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SECOND EDITORIAL

A PAGE FROM MODERN HISTORY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IF a man with his eyes open expresses the maxim that the capitalist has no political party except his pockets, that he has no political convictions except such as affect his profits, and that all his talk about “honor,” “political integrity,” “patriotism,” “religion,” etc., is but a blind behind which to fleece the people, the innocents and the criminal class of the capitalist set up a howl against the “vicious” Socialists.

Now then here is a page from modern history that speaks for itself.

The organization of the Republican party in this city is just now going through the throes of a “reorganization.” On the one side are the silk-stockinged high muck-a-mucks who wish to control the machine, the Vanderbilts, Depews, Blisses, Choates being the leading lights on that side of the circus; on the other, are the millionaire politicians Tom Platt and Whitelaw Reid, with their right hand bower the professional workingman and bunco-steerer Milholland. Each side had its “organ”: The *Tribune* was the organ of the Platt-Reid-Milholland combine, while the *Mail and Express*, which is the property of the Vanderbilts, tooted the horn for the Depew-Vanderbilt-Bliss show.

Now, then, when the Platt-Reid combine made its first open appearance in the local row, the editor of the *Mail and Express* was aroused to great and righteous indignation at a scheme which he claimed to be obviously designed to injure the party. He “swung out” his paper against it, publishing columns of denunciation of Platt, Reid and Milholland, under headlines of double the ordinary size and extending across two columns of the first page. In his editorial columns he published a genuine old-fashioned “scathing” leader, in double-leads, speaking of

Platt, Reid, and Milholland in terms which must have sent shivers down their backs, and saying of the occasion that it was not one for “temporization,” but was so serious that the editor could not “mince words” about it. This was continued with undiminished fervor on the second, third, and fourth days. The fire upon Platt, Reid, and Milholland was equally terrific, and the combine assailed was spoken of as the “Platt-Reid-Milholland coalition.” Then came a mysterious and unexplained change. The name of Reid was dropped out on the fifth day, under “pressure” of some sort, and the *Tribune* ceased also to figure as an object of the editor’s wrath. The headlines were still continued over two columns, but the bitterness of tone toward Platt which had hitherto distinguished them was perceptibly modified. On the sixth day the headlines dropped to a single column in width, and on the seventh Platt’s name disappeared from them, and a call for “Harmony” took its place. In the editorial columns, bossism continued to be assailed in general terms, but Platt as well as Reid and Milholland ceased to be mentioned.

Now, why this sudden, mysterious change? Here is the explanation: + The day before the banner “Harmony” was hung from the paper’s masthead, a bill appeared in the Legislature at Albany forbidding the burning of soft coal in any railway tunnels in New York city. It was said that if this measure were to become a law, it would put the New York Central Railway—i.e., the Vanderbilts—to an additional expense of at least \$100,000 a year. This bill was quietly introduced in Albany through the instrumentality of Platt, and old stagers at Albany spoke of it as performing a function known as “ringing the bell on Chauncey Depew,” and predicted that it would be followed by an outbreak of “Harmony” in the *Mail and Express*. Their forecast proved true to the letter, and the *Mail and Express* has now nothing more to say against “Platt rascality,” or “Milholland dishonesty.”

Touch a capitalist’s pocket and you have his “honor,” “patriotism” and “religion” at your feet.

How could not the proletariat bring these gentry to terms if it held the reins of power—they would dance to whatever tune the proletariat played!

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