

EDITORIAL

DISTRESSFUL DAME FREE TRADE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT may not be a Christian impulse—but one cannot always be good—to relish the plight that that coy Revolutionary Dame Free Trade finds herself in again, and yet again. The Old Girl has for her special Church the New York *Evening Post*, and for High Priest, Vicars, Deacons and Acolytes the *Evening Post's* Editor-in-chief, staff, reporters and minor bottle-washers. To judge by the language of their hierarchy the Old Girl is once more to {be} consigned to retirement. An ungrateful people is deaf to her charms.

Says the *Evening Post*:

“The Democrats are for revision [Free Trade] as a matter of course; but they seem [Seem, mother, nay, they are!] in general lukewarm about it.”

Again:

“The chances of a thorough overhauling of the Dingley schedules by the Republicans are remote; but the Democrats are almost [!!!] as indefinite and hesitating.”

Finally comes this wail of distress:

“In 1892 Cleveland was elected on that sole issue [Free Trade]; the Democrats, then comparatively united and enthusiastic, had a clear mandate for revision; but they failed miserably in the attempt.”

This last wail eclipses the most pathetic lamentation that ever went up from the chest of Jeremiah.

The long and short of the story is that the Democratic party flirts with the Old Girl; pretends to love her, feeling all the time pretty safe against her wiles; and when the party actually, by accident, and very much to its own surprise won out

with a “mandate” from her, it cruelly went back on its plighted troth, and jilted the spinster.

Now, there must be some reason for this. Nor is the reason far to seek:

Dame Free Trade is a bogus revolutionist. She tries hard to conceal her wrinkles of superannuated reaction in loud declamation against “Monopoly,” the “Octopus” and “Trusts”; but the affectation takes in nobody. Her economics are false pretense; her erudition is tinsel.

Lower prices means lower wages. Free Trade would reduce prices, but the condition of the workers would remain unaffected. The wages would decline in proportion. The only ones to profit would be capitalists. Here the question comes, Since Free Trade would benefit capitalists, why do not the capitalists strike a match with the Old Girl? The answer exposes the padding with which the Old Girl conceals her shriveled age. The philosophy of Free Trade, all the jokes of Bastiat against Protection, fail of application in a country that raises both oranges and shoes, wool and woolen goods—in short, both agricultural and manufactured products. In such a country there are always capitalists enough who need Protection to bar Free Trade, while the industries that need Protection no longer, and that to-day are protected by Protection only in their power to plunder by high prices, can safely lean upon those industries (agricultural if not manufacturing) that would suffer by Free Trade.

Accordingly, Dame Free Trade is there only to be flirted with. True to the traditions of the last fifty and odd years, the Democratic party ever flirts with scrawny beauties whose companionship land it in the horse-pond of failure.

In the meantime genuine capitalist interests converge ever more to render the Democratic party “safe and sane,” and thereby to deprive the *Evening Post’s* protegee from any chance of recognition.

Free Trade will triumph in America. No doubt of that. But it will triumph only when the Socialist Republic is proclaimed—and not before. Only then will the sense of Free Trade be cleansed of the capitalist smut that now renders it both ridiculous and fraudulent. Only when Labor will depend for its share in the wealth it produces no longer upon the supply and demand of and for its services, only then will the Fraud of Protection, as a protection of the workers, fall off as a scab from a healed

wound, and only then can Free Trade step in.

But the Free Trade of that happy and glorious day will not be the painted and padded hook-nosed Dame of the sanctum of a paper, which, like the *Evening Post*, prescribes the “rifle diet” for the Working Class; the Free Trade of that day will be the well-proportioned and charming damsel of Freedom that inspires the Socialist Movement with its all-conquering virility.

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

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