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EDITORIAL

AND THEN—?

By DANIEL DE LEON

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found in full the declaration just issued by Thomas E. Watson as his first step towards the reorganization of a new party that shall “overthrow plutocracy”.¹ The first article in Mr. Watson’s credo is the following:

“I believe to-day that if all those who believe in the Jeffersonian theory of Government could be united in harmonious political action, we could sweep the country.”

Sure! And then—?

The Anarchist has Jefferson for his patron Saint. Many a saying of Jefferson on the theory of Government is quoted by the Anarchist as his ideal. The “Jeffersonian theory of Government” would suit the Anarchists.

The Single Taxer ever has Jefferson on his lips. There are passages from Jefferson that the devout Single Taxer will quote even in preference to Henry George.

The Greenbacker never thinks of starting an article, let alone an essay, least of all a book, without a full-mouthed resonant quotation from Jefferson.

The Bryanite can simply not walk except on Jeffersonian crutches. He uses the crutches both to keep him from tumbling down, and to brain his adversaries.

Senator Newlands of Nevada, the silver mine owner and American representative of silver mine owning American heiresses married to European noblemen, is a passionate Jeffersonian.

The Ingersollians, or “Truth-Seekers Brigade” of anti-God luminaries may be as rough as they please on other deities, on Jefferson they are as tender as the

¹ [See “Watson’s Plan,” page 3, below.]

bridegroom on his charmer.

We need go no further. For the sake of simplification we may leave out the Socialists, who are ever ready to do the great Jefferson justice. But they may be left out of the present reckoning. The case is clear enough with the others. All of these, together with the “Municipal Ownershipists a la Glasgow” and the “Public Bathists” a la any old freak are Jeffersonians; they all believe in the “Jeffersonian theory of Government” (as each of them understands the thing); and unquestionably their numbers are such that they could “sweep the country”. And then—?

They would kick each other to pieces.

The Anarchist’s Jeffersonianism consists in no government whatever. He would immediately grab by the hair the Single Taxer who insists there shall be a government just strong enough to levy a single tax and prove George true; the Single Taxer will grab by the hair the Greenbacker who insists government shall be equipped exclusively with a printing press to turn out crisp greenbacks; the Greenbacker will grab by the hair the Ingersollian who holds happiness would reign on earth if only priests and parsons were done away with; the Ingersollian will grab by the hair with one hand the Bryanite and with the other Newlandser whose Jeffersonianism lies in going back to the days of the daddies: if there is one thing the Ingersollian detests it is the recollection of the “daddies.” That smells of sulphur and brimstone to him. And so forth, and so on. Killkeney and Dooybrook would grow green with envy after Mr. Watson will have “swept the country” on a phrase.

“Sweeping the country” is certainly needed. Heaven knows the country needs the broom badly. But what next? Unity of purpose and of policy are the bands needed to hold together the thousand wisps of the harmonious broom. Without such bands the broom will never sweep, or will scatter just when most needed. Nor can the unity of purpose and policy ever be encompassed except upon the sound basis furnished by economic development.

Until that day come, the day of such unity, the day when, whatever pet patron Saint individuals may have, the slogan, born of experience and matured in popular trials, will be “The Unconditional Surrender of the Capitalist Class!” “The Socialist Republic!”—until that day comes all thoughts of “clean sweeps” will be purely chimerical. They will be chimerical as a means, they will be chimerical as an end.

The sweeping clean and then enjoying the fruits of victory is the boon preserved for Socialism alone.



WATSON'S PLAN.

I have found everywhere that the current was strong and deep in favor of Jeffersonian Democracy. I believe today that if all those who believe in that theory of Government could be united in harmonious political action, we could sweep the country.

Roosevelt's overwhelming majority was not so much due to the fact that our people believe in class legislation and the reign of special privilege. It was not by any means an indorsement or corporation tyranny or the greed of the trusts. Roosevelt's majority over Parker was due mainly to two things, one was the immense personal popularity of Mr. Roosevelt himself, and the other was the immense unpopularity of Mr. Cleveland's second Administration.

It was only when the old Cleveland combination compassed the defeat of Bryan and Hearst and dictated the nomination of Mr. Parker that the masses got the opportunity to vent upon a national candidate the intense hatred which they had been nursing for years against such men as Olney and Belmont and Carlisle and Cleveland himself.

My own plans for the future embrace a complete organization of the people along the lines of Jeffersonian Democracy, the re-establishment of reform papers, and a systematic propaganda of Jeffersonian principles, in order that in 1908 there shall be a party of genuine opposition to the Republican party and its present policies.

Mr. Bryan, while great Democrat, is not the Democratic party. There are other distinguished Democrats who are yet to be heard from, and they may not indorse his Populist platform.

For the next four years the Democratic creed must remain what the St. Louis convention of 1904 made it, and the machinery of the party must remain in the hands of the men who now hold it. The air still rings with the eloquence with which Mr. Bryan indorsed the candidate of the St. Louis convention, spoke of him as the Moses of Democracy, spoke of Parker's ideals as his own ideals, and proclaimed the "sincerity" with which he was advocating both the platform and the nominee of 1904. Mr. Bryan himself will remain for four years as much bound by the action of the St. Louis convention as he was when he made his whirlwind trip through Indiana.

In short, the Democratic party presents this hopeless situation: The Bryanites cannot drive out the plutocratic element, the plutocratic element cannot drive out Mr. Bryan. They exhaust their strength with internal struggles, leaving the party where its enemies can always defeat it at the polls. There is this further weakness in the program of Mr. Bryan: The plutocratic element has shown that it can safely defy him and combat him although he is the nominee, whereas he submits to them when they put up a plutocratic nominee. From a party so hopelessly divided it is the rankest

folly, in my judgment, to expect any reforms.

I would be only too glad to co-operate on parallel lines and honorable terms with any Jeffersonian Democrat like Mr. Bryan or Mr. Hearst or George Fred Williams to accomplish a purpose which is common to us all, but I believe that the best way to assure the final success of the reform movement is for us to build up a party of Jeffersonian Democracy on solid foundations where unity of purpose, and where, therefore, some hope of accomplishing that which we wish to accomplish can be reasonably entertained.

In the South there are peculiar reasons why the present policy of the Democratic leaders should be defeated and a better line of policy adopted. For the last twenty-five or thirty years the Democratic machine politicians have made that great section a mere tool in

the hands of Wall street and a handful of Eastern Democrats, who have no purpose in common with us and who use the electoral vote of the solid South for their own selfish purposes. In this manner our Southern country, which is an empire in itself, has been made mere province for a few great financial magnates, who exploit it for their private gain without the slightest reference to the welfare of the Southern people. The situation is pitiable. The degradation of it finds expression in the phrase "The solid South would vote for a yellow dog on the Democratic ticket." As a Southern man, I am ashamed of such a state of affairs and resent it profoundly. If I can do anything toward accomplishing the political independence of my own people from this slavish servitude to a handful of Wall street politicians I consider it a duty to do so.

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