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EDITORIAL

SHOEMAKER, STICK TO YOUR LAST!

By DANIEL DE LEON

AND now comes the Albany, N.Y., *Evening Journal*—an organ of the Republican wing of the “Rifle-diet to the Workingman” capitalist political machine—, and informs a startled world that “without capital labor’s opportunity and ability to create wealth would be small indeed.”

Does the *Evening Journal* mean by “capital” actually capital, that is to say, the machinery and plants requisite to Labor in the production of wealth? If it does, it speaks truly. Man is a tool-using animal. The tool adds inches to his stature over nature. Without the tool, man is a savage. In the measure that the tool develops, man’s productivity increases, and he thereby rises above the savage stage. When the tool reaches the point of the modern machinery and plants—CAPITAL—man is ready for civilization, just because capital tremendously improves man’s ability to produce wealth. That’s all admitted. Indeed, it is the Socialist who teaches and insists upon the fact. Upon this the *Evening Journal* and the Socialist are agreed. Yet the two disagree absolutely. They disagree in the conclusion to be drawn from the fact. The Socialist concludes that the wealth produced by Labor with the aid of such ability-to-create-wealth-promoting capital belongs, down to the last farthing, to Labor, and Labor alone. Not, so, holds the *Evening Journal*. Then whom should that wealth belong to? To the thing CAPITAL? Shall that THING be decked with the magnificent product that it enables Labor to bring forth? Shall that product be heaped at the feet of that THING and left there to rot, perchance, be burned as incense in the nostrils of the THING? Any such proposition evidently savors of heathenism. The mere idea is a turning of capital into a fetish. Seeing that the logical end of the avenue that leads along that track convicts the *Evening Journal*-ites of rank fetishism, the gentlemen turn sharp around and strike into a different tack.

The second tack gives up the posture that, by “Capital,” actually capital is meant. By “capital,” the gentlemen, routed on the first tack, inform us that they mean, not the machinery and plants, but the holders thereof. By “capital” they mean “the capitalists.” Rubbing the sore spot on the cheek that was smitten, when they tried the first tack, these gentlemen lean back with much gratification imagining themselves safe on the second tack. The amended form of their declaration then becomes: “Without the capitalist labor’s opportunity and ability to create wealth would be small indeed.” If on the first tack it was an easy matter to smite the cheek exposed, on this tack it is infinitely easier to box the other cheek, and throw its owner, heels over head into the ditch.

Every day some capitalist departs this world, so do many workingmen. Yet what is seen? The departure of the capitalist causes the stoppage of not one wheel, for the good and sufficient reason that the departed capitalist did no work. On the other hand, if the place of the departed workingman is not immediately taken, production stops to that extent. Evidently, if all the capitalist class were to betake itself to heaven, production would go on uninterrupted, by whom? Why, by the Working Class! In other words, if the ability on the part of the Working Class to produce wealth depends, as the *Evening Journal* would declare, upon the willingness of an idle class, a class that society can well dispense with, what conclusion is there to be drawn but this:—THE SOONER THAT CLASS IS WIPED OUT THE BETTER FOR SOCIETY?

The *Evening Journal’s* forte evidently is not political economy. It there gives itself dead away. Its forte is to pull political wires and echo the praises of the Hon. Thomas C. Platt.

Shoemaker, stick to your last!

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