

The People.

VOL. I, NO. 24.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1891.

PRICE 3 CENTS.

EDITORIAL

CASTING ANCHORS TO WINDWARD.

By DANIEL DE LEON

BOSS Platt's, otherwise called the Republican, convention of New York met at Rochester to nominate a State ticket. The slate was put through smoothly. J. Sloat Fassett, noted for the glibness of his tongue and his bitter opposition to all laws that promised to accrue to the benefit of labor, was placed at the head of the ticket as candidate for Governor; the other places were filled in the usual machine and perfunctory ways; pieces, gotten up to order, were spoken with more or less oratorical display; and last, not least, a platform was tinkered together in good capitalist style, cleverly framed to conceal what it really means and insinuate what it does not mean.

Capitalism to-day rides the wave. All it feels incumbent upon itself to do in order to preserve its position is to cast anchors to windward, like James G. Blaine from the Speaker's chair, that the ship may be steadied. These anchors to windward have become the real platforms of the two ruling parties; above all they denote the extent to which the capitalist measures the ignorance of the people by his own.

Accordingly not a few are the anchors which the Rochester Republican Convention has thrown out in the direction it deems necessary.

First of these should be noted its labor plank. Next to the foreign, the labor vote is that to which the capitalist politician turns at election time with a love like that of him who discovered his long-lost brother by the strawberry mark on his shoulder-blade.

Between campaign and campaign, labor is not only disregarded, but positively maltreated; governors, legislators, sheriffs, the whole crew of the silent partners of the exploiting employers, turns upon him, skins him, clubs him, shoots him down, and what is left of him is chewed up by "His Honor," who caps the climax of wrong by giving his judicial sanction to these breaches of the Constitution and sentences the hapless

workingman to the penitentiary, the gallows or the chair of the electrocutionist. During the campaign this changes considerably. Labor suddenly becomes noble; those who before sneered at the title of “Knights of Labor” now lavish encomiums upon the knights of toil, and cannot belabor them with too many praises or titles. Suddenly, labor, until then the football of the capitalist, becomes the pillar, the sinews, the grandeur of the nation in the speeches of the politicians. His vote is to be wheedled out of him, hence anchor to windward No. 1.

Next to and just above labor, *i.e.*, the class of the proletariat that is aware of its proletarianism, there is an extensive class that stands on the ragged edge: the middle class of small employers, shop-keepers, etc. The life of this class is not one of joy. Its nose is held to the grindstone in a trying way, and what is worse, its nose is held there mainly by itself. Its days are numbered. It is rapidly being mowed down and thrown into the class of the proletarians, nevertheless it is struggling tooth and nail not to sink and to become a big capitalist. Its tribulations come, as far as it can see{,} from the class above. That class is concentrating its capital and by its trusts squeezing the middle class out. To this middle class the trust is an ogre. They want its abolition; and that is promised to them by the political platforms. Full well knows the politician that he cannot abolish the trust if he would, and would not if he could. In the first place he represents, not the middle but, the ruling class, *i.e.*, the stockholders of trusts and monopolies, it is the bidding of these he will obey and the trust is their stronghold; in the second place, the politician knows full well that the trust cannot be abolished, that all attempts in that direction have failed; that concentration of capital is a necessity. Nevertheless, the vote of the middle class is to be wheedled out of it, hence an anti-trust plank—anchor to windward No. 2.

There is a third staple class for whose support the politician knows by experience that it is wise to fish. That is the class of the wind-bags, the people who can be stuffed with big phrases, and puffed up with words. Hence a Republican or Democratic party platform will always contain numerous clauses on liberty, and jingoism, and that is anchor to windward No. 3.

These are the staple anchors to windward. Occasionally there are some anchors that may be called “topical”, they are intended for exceptional cases. The present Republican

platform has one, and no doubt the Democratic will have it also. The Jews are just now an object of general interest. Their persecutions in Russia are calling general attention. There is quite an exodus of them. Sympathetic words for them are cheap. A clause giving them sweet words may catch their votes, and hence anchor to windward No. 4 in the Republican platform.

These four anchors form the outside tackle of the ticket just launched at Rochester, and such will be that of the ticket which the Democratic companion ship also will exhibit. No more striking evidence can be furnished of the contempt of our rulers for the intellect of the people. But that tackle will not stand forever. Already it looks over-taut. It will snap when least expected.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded February 2002