

The People.

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FIRST EDITORIAL

Typical

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The speech pronounced by John Burns in the House of Commons on the 17th inst., together with the occasion thereof, illustrates to perfection the dullness, flatness and sterility of the leaders of a labor movement that is not grounded on the principle of the class struggle; the illustration becomes all the more striking when the speech is contrasted with those of the tribunes of the class-conscious proletariat, uttered in the Parliaments of other nations.

A bill being under discussion in the House of Commons by which the London County Council sought to obtain borrowing powers to erect a Town Hall, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, William Waldorf Astor's paper took a leading part in hostilely opposing the proposition. On this "elevated" question John Burns hastened to take the floor and said:

"It is an abuse of London's hospitality, it is not fair or gentlemanly, for this new millionaire from America who has dumped down his city offices next to the London School Board offices, so preventing those premises from being extended, and has now placed his private house next to the County Council offices, should complain that our new building would come between the wind and light and his nobility.

"These attacks of the *Pall Mall Gazette* on our scheme spring from the purely personal, selfish motives of its proprietor, and I hope the honorable members will not be deceived by such appeals.

"I can stand a decent duke (laughter), but I cannot do with this new American millionaire who enjoys London's hospitality and in whose ground rents he is investing heavily, using his newspaper and money to prevent the citizens of London from obtaining a proper Town Hall."

The man who can sit quietly while English miners are worked to death; while English Capitalist conspiracies carry the fagot into the peaceful domain of the Boers; while factory acts are brutally ignored right under his own nose; while the law is stretched to allow English Capitalists to escape, and is pulled tight to throttle

innocent proletarians;—the man, who, unmoved and untutored by the science of the class struggle, can gather no inspiration from such subjects, burns at white heat over a petty Town Hall, and on the subject of a “new millionaire from America!”

Contrast this sorry performance with the conduct of the Jaures and Guesdes in France, the Ferris and Barbatos in Italy, the Bebels and Aures in Germany, the Vanderveldes and Ansels in Belgium. The themes of their speeches are taken from a wholly different quarry—the sufferings, the interests, the fate of the class of the proletariat; its hopes, its aspirations, its future. Every time these rise in their seats in their respective Parliaments, their voice is heard the world round; it touches a chord to which the heart strings of the working class respond everywhere; it breathes a breath that teaches, that elevates, that inspires, and that, by as much, draws nearer the emancipation of the working class.

John Burnsism runs into the ditch, the thunder claps of the class struggle rive the rocks and clear the path for Civilization.

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

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