

EDITORIAL

EARS OF THE JACKASS AS LONG AS EVER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the history of American politics the Democratic party has earned, and come to be known by, the symbol of a Jackass. The “punishment fits the crime.” The Democratic party has remained what it became since the Southern Bourbon, by dominating, placed upon it his stamp. It neither forgets nor learns. Gen. Grant well said of the party that it took a “hind look at the political landscape”: it sees things after they pass. How well the symbol fits the party, its most conspicuous member, William Jennings Bryan, has hastened to prove. Interrupting his present junketing tour at Berlin just long enough to bray, he furnished his party with this truly asinine slogan:

“Democracy recognizes competition as legitimate and tries to protect the competitive principle from attack.”

Similar language is held by the Republican party also. But then, the context of Republicanism sufficiently indicates that the language is merely buncombe—the usual phraseology to catch flies with. No thief announces himself with a placard on his hat, or his back. With the Democratic party, however, the utterance is sincere. Hence Republicanism has, at least, the merit of knowledge, however sophisticated; Democracy the demerit of asininity.

Competition, no more than crutches, is absolutely “legitimate.” While a man’s legs are weak, crutches are necessary, hence “legitimate,” at that stage. When the legs become strong, the crutches cease to be necessary, hence are no longer legitimate. Competition is not an abstract principle of good or evil, like “Righteousness,” or “Sin.” It is a make-shift. Infant society competes. Developed society throws away the crutches, as a wasteful expenditure of energy and a

hindrance. It follows that to “try to protect the competitive principle from attack,” now that society no longer needs the competitive crutches, is like trying to protect the crutches under a man’s arms, after his legs have grown to vigor. The result in the case of the crutches would be to cultivate weakness in the man’s limbs; in the instance of society, the effect is to fetter its developed pinions.

An abundance of wealth production, so abundant that mankind need no longer walk on all fours, expending the main part of its time, energies and thought in grubbing for the necessaries of physical life,—such is the trend of the social evolution. The evolution travels through competition, until it reaches the era of concentration of productive powers. This era alone renders possible that abundance of production that civilized man needs. Our country has reached that era. Arrived at that spot, the roads fork. One road leads to Socialism, where the concentrated powers of production are seized and used for all; the other road leads to despotism, whither Republicanism tends, where the concentrated powers are usurped by a new dynasty, the economic-political Shogun, or Great Tycoon, of the Capital Class.

While the struggle of Civilization and the battle for freedom rages between the Socialist hosts and the Republican Shogun, the Democratic Jackass plays its ears of undiminished length, and brays its old periodical bray of reaction.

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

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