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EDITORIAL

SUPPOSITIOUS EMANCIPATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE *Physical Culture Magazine* for January has a signed editorial by Bernarr Macfadden advocating the unity of all good people in one political party for the next Presidential election. The gist of the article is contained in the following passage:

“Let us suppose that all the Socialists, the Prohibitionists, members of the W.C.T.U., of the Y.M.C.A. and every church organization that stands for human betterment, were to combine their forces at the next Presidential election. No one can doubt the result.”

Indeed, there should be nothing to doubt!

The result would be a Killkenny Cats performance upon a national stage, with the victorious “revolutionists” themselves as the performers.

The trouble with those who think like Mr. Macfadden is that they fail to grasp the fact that man’s ideals are the reflex of the respective economic conditions which require such reflexes; and the further fact, which flows from the first, that man adjusts his standard of morals to the reflex thus cast by his economic necessities. Failure to grasp these twin facts leads, not only to such mistaken policies as Mr. Macfadden proposes, but to positive injustice to our fellow men.

The economic conditions that reflect, and require the reflex of, Socialism are wage slavery, a state of things under which the worker, being deprived of the tools of production, must submit to be fleeced of the lion’s share of the fruits of his labor in order to live.—Such conditions demand Socialism: they reflect the ideal of a form of society in which the plants of production are owned as collectively as they are operated.

What are the economic conditions of Prohibitionists, W.C.T.U.’s, Y.M.C.A.’s and

the runners of church organizations?

The economic conditions of the Prohibitionist, who has factories, reflect the ideal of capitalism; and the standard of morality, sincerely clung to by such a Prohibitionist, neatly adjusts itself to the reflex cast by his economic necessities. He looks upon himself as a benefactor of humanity in that he “gives work to wage earners,” and he will not deprive himself of the opportunity to be “benevolent” by abolishing the class that needs his “benevolence.”

The economic conditions of the church member, whose revenue is mainly from stock in the Liquor Trust or in breweries, reflect the ideal of “No sumptuary legislation!”; and the standard of morality, sincerely clung to by such church member or members, neatly adjusts itself to the reflex cast by his or their economic necessities. He looks upon himself as an apostle of human freedom, hence as a betterer of humanity.

The economic conditions of the W.C.T.U. (Women’s Christian Temperance Union) member, whose husband or father is a coal mine owner, reflect the ideal of “Child labor builds up the man!”; and the standard of morality, sincerely clung to by such a W.C.T.U. wife or daughter, neatly adjusts itself to the reflex cast by her economic necessities. She has no doubt but that she is a rock in the way of the “unnerving Socialist theory,” which opposes child labor.

The economic conditions of the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men’s Christian Association) member, who holds stock in railroads, reflect the ideal of “Discrimination in rates”; and the standard of morality, sincerely clung to by him, neatly adjusts itself to the reflex cast by his economic necessities. He raves with righteous indignation against those Prohibitionists, W.C.T.U.’s, Y.M.C.A.’s and church members, who, having opposite interests, “object,” and he proves to his own utmost satisfaction that, unless his ideal prevails, “the country will fall into Anarchy,” etc., etc.

Unite in one political party, Socialists, Prohibitionists, W.C.T.U.’s, Y.M.C.A.’s and church members generally upon the abstract principle of “human betterment,” and the result will be that Prohibitionists, W.C.T.U.’s, Y.M.C.A.’s and the aforementioned church members will be in one another’s hair; and all of them in the hair of the Socialists; and the Socialists in the hair—and justly so—of all their “political allies.”

There is nothing to suppose in the case. Political unity depends upon oneness of interests.—That is the rock on which to build, not sentiment.

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

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