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EDITORIAL

STAND FIRM.

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LET us speak frankly to the farmers.

As a body of workers, robbed by plutocratic idlers of a large portion of the value of their labor, their grievances are substantially the same as those of other toilers, regardless of occupation.

Now, taking labor as a whole and considering its exploitation by the owners of capital as a class, it would seem *a priori* the interests and consequently the aims, of all toilers must be identical; and it would be if the economic conditions, through which interests and aims are necessarily influenced, were the same in all employments; and so it will unquestionably be, sooner or later, for those economic conditions are fast tending to be uniform in all branches of labor.

For the present, however, there is a marked difference in the economic conditions of farmers and wage workers.

Through the development of machinery, the workers in manufacturing, mining, mechanical and transportation employments have been utterly expropriated. They no longer possess so much even as the tools of their respective trades and can never expect to recover these now vastly improved tools as private owners, their only possible aim being to gain collective possession by vesting the ownership in the community at large.

But the transformation wrought out by machinery in the economic conditions of the farming population is by no means so complete as in manufacture, mining and transportation, although it has, of late years, progressed at a very rapid and steadily increasing rate. A considerable number of formerly independent farmers have been expropriated and reduced to the con{dition of mere} tenants and wage {workers.} These are helpless, and owing to the lack of organization few of them, if any, have yet

perceived that their only possible aim must be—as in the case of other wage workers—the “socialization” of the instruments of production, including the land. But a far more considerable number have still a private, individual title and interest in their chief tool—the land—which they hold under mortgage, subject to the ever increasing exactions, not only of the money lender, but of the transportation, mercantile and manufacturing monopolies.

It is among these people that there is a definite movement. Their aim is merely to check the progress of expropriation in their own industry of agriculture, and they can achieve it by various legislative measures for their own special benefit; such, for instance, as free silver coinage and unlimited issues of greenbacks through which the dollar may be depreciated in value and the amount of their debts correspondingly reduced; sub-treasuries, through which the public credit may be used by them in obtaining loans upon their crops and their land and higher prices for both; low rates of transportation by national control, or, if “unavoidable,” by national ownership of the railways, etc. They do not see that if they could obtain all this, and thereby for a time improve their condition, yet, not only the progress of machinery in agriculture, but the competitive struggle among them, that would receive a tremendous impetus from the legislative advantages which they would thus have conferred upon themselves, would soon again, and more vigorously than ever, hasten the process of expropriation.

It is an historical fact that no great mass of deluded people can be educated out of such false notions as their immediate interests may lead them to entertain, but by their absolute failure in the practical application of their tenets. In view of the large number of farmers whose conditions are such as we have just stated; in view of the form which under these circumstances their movement has necessarily assumed; in view, furthermore, of the great influence which they naturally exert on their immediate surroundings and even to a considerable though less extent upon other people, we must here express the opinion that {this} movement cannot, as the interested organs of the plutocracy predict, vanish next year, but will on the contrary grow in strength and become an important factor in the politics of this country.

In its present form, however—which is not likely to undergo any radical modification until the dispossessed, the agricultural wage workers and tenants, know

enough to assert themselves and push to the front views and ideas more in harmony with the interests and aspirations of the whole proletariat—its greatest strength must {lie} in the Western group of States. But, {as} we observed last week, it cannot fail to induce a corresponding activity among the wage workers of the East and all the great cities of the United States. And it is here—in those cities and States where the capitalist system has almost fully accomplished its work of expropriation—that the true issues, the issues which are at the foundation of the great international movement, must be firmly upheld by the Socialist Labor party. Upon the activity, firmness and statesmanship of the Socialists depends not only the preservation of the labor movement on its true lines in the immediate future, but the enlightenment of the agricultural proletariat, through which these lines may at last be advanced in a direction where resistance has heretofore proved insuperable.

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