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FIRST EDITORIAL

Too Old To Be Cheated

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Our friend, the Independence, Kan., *Star and Kansan* laments our attitude towards Senator Tillman with a series of arguments that merit attention. It is of the opinion that although, as we charged, he “struck down manhood suffrage in his own State,” yet is he entitled to the support of the modern revolutionist in America, because he is “dealing blows to the oppressors,” is “setting their knees to trembling,” and, therefore, is aiming at justice; and that, “as day advances he will gain more light.”

If there be any one thing upon which the American revolutionist of to-day should keep a vigilant eye more than upon any other, it is upon that class of political errors which proceed here in this country, from its youngness, errors that our comrades the revolutionist of older countries, with fuller experience, are safe from, whence their steadier course.

Is it enough that a man or a class should “set the knees of the oppressors to trembling” in order to justify the belief that “justice is his aim;” that he “will have more light as the day advances,” and that, therefore, he is entitled to the support of the working class? Let us open the book of history and consult its tell-tale pages, and we ask our Kansan friend to look into it with us.

If ever “the knees of the oppressors shook” it was when the French revolutionists struck at Louis XVI and his court: the clatter of the knees of these could be heard throughout Europe; the blows dealt by the former resounded the world round. And yet what do we see:

“During the very first storms of the revolution, when the revolution was most enthusiastic, most full of ‘Liberty, Fraternity, Equality,’ the French bourgeoisie dared to take away from the workers the right of organizing. By a decree of June 14, 1791, they declared all unions of workers ‘an attempt against liberty and the declaration of the rights of man,’

punishable by a fine of 500 livres, together with the forfeiture of the rights of citizenship for one year.”

Was “justice” the aim of those blows-to-oppressors-dealing revolutionists? Or do we, perchance, find that, “as day advanced,” those “yet unripe” revolutionists “gained more light”? Have we not rather seen them day by day recede, after they had reached masterhood, from their abstract phrases of freedom and simultaneously develop into more and more cruel exploiters of the class, which, even as early as 1791, they already sought to render helpless? Have we not seen them commit the butcheries of Fourmies, the massacres of 1871, and are they not now the most inveterate oppressors of the French workings class? The facts are indisputable.

Tutored by the experience of France—and of many other countries—the European revolutionist refuses to be deceived by words, he insists upon looking at the acts of all would-be Saviors, and he turns upon these as fiercely, as, nay, more fiercely than he does upon the outspoken oppressor, if their conduct belies their protestations. For why should we act otherwise?

Tillman is, essentially, of that bourgeois class that, in 1791, smote the oppressor with the aid of the proletariat and then, once in the saddle, itself became the oppressor. It was the not yet ripened and yet rapidly ripening capitalist class of France that played that ignoble role in history. Tillman’s bourgeois class differs from that of France in 1791 in this only that the latter had its future before it, while Tillman’s has its future after it. The one and the other only sought and seeks to free ITSELF; the one and the other proved and proves this by its conduct—the French by depriving the workers of the right of association, Tillman’s by depriving them of the right to vote; and both flung and fling empty phrases of love to the workers for the sole purpose of enlisting the aid of the working class into the political service of the small and would-be big capitalist shark class. Bourgeois history is but repeating itself. Tillmanism is but embryonic would-be-large-capital tyranny.

In France, a century ago, the workers were trepanned; to-day, in America, a hundred years later, the workers SHALL NOT be trepanned, if the organized Socialists of the land know it. In France, a century ago, the workers bled and died for a new sort of despots—the CAPITALIST CLASS; to-day, in America, a hundred years later, we are ready again to bleed and die, if needs be, but our lives and all that is ours we shall lay, not on the altars of Mumbo Jumbo, we shall lay it all on the altars of FREEDOM FROM ALL EXPLOITATION.

Socialism stands equipped with all the knowledge of the age, and its mind tutored by the history of all ages.

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

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