

EDITORIAL

BAILEY'S "CONSCIENCE AND JUDGMENT."

By DANIEL DE LEON

BEING chided in the Senate by some of his fellow Democrats and some of the "insurgent Republicans" for bolting the platform of his party and voting down free lumber, Senator Bailey answered that he declined to surrender his conscience and judgment to the delegates of the Denver convention.

Moralists will fall and are falling over the Senator for this "act of betrayal." From the moral viewpoint it is wrong to hold the Senator responsible; from the scientific viewpoint to blame him is still worse—it amounts to muffing the point.

It is not man that rules property it is property that rules man under class-rule social conditions.

Class-rule social conditions raise property to a dignity by which all moral perceptions are shaped.

The Socialist says life is more precious than property and he is right. Closely looked at the capitalist holds the same view. The difference between the two is that the Socialist feels and speaks with the deliberation that thought and knowledge promote; the capitalist, on the contrary, feels only blindly, with the blindness that ruling class interests afflict a man.

When the Socialist says life is more precious than property he utters a sentiment that depends upon material conditions not as yet in existence—conditions that he knows are possible, and which, accordingly, he strives to bring about. Under Socialism the system of property would promote life and its happiness.

When the capitalist feels life is more precious than happiness he utters a sentiment that the existing system of property distorts. It is life that the capitalist starts after when he seeks to amass property. Seeing, however, that in the process

of amassing he is bound to lose sight of the goal and that the time and effort he is bound to expend in the amassing tends to turn property, a means, into the goal itself, property is de facto raised into pre-eminence and life sacrificed to it. Wittily did the English economist put the case when he said that the prospect of a 300 per cent profit would cause the capitalist to run any risk, including the risk of breaking his neck.

If life, so honor.

Bailey is not less honorable than the Senators who voted differently. The rush for property dominated both. It happened that, with the others, honor happened to coincide with the property striven after, while, with Bailey, it was the other way.

It is no crocodile tears that the Socialist wastes over the dishonor of the Baileys. Of course tears will not wash away such dishonor. The only waters that can do the job is {sic} the waters of the revolutionary flood—and in those waters not the Baileys only but all potential Baileys will have to be dipped, clean over their heads.

Conscience and judgment require the Social Baptism of the Revolution.

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

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