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EDITORIAL

BRUSH UP ON YOUR ROMAN HISTORY!

By DANIEL DE LEON

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found the reprint of an article that the New York *Evening Post* published under the title of “Looking Ahead”¹ on last Nov. 5—four days before election. The cry set up since election by such Democratic papers as the *World* and Hearst’s *American*, the statement just issued by Bryan and also to be found in this issue,² and finally the tone of alarm on the part of the victorious Republican, together with that of the arch capitalist Democratic, press, only goes to underscore the premonitions of the *Evening Post* article uttered on the very eve of election. By the light of all of these we say—Brush up on your Roman history!

Like the mills of the gods, the evolutionary process of society grinds slow. More than fifty years ago that process started in the good earnest that now is bearing its present manifestations. Planting itself squarely upon capitalism, the Republican party demanded “free labor” and has now gathered into its folds the leading beneficiaries of a working class that is “free” enough to mutually cut their throats in the competition for jobs, or to rot in poverty waiting for a job. The Trust magnates and other leading capitalist interests are to-day Republican. The Democratic party, on the other hand, planted itself upon slavery, which meant reaction; it thereby gradually became a back-number. That, beginning with Lincoln forty-four years ago, only two Democratic administrations have since been seen is one of the external manifestations that register the fact of the back-number qualities of the Democratic party. This year’s election with its crushing Democratic defeat, not only confirms the verdict of the last forty years, it also dashes the last and newest expectations of the newest use that the Democracy could be put to.

¹ [See “Looking Ahead,” page 4, below.]

² [See “Bryan’s Statement,” page 5, below.]

It is in this regard that the *Evening Post's* article is of special interest. The element represented by the *Evening Post* realize whither things will tend if Republicanism, unrestrained, bold and brazen, continues to triumph. Equipped with too little intelligence to comprehend that the downfall of capitalism means but the birth of a higher social order, the *Evening Post* element trembles in its stolen boots at the prospect of any assault upon capitalism; and altogether too ignorant on the trend of politics, the same element seeks to protect capitalism by means of a seemingly revolutionary party—what it calls a “progressive,” or “radical Democracy.” Its card-house scheme was shattered last election. Upon no smaller a stage than the many million electorate of this vast country, socio-political evolution has just thunderingly declared that it WILL NOT BE HUMBUGGED. The evolution of society will proceed upon its course; and its course is to ripen the capitalist boil to its head, till it bursts.

But while the *Evening Post* element is not equipped with the intellectual and moral qualities to foresee the “end of the dance” that is approaching, it has all the instincts of its class to scent danger. It justly scented danger in case the Democracy “failed disastrously”; and now that the Democracy did “fail disastrously,” that element shivers all the more at the swift indications that have followed of the peculiar danger that it feared.

Bryan and Hearst have spoken. There is between the Bryan and the *Evening Post* element this difference: The former would keep a run away horse back by tugging at his tail, the latter fiddling to him. Fiddling obviously will not stand; and as to holding back by the tail, on that history has expressed itself again and again. The result of the method is to warp the course of evolution. The method, applied to the American repetition of old Roman conditions, can only result in a repetition of the human tragedy that had the Caesars for central figure, the Roman Empire for stage, the people for tinder.

Already the Catilines and the Crassuses are looming up; behind them just below the horizon are the expectant Caesars. Shall that ancient history be repeated? The *Evening Post* element is too ignorant to know of any alternative other than such dire results or the peaceful continuation of capitalism. That element is so dense upon the subject that it sees no difference between a Bryan, Hearst and a

Debs. It knows not that in this sequence Debs is not the last ratio, and that beyond him is the Socialist Labor Party. It knows not that, however untrained Debs' following may still be, and however mistaken these may happen to be as to himself, nevertheless, in gathering around him they are gathering around a light that they take for SOCIALISM. In other words, that increasing numbers of our working class are above being Caesared or Catilined; and that the beacon raised by the Socialist Labor Party will ultimately guide the stragglers to firm ground.

Let every lover of the race brush up on his Roman history. Given similar conditions, the result will be similar. It is for man to co-operate with evolution. In the absence of the light of Socialism, or the presence of too flickering a Socialist light, the hero of Donnelly's *Caesar's Column*³ will lead a cattle humanity to slaughter. With a firm, a steady, an all-absorbing Socialist light, the Socialist Republic will break through the egg-shell.

On us, the living of this generation, all depends.

³ [*Caesar's Column—A Story of the Twentieth Century*, Edmund Boisgilbert (Ignatius Donnelly), 367 pages. Schulte Publishing Company, Chicago, 1890.]

LOOKING AHEAD.

(From New York *Evening Post*, Nov. 5, 1904.)

