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EDITORIAL

A STRIDE BY TAMMANY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Democratic city convention that met here on the 3d instant made a rather important declaration, to wit:

“In respect to capital, on the one hand, and labor, on the other, the attitude of the Democratic party is to-day, as it always has been, friendly in the largest sense to BOTH.”

This is a decided stride. There may be a doubt upon whether to call it a stride forward, or a stride backward, or some other kind of stride; a stride it surely is.

The relation of Capital (meaning the capitalist class) to Labor (meaning the working class) has been one that more than any other has taxed the ingenuity of the capitalist “intellectual.” The two have been made out to be “brothers,” sometimes separated, sometimes connected by a ligament; other times they have been made out supplemental caryatids, bearing on their heads or robust shoulders the entablature of Society; then again they have been argued to be boon companions, mutually supporting each other; and so forth, and so on. But now comes Tammany, and with an originality for which it deserves admiration, it turns its back upon all these previous theories on the relation of Capital and Labor as so much trash (which they surely are) and launches a new theory. According to this theory Capital is Labor, and Labor is Capital, one and indivisible, with this qualification that whatever favor is bestowed on Capital Labor enjoys vicariously, and whatever affliction is bestowed on Labor Capital is understood to appreciate.

The Democratic party, for instance, sent that mighty man of valor, Gen. Miles, to break the backbone of the Pullman strike. Was this a sign that, in respect to Capital, on the one hand, and Labor, on the other, the Democratic party was in this instance friendly to only one, being brutal to the other? By no means. Labor and Capital being one and indivisible, the favor done to one (Capital) can not fail to be enjoyed by the other (Labor), even though its backbone be broken. The act is,

consequently, an act “friendly in the largest sense to BOTH.”

The Democratic party, on an other occasion, passed in this State a law to promote Trusts, and it did so under guise of prohibiting Trusts, the manoeuvre being intended to deceive Labor. Was this, perchance, a sign that, in respect to Capital, on the one hand, and Labor, on the other, the Democratic party was here friendly to Capital only, and stepmotherly to Labor? By no manner of means. The proposition is clear. Capital and Labor being the same thing, the service rendered to Capital, by enabling it to grind the workers, must inevitably redound to the benefit of Labor. That it is thereby ground down does not materially alter the case. That act also, accordingly, was an act “friendly in the largest sense to BOTH.”

In the same way, when Tammany builds magnificent speedways for capitalists to enjoy driving on, appropriates large sums of moneys for Armories for capitalists to practice “riot drills” in, carefully cleans the streets where capitalists dwell, etc., etc., let no one point to such acts as acts of partiality for Capital, nor let anyone be unreasoning enough to contrast such acts with the parallel ones that would seem to indicate Tammany does not care for the workers. Not at all! Capital and Labor are one; this is the point to start from. This being thus, how could any of the above named services rendered to the capitalist fail of its beneficent effect upon Labor? Though the toe be not wined, does it not profit from the champagne poured into the stomach? Does it not partake of the general hilarity imparted to the whole body via the stomach? Why, of course! Wonder only that this was never thought of before and was left for the much maligned “Tammany mug” to hit upon! Evidently Tammany’s every act proves conclusively that “in respect to Capital, on the one hand, and Labor, on the other, it is friendly in the largest sense to BOTH,”—which again means that Capital is the only thing worth considering, Labor being only a subordinate matter.

Hail to thee, O Tammany; mayest thou frequently stride!

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