

EDITORIAL

THE WILSON “TEST.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

“CIVIL Service Reformers”—a special breed in the land—have set up the cry: “The coming test for Wilson.” The “test” concerns the appointment of Post-Masters in certain leading cities. Will Wilson appoint the present incumbents, regardless of their political antecedents? Then, so runs the reasoning, he will have raised the Post-Masterships above the plane of political conflicts, and taken a long step towards redeeming the political administration from the swirl of “spoils.” If, on the contrary, he makes the appointments under the dictation of the Senators from the States that are concerned, then, so does the argument close, the President-elect will have succumbed to the Jacksonian “spoils” and “victors” theory of government.

Granting all that the Civil Service Reformer claims for his pet reform, the real test that the President-elect will be put to in the matter of the Post Office, concerns not the Post-Masterships of cities, it concerns an office “higher up,” the Post-Master Generalship itself.

It is upon the crest of a bourgeois wave, which hearkens back to the revolutionary days of the bourgeois, that Woodrow Wilson will enter the White House next March 4th. The Socialist does not expect, the Socialist does not demand of a triumphant bourgeois political chieftain that he act the Socialist. That would be to expect of him that he act dishonestly to his own class, which means untruthfully to his express and his implied promises. What the Socialist may and does expect from, and what he holds a triumphant bourgeois political chieftain to, is that he be true to the class that he represents—as true in those matters that are his class’s glory, as in those matters that are distinctly his class’s infamies.

It is a distinct badge of bourgeois class infamies to exploit the wage slave. The Socialist will not wonder at a President whose Civil Service appointments are made

obedient to the exploitative nature of bourgeois political rule. Any other conduct would rather blur the Issue of the day. On the other hand, the Socialist knows that infamy is not the only sign-manual of the bourgeois. The Socialist knows that there are also glories attached to the bourgeois, glories that it fell to the bourgeois revolution to contribute to the race's store of achievements. Among these achievements the freedom of the press is one. Unhampered transit threw the medium of the channel known as the Post Office is a necessary accompaniment of a Free Press. The tone of the Post Office Department depends primarily upon the Post Master General. In this lies the real test of Woodrow Wilson.

A Social Revolution is pending—that, nobody denies. Even those who seem to deny the fact admit that "serious changes" are at hand. At such a time Conservatism frequently interprets its duty by the light of Reaction. Such was the policy of the present incumbent in a score of directions, the direction of the Post Office among others. A muzzled Press was a feature of the social order that the bourgeois overthrew. Under that social order the Post was an engine for such muzzling. President Taft's Post Masters General instinctively took their cue from that aggressive vestige of feudal mental oppression, the Roman Catholic Political hierarchy.

Suffice it to mention just two instances.

One instance is that of the Italian illustrated comical weekly *L'Asino*, published in Rome by a radical organization. *L'Asino's* fingers are in perpetuity in the hair of Ultramontanism, that is, of the political prelatism that, though overthrown in Italy, continues a menace to the integrity and progress of the Italian Nation. Cartoons, along with well-barbed jokes, that uncover the political ambitions, the arrogance, the greed, the immorality also of Ultramontanism, are of frequent occurrence in *L'Asino*. Twice, at least, during President Taft's administration have issues of *L'Asino* been refused admission to the American public by the Post Office.

Another instance, a still more recent one, is the prosecution of Tom Watson under the false pretense of "sending obscene matter through the mails," the "obscene matter" being scientific citations that go to demonstrate the paganism of Ultramontanism.

Controlled by Ultramontanism the present Post Master General is exercising a feudal censorship upon, and is violating the freedom of the press. Thus the country

is being pushed back to the path of Reaction. To that extent the bourgeois administration of William Howard Taft was and is untrue to the glories of its own class traditions.

The test for Woodrow Wilson in connection with the Postal Department is obvious. Will his nominee to the Post Master Generalship be dictated by Reaction?—if so then he will be untrue to the best traditions of his own class. Will his nominee be dictated by the Free Press traditions of the bourgeois revolution?—then will he be true to his class, true to one of his class's most distinguished glories, one of the rungs of the ladder up to Human Emancipation.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2014

slpns@slp.org