Next Tuesday's election should not be thought of as standing by itself. It will have a powerful influence upon the political alignments and movements, not only of the next four years, but of the next eight. As the battle goes on November 8, 1904, so will the lines of battle be determined in November, 1908. The whole question of conservatism and radicalism in the following Presidential election, as well as in the one at hand, is really upon us for decision now. "The present day," said Metternich, "has no value for me except as the eve of to-morrow; it is with to-morrow that my spirit wrestles." It is the morrow of the election that thoughtful and patriotic citizens should bear in mind as they make their choice between Roosevelt and Parker.

Do they want their next choice to be between Roosevelt and Bryan, Roosevelt and Hearst, Roosevelt and Debs? In other words, do they wish to see a conservatively progressive Democracy beaten this year, with the consequence that the party will be flung back into the hands of agitators and incendiaries? That such a result would follow Parker's defeat—especially if his defeat should be overwhelming—is writ so large on the scroll of the fates that only the blind can fail to read the warning. People have been breathing relief ever since Parker was nominated. The country was safe in any event. It was not necessary to go through this campaign in fear and trembling, not knowing whether the verdict at the polls would mean a frightful impairment of property. But if the reorganized Democracy fails this

year—particularly if it fails disastrously—it infallibly means that the extremists and the levellers will be in undisputed control four years from now. Then we should indeed have a nerve-racking and business-upheaving campaign, compared with which the two Bryan elections would seem like afternoon teas.

This is a legitimate and powerful argument for straining every nerve to give Parker strong support. We know that not few New York business men, who can see beyond their noses, are deeply interested by it. Many Republicans in this city will vote for Parker on that principle. They do not desire his election outright. Still, they are anxious that he should get a large vote. If he carried New York State handsomely, and still fell short in the electoral college, they would be well pleased, for that would be a plain intimation to the Democratic party that the road to success had been found, even if the goal had not been reached at the first attempt.

There is another aspect of this line of reasoning, equally cogent with many minds. It is that it is desirable, if Roosevelt is to be elected, that it should be by a narrow majority. Thousands of Republicans the country over agree with Mr. Carnegie in hoping that Roosevelt may succeed, "but not by a great vote." They wish him to be saved, but so as by fire. The reason is, of course, that they think he is in need of restraint, and that a great Democratic vote, with signs everywhere of Republican disaffection, even if he barely carries off the victory, will have a sobering effect on him—and it is idle to pretend that steady-going business

men like his erratic and spectacular ways. Some may say that this would make no difference; that all the President wants is four years more of power, however obtained, and that he will go his own gait after election more headstrong than ever. But the real argument is that he will be restrained through his own party in Congress, even if not in his own desires. Even if he snaps his fingers at the future, when once he has had his day, it is certain that a Republican House and Senate will not. If they see in a rising Democratic vote in the conservative East the handwriting on the wall, they will remonstrate against more rough riding in the Presidency, and will be able, by their control of legislation, to curb Mr. Roosevelt when most disposed to take the bit in his teeth and bolt over the fence.

The arguments we are stating are simply those which we know to be weighing heavily with far-sighted Republicans in this city and State, so many of whom will give their votes to Parker and their vows to Roosevelt. There is, however, another view of the

matter which perhaps goes even deeper. How is a healthy radicalism in our politics best to be made effective? Mr. Maurice Low writes in the *Monthly Review* of what he considers the doleful outlook for American radicalism. Compared with the prospect in England, it certainly appears so. Yet no reflecting man can doubt that we need the progressive spirit in our public legislation; that our taxation ought to be made juster; that the laws affecting the distribution of wealth should be less unfair. But at the hands of which party are we more likely to get this progress? The party that stands pat upon stolid contentment with things as they are? Or the party that contains the largest number of forward-minded radicals who are at present under such cautious control that they can effect reforms without seeming to threaten a revolution? The answer seems not at all doubtful to us; and is one reason more for those who vote, not simply for this year and the immediate result, but with an eye to future and far-reaching consequences, to give their suffrage to Judge Parker.

BRYAN'S STATEMENT.

Lincoln, Neb., Nov. 10.—William J. Bryan in an extended statement issued last night, insists that the Democracy, if it desires success, must break away from conservatism and stand for reforms that appeal to the people. He says:

“The Democratic party has met with an overwhelming defeat in the national election. As yet the returns are not sufficiently complete to permit analysis, and it is impossible to say whether the result is due to an actual increase in the number of Republican voters or a

falling off in the Democratic vote. This phase of the subject will be dealt with next week when the returns are all in.

“The questions for consideration at this time are, What lesson does the election teach and what of the future? The defeat of Judge Parker should not be considered a personal one. He did as well as he could under the circumstances; he was the victim of unfavorable conditions and a mistaken party policy. He grew in popularity as the campaign progressed and expressed himself more and more strongly upon

the trust question, but could not overcome the heavy odds against him.

