

EDITORIAL

THREE CHEERS FOR THE “LABOR-SOCIALIST”!

By DANIEL DE LEON

NOT long ago—it is not so long since C.W. Post of Battle Creek, Mich., burst upon the horizon—*The People* had occasion to pitchfork this apostle of capitalism as an egregious clown and ignoramus on economics. The gentleman affords the Socialist Movement a fresh opportunity to pitchfork him, this time as a dealer in statistical “green goods.”

Mr. Post is now before the public with a four-column dysenteric article, which he has published simultaneously West and East and North, against the “Labor-Socialists.” The Labor-Socialists are called all manner of names, among other things they are called home-stealers, and the “Home-Owning class,” who, Mr. Post declares, “heavily outnumber the Labor-Socialists,” are summoned to take their stand right away, if not sooner, against the predatory Labor-Socialists whom he sketches as follows:

“If any man has worked and been economical and self-denying and has bought a home, take it away and divide up the proceeds among those who are unthrifty, drinking, profligate or simply ‘failures.’”

According to the Census for 1900, the total number of homes in the land was 16,187,715. Furthermore, according to the same Census, the number of homes “owned” was 7,259,362, leaving 8,365,739 of the homes unowned. If we go no further, and look at these figures only, already Mr. Post’s “heavily outnumbering ‘Home-Owning’ class” sinks into a decided minority, there being a majority of over 1,000,000 who do not own their homes. But there is worse in store for Mr. Post’s “heavily outnumbering ‘Home-Owning’ class.”

A man may “own” his home, yet that ownership may be a snare and a delusion;

it may be, in fact, a millstone around his neck. Hetty Green admitted she did not care to buy land; she was satisfied with taking mortgages on land. A wise woman in her Post-Capitalist generation—leave to others the empty glory of "ownership" with all the burdens of taxation, etc., that that ownership carries with it, and keep for yourself the substance. The mortgaged "owner" has the shell, the mortgagee capitalist takes the kernel. Obviously, one knows little if he only knows how many homes are "owned"; his knowledge does not become accurate until he knows how many of these homes are unencumbered. The same Census answers the question. Of the 7,259,362 homes "owned" there were, free from encumbrance, only 4,761,211. In other words, out of the total of 16,187,715 homes in the land, the "heavily outnumbering 'Home-Owning' class" sinks into a still more pitiful minority, the actual majority of the "non-home-owning" class towering up to 11,426,504 in excess of the "Home-Owning" fraternity.

When one turns to Mr. Post's own State of Michigan the facts bump equally hard against the gentleman's nose. The total number of homes in Michigan is 548,094; of these only 193,190 are free from encumbrance, leaving an overwhelming majority of 454,904 actually or virtually owned by somebody else.

As is well known, homes that are actually owned are not crowded. The families are small, the inmates few. Crowding and congestion is found only in the unowned homes—the mortgaged, especially the hired ones. Calculating the total population of the land at 80,000,000, and making the generous allowance of 4 members for every actually home-owning family there would be 19,044,844 of these preferred beings to 69,955,156 who would fall under Mr. Post's category of "unthrifty, drinking, profligate, or simply 'failures.'"

Whichever way Mr. Post turns he is caught. To him there is not even an alternative. He is in a hole, with the wind and hail and sleet blowing in upon him from all sides. His "heavily outnumbering 'Home-Owning' class" dwindles into nothingness in sight of a 60,955,156 majority of "unthrifty, drinking, profligate, or simply 'failures.'" Mr. Post's statistics are "green goods."

But Mr. Post is not simply a dealer in statistical "green goods." Nothing better can be expected from his tribe; nor is that anything new, or particularly encouraging. What there is decidedly encouraging is the fact which the gentleman

takes four columns in a large number of papers to prove, to wit, that vile calumny of Labor and Socialism is all the weapon his tribe has to fight the Labor-Socialist with. This is encouraging.

It is so in larger as in smaller matters—when Wrong finds its arguments shattered, and every bone in its body broken by Reason, it ever drops argument and takes to personal slander. The move is an evidence of intellectual bankruptcy. When Mr. Post, rearing himself upon his bogus "heavily outnumbering 'Home-Owning' class," pronounces the Labor-Socialists an "unthrifty, drinking, profligate, or simply 'failures' class" because they do not own their homes, the gentleman libels that actually "heavily outnumbering" class of our population whose industry builds up the land, and the fruit of whose industry is plundered in fact by the class that stands exposed as the "unthrifty," the "drinking," and the "profligate," and whose only success is in producing failures and panics. When one's foe displays mental bankruptcy in a conflict one may well feel cheered. Such bankruptcy is a harbinger of victory to us. It is a proof of the soundness of our position; it is a sign of approaching collapse with the foe.

Three cheers for the Labor-Socialist!

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