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EDITORIAL

SUICIDAL BRYANISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Speaking last week in Salem, Ill., the town of his birth, Mr. Bryan declared that the Republican party was intimidating the workingman, and that, if he is beaten, it will be due to such intimidation.

The work of intimidating costs money and efforts. It is hardly likely that the Republican party will spend either money or effort to do what is being done now free, gratis and for nothing in its behalf by Mr. Bryan himself.

Individual workingmen may be intimidated by individual fists; that sort of intimidation does not go far. Neither does Mr. Bryan mean that. The intimidation that he has in mind, and that alone can extend far enough to affect results, is the frightening of workingmen with the loss of work. But why should the Republicans put forth any particular effort in that direction when Mr. Bryan, in his eloquent and widely read speeches, is doing the work for them.

An argument, that, like a black woof, runs through the whole warp of Mr. Bryan's speeches, is that the welfare of the workingman depends upon that of his employer: Does the condition of the employer improve? Then his workingmen are better off. Does his condition decline? Then his workingmen pine along with him.

It is unnecessary here to point out at any length the heels-over-head posture of this reasoning. Every man, approximately well informed on economics, knows that the earnings of Labor depend upon something very different from the degree of affluence enjoyed by the Capitalists: the crop of American princesses, of Bradley Martin balls, etc., grows, as everyone knows, to the orchestration, not of happiness, but of woe among the workers. Nevertheless, that is a basic line of argument with Bryanism: it seeks thereby to attract the Labor vote to the side of the sinking middle class with the allurements that the prosperity of this class would mean the prosperity of its employes. By aid of this argument Bryanism nails its own coffin: it drives shoals of workingmen into the McKinley net, for everyone that it catches with the Bryan hook.

The mass of workingmen whom Mr. Bryan's speeches reach consists of two elements:

The intelligent element is the Socialist workingmen. With this element his argument can excite only derision. This element is class-consciously trained. It knows what all this turmoil means. It knows that the end can come only with the complete ruin of the employing class and its dethronement from power. All talk about "improving the condition of the employer" is, of course, spurned by the workingman whom the gospel of Socialism has reached. That element cares not to be food for capitalist cannon.

The other element consists of workingmen not yet redeemed from the clutches of capitalist thought. These are yet blind to the class struggle. They do not see the conflicting class interests between them and their exploiter. To them the two interests are one. They do hold that the better off the vampire on their backs, all the better off are they. To this element, the Bryan argument appeals with force. It makes that element apprehensive for their own existence. But, the moment the argument strikes them they split in two. Obedient to the appeal in behalf of their employers, those who are employed by the middle class capitalists cleave to this set;—and consistently enough, those who are employed by the big capitalists rush over to their own skinners. Now then, to every worker employed by a middle class man or Bryan shouter, there are 100 employed by the big or McKinley capitalists. Thus Bryanistic speeches produce McKinley majorities of 99.

The strongest intimidation of workingmen in behalf of McKinley is the Democratic candidate for president, Wm. J. Bryan.

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