

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 148.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

RENEGADE CARNEGIE CANONIZED.

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ANDREW CARNEGIE, hitherto a pillar of protection, has come out, flat-footed, for free trade. As a consequence his old-time associates are reviling him as a “renegade,” while tariff reformers generally have started to canonize him.

Carnegie is no more a “renegade” and “ingrate” than a child that casts off its swaddling clothes is an ingrate.

It is true, as Senator Burrows of Michigan says, that Carnegie has “amassed a wealth” which only protection could have enabled him to amass. Senator Burrows’s statement not only gives the clue to, it also furnishes the justification for Carnegie’s conduct. The amassing of wealth is what Carnegie is after. For a time, only protection gave him the license to do what Charles Francis Adams correctly calls “stealing.” Carnegie amassed, Charles Francis Adams would say stole, wealth. Changed conditions bring new duties. With the amassed (stolen) wealth once in hand, the further amassing of wealth is now best promoted by adopting free trade for steel and the necessaries of life for the workers.

Under protection Carnegie “amassed” wealth by the double process of overcharging the capitalist consumers of his product and by underpaying his workingmen. He wants still more wealth. That cannot now be obtained by raising his prices; it can be obtained only by lowering wages. To lower wages under the existing high cost of living would “disturb the market”; there is but one way left—free trade. Under free trade the cost of living would be lowered, and seeing that wages depend upon the price of Labor in the Labor market, the lower the cost of living all the lower can and will wages go down. The share that Labor would receive of the wealth it produces would be no less; the worker would not be injured; but the Carnegies would profit immensely: they would profit by the difference in the

price of Labor.

Closely scanned there is no essential difference between free trade, after protection has placed a capitalist in the saddle, and improved machinery. Carnegie made his first “amassing” with inferior machinery; being after some more “amassing,” he discarded the inferior for an up-to-date plant. Carnegie, the one time protectionist, but present free trader, is a repetition of the Carnegie who adopted superior methods of Labor exploitation.

The hosannas now sung to Carnegie by the free traders are tuned to the self-same key as the jeremiads hurled at him by the protectionists. The latter lose a support in the identical game that the former win one—the game of skinning the working class—or “stealing with a license, under the broad seal of the United States,” as Charles Francis Adams expresses it.

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Uploaded April 2010

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