring things back to “American” conditions, to the times of the “Daddies,”—in short, it sought to drive Civilization back, make it forfeit all its conquests. Such a movement may have impetus enough to disturb the social equilibrium for a while; permanently it can accomplish nothing; sooner or later, and sooner than later, its forces are spent and things as they were regain predominance.

But, in taking the parallax of Populism, it should be contrasted, not with the political expression of the present Social Order only, it should be contrasted also with the political expression of the on-coming next higher Social Order,—the Socialist Labor party. Populism claimed for itself all the glories of all human aspirations, accordingly it numerously proclaimed its SocialistIC, if not its Socialist, spirit. Its attitude in this respect is pregnant with instruction. As a movement of retrogression, it was necessarily a movement of deception. “SocialistIC” utterances, official and otherwise, were resorted to recklessly, but always under cover; the S.L.P. was to be captured by blandishments; and the baits that were used were baits to captivate the “reformers.” In pursuit of this policy, Populism in Kansas adopted the Referendum and Initiative plank. “What more democratic do you want?” it asked in sight of the “stiff-necked” attitude of the S.L.P. Yet one of the last acts of the Kansas Populist Legislature that just expired was to DEFEAT A BILL FOR THE REFERENDUM AND INITIATIVE! As bait, the plank did first rate; but as a dying confession the truth was coughed up.

Good-bye, Populism, good-bye, thou wert an exhalation of the dead past. The present struggle of Civilization is not between WHAT IS and WHAT WAS; it is between WHAT IS and WHAT WILL BE.

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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