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Newspaper article, Capitalist Panics, circa 1908

Appeal to Reason

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Recommended Citation

Appeal to Reason, "Newspaper article, Capitalist Panics, circa 1908" (1908). *Biographical*. 18.
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Eastern financial papers are gravely discussing the question, "Who owns the waterways throughout the United States?" This recalls the famous controversy between the priests and the kings in Holland when the windmill was invented. The priests claimed the ownership of the wind on the theory that God, in his infinite wisdom, had placed them in charge of this important element of the universe. The king, on the other hand, claimed ownership of the wind because of his dominion over the land. The issue developed immense proportions and the entire nation was divided into two camps. In the meantime, both the kings and the priests paid tribute on the mill owners, who in turn robbed the people. This process, with slight variations, has been in vogue ever since.

John Ruskin said that one of the expenses to which a people must submit if they would maintain the private ownership of things publicly used is the expense of maintaining an army; for by no other means can private ownership of such things be maintained. This statement explains the presence of troops in the tobacco districts of Kentucky and Ohio. The troops are there to protect the tobacco trust in its economic power whereby the tobacco raisers are robbed. But the farmers are not next to the game. They destroy their own tobacco under the delusion that they are thereby hitting the trust, the members of which are able to live in luxury for years if not another leaf of tobacco were grown. The only remedy lies in the ownership of all the trusts by all the people, which would put an end for all time to night riding and night raiding.

They were the most ignorant slaves who were satisfied with their lot, and they had no ambition for liberty because they did not realize the misery of their condition. And what was true of the chattel slave is today true of the wage slave. The most ignorant man today is the only one satisfied with his lot. A child born into slavery of any kind has no comprehension of any other condition; its surroundings seem perfectly natural to it until such time as it grows into intelligence and its mind begins to grasp the situation and the reason for it. To prevent this mental awakening, and the results that follow, the masters now, as then, do all they can to obscure the issue. Through their influence pulpiteers now, as then, preach contentment and submission to the only. Politicians serve the ruling power by telling the ignorant of their great liberty; and the press, owned and controlled by the "interests," do their share toward perpetuating the ignorance of the poor that thereby the privileges of the wealthy may be conserved. Slavery is a mental as well as a physical condition. To keep the mind in subjection is to keep the body in service. Capitalists can well afford to spend millions as a means to prevent the enlightenment of their slaves. Let a little light shine in!

The Omaha Bee announces in its editorial columns that the Appeal to Reason has been barred from the mails. This is a very bad guess on the part of the Bee. Try it again. The Appeal has not been barred from the mails, but must confess that we are having a vigorous fight to maintain our rights.

...with the spirit of earnestness, with conviction, faith in their propaganda and hope of ultimate victory and the good it will bring to mankind, there can be but little doubt as to growth. Socialism is the most powerful civic and political organization in the world at present, and hourly its principles are becoming more crystalized, its numbers increased and its faith in the consummation sought more steadfast.

These are remarkable words from a capitalist daily paper. They certainly evince an intelligent recognition of the Socialist party and its mission and a spirit of fairness in dealing with it. The editorial above quoted is in striking contrast with the almost unanimous silence, broken by an occasional attempt at ridicule, which characterized the capitalist press during the last national campaign.

Capitalist Panics.

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat, which maintained stoutly four years ago that the country would be immune from panics so long as the republican party remained in power, seriously discussed the unemployed problem in a recent issue. But it has no solution to offer and flounders helplessly in a maze of platitudes. How easy it would have been for the wise editor of this stalwart republican paper to have pointed out a remedy if the democratic party had been in power at this time! He would have told the working people to vote the republican ticket and all would be lovely and everybody happy. But alas! disaster has overtaken the republican administration, as it did the democratic party in 1893, and he is, therefore, unable to see a way out.

Our democratic friends are saying very little about the panic and the industrial depression because the working people still remember their patchy pants and empty stomachs during the reign of Grover. Bryan can say little about the present situation because a few months ago he openly boasted that the good times the country was then experiencing were due to democratic measures stolen by the republican party. I have seen no statement from him claiming that it was the operation of his pet schemes which brought about the present panic.

Those of you who are pretty well acquainted with William J. should write him and ask why this panic hit the country when his democratic measures of relief were in full operation, under the guidance of his good friend Roosevelt?

From the prominence given the menus of the rich at their banquets one is certainly justified in saying that they are nothing but gourmands and gluttons and barren of brains, for nothing quoted as being said at these functions is worth hearing or reading.

The Appeal is, in my opinion, the best and most revolutionary propaganda organ of any I have yet read. The circulation of the Appeal is somewhere near 350,000, which is more than that of any weekly newspaper in America; it is thoroughly Marxian, never ceases to preach the class struggle, and is quite uncompromising. Comparisons are odious, yet I am sure Comrades Wayland and Warren would hardly feel flattered.—A. Tierce in London Justice.