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EDITORIAL

TOLDEROLLOLL, FATHER VAN AKEN!

By DANIEL DE LEON

AT this critical epoch when Europe at large, and now America also, are in the convulsions that denote the affliction—at least the belief in the affliction—of a grave social struggle, the struggle foretold by Marx, the Reverend E.M. Van Aken has come forth with a soothing balsam—something even better than a soothing balsam, a positive counter-irritant. The potion is administered in a neat 78-paged, blue-covered booklet, that establishes beyond peradventure the “fad-and-fanciness” of Socialism, the utter unreliability of Marx.

The argument is neat, forceful and terse: Marx prophesied increasingly acute industrial competition as a result of private capital; in the wake of that the enslavement, moral and material bestialization of the laborer; hand in hand therewith the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, with the eventual disappearance of the middle class and the appearance of a large reserve army of superfluous labor; finally the assumption of the control of society by the working class and the establishment of Socialism. Having thus summarized Marx, the Rev. Van Aken, summarizes the summary with the following dismissal and confutation:

“More than thirty-five years have elapsed since Marx flaunted this threat into the face of society, and yet we have not seen its fulfillment; there are no signs on the social and economical horizon of increasing poverty, of bestialization, of a reserve army of superfluous laborers.”

This is settler—for all time.

Nevertheless and for all that, us-seems to see some impertinent fellow rise in his seat, in the vast auditorium of civilization into which he has squeezed his insolent personality; and rush forward; pull out of the good Father Van Aken’s belt the holy man’s pocket-Bible; turn up impudently St. Matthew, Chap. 24; partly read aloud verses 29 to 33 foretelling the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of

the stars, the appearance of the Angels of final Judgment, the summoning of the elect and their gathering from the four winds, closing with verse 34: “This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” Us-seems to see and hear the bumptious fellow jauntily apostrophize the scandalized Father: “With what grace, by what process of reasoning can you, who clothe yourself in the sanctity of the words of this book, presume to refute Marx’s ‘prophecy’ on the mere allegation that thirty-five short years have elapsed and the ‘prophecy’ has not yet been verified? Marx never specified so short a period for the downfall of capitalism; on the contrary his argument shows the process would be slow. Granting, for the sake of argument that there is as yet no sign of ‘increasing poverty’, of ‘beastialization’ or of the ‘reserve army,’ How dare you weave out of that a proof that Marx’s ‘prophecy’ was a ‘gratuitous prophecy’, in the face of the fact that the moon and stars have not yet fallen, that no one has yet either seen or heard the final Judgment Angels and their trumpets, that the elect are yet scattered to the four winds and that Satan—as your own activity on earth testifies—is still busily at work keeping you stirring and your hands full, and all that after unnumbered generations have passed since the generation which was not to pass till all those things were fulfilled?”—To the impudent fellow, who would make such an argument against Father Van Aken’s settler, we would simply say this—: “Thou art obviously a Socialist. Obviously thou confirmest Father Kreft’s words that Socialism destroys ‘the submission due to the priest in all things.’ Sit down, thou perambulating lump of insolence!”

And no sooner was this scamp disposed of when, us-seems, another would rise. He would quote the statistics on concentration of wealth, the statistics on crime, the statistics on the increasing numbers of paupers, too numerous to be attended to by the charity organizations, the statistics on the mortality in the working class, the statistics on the recurringly increasing volume of the unemployed. He would quote all that and sit down with a heathenish look of self-approval and blurt out: “There goes your ‘settler!’”—But to this misguided brother we would give the warning: “Knowest thou not that FACTS are material, and FICTION only ethereal, spiritual? Be not thou a grovelling materialist!”

Oh, what a relief! A nightmare is lifted from the chest of humanity. We thought there was a social crash on. It has been called off—all thanks to the Rev. E.M. Van

Aken.

Why did he not speak up before?

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

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