“The so-called conservative Democrats charged the defeats of 1893 and 1900 to the party’s position on the money question and insisted that a victory could be won by dropping the coinage question entirely. The convention accepted this theory and the platform made no reference to the money question, but Judge Parker felt that it was his duty to announce his personal adherence to the gold standard.

“His gold telegram, as it was called, while embarrassing to the Democrats of the West and South, was applauded by the Eastern press. He had the cordial indorsement of Mr. Cleveland, who certified that the party had returned to safety and sanity. He had the support of the Democratic papers which bolted in 1893, and he also had the aid of nearly all of those who were prominent in the campaigns of 1893 and 1900, and yet his defeat is apparently greater than the party suffered in either of those years.

“It is unquestionable also that Judge Parker’s defeat was not local but general—the returns from the Eastern States being as disappointing as the returns from the West. The reorganizers were in complete control of the party, they planned the campaign and carried it out according to their own views, and the verdict against their plan is a unanimous one. Surely silver cannot be blamed for this defeat, for the campaign was run on a gold basis; neither can the defeat be charged to emphatic condemnation of the trusts for the trusts were not assailed as vigorously this year as they were four years ago. It is evident that the campaign did not turn upon the question of imperialism, and it is not fair to consider the result as a personal victory for the President, although his administration was the subject of

criticism.

“The results were due to the fact that the Democratic party attempted to be conservative in the presence of conditions which demand radical remedies. It sounded a partial retreat when it should have ordered a charge all along the line. In 1896 the line was drawn for the first time during the present generation between plutocracy and democracy, and the party’s stand on the side of democracy alienated a large number of plutocratic Democrats, who, in the nature of things, cannot be expected to return, and it drew to itself a large number of earnest advocates of reform whose attachment to its reforms is much stronger than attachment to any party name.

“The Republican party assumed, as it were, the conservative position. That is, it defends those who, having secured unfair advantages through class legislation, insist that they shall not be disturbed, no matter how oppressive these exactions may become. The Democratic party cannot hope to compete successfully with the Republican party for this support. To win the support of the plutocratic element of the country the party would have to become more plutocratic than the Republican party, and it could not do this without losing several times as many voters as that course would win. The Democratic party has nothing to gain by catering to organized and predatory wealth. It must not only do without such support, but it can strengthen itself by inviting the open and emphatic opposition to those elements.

“The campaign just closed shows that it is expedient from the standpoint of policy, as it is wrong from the standpoint of principle, to attempt any conciliation of the industrial and financial despots who are gradually getting control of the avenues of

wealth. The Democratic party, if it hopes to win success, must take the side of the plain, common people. *The Commoner* (Mr. Bryan's paper) has in the past two years pointed out the futility of any attempt to compromise with wrong or to patch up a peace with the great corporations which are now exploiting the public, but the Southern Democrats were so alarmed by the race issue that they listened, rather reluctantly be it said to their credit, to the promises of success held out by those who had contributed to the defeat of the party in the two preceding campaigns. The experiment has been a costly one, and it is not likely to be repeated during the present generation.

"The Eastern Democrats were also deceived. They were led to believe that the magnates and monopolists who coerced the voters in 1896 and supplied an enormous campaign fund in 1896 and 1900 would help the Democratic party if our party would only be less radical. The corporation press aided in this deception, and even the Republican papers professed an unselfish desire to help build up the Democratic party.

"The election has opened the eyes of the hundreds of honest and well meaning Democrats who a few months ago favored the reorganization of the party. These men now see that they must either go into the Republican party or join with the Democrats of the West and South in making the Democratic party positive, aggressive and progressive reform organization. There is no middle ground.

"Mr. Bryan did what he could to prevent the reorganization of the Democratic party; when he failed in this he did what he could to aid Parker and Davis in order in order to secure such reforms, and there were some vital ones, promised by their election. Now that the campaign is over he will, both through *The Commoner* and by

personal effort, assist those who desire to put the Democratic army once more upon a fighting basis. He will assist in organizing for the campaign of 1908. It doesn't matter so much who the nominee may be. During the next three years the circumstance may bring into the arena some man especially fitted to carry the standard.

"It will be time enough to discuss a candidate when we are near enough to the campaign to measure the relative availability of those worthy to be considered but we ought to begin now to lay our plans for the next national campaign and to form the line of battle.

"The party must continue to protest against a large army and against a large navy and to stand for the independence of the Filipinos, for imperialism adds the menace of militarism to the corrupting influence of commercialism, and yet experience shows that however righteous the party's position on this subject, the issue does not arouse the people as they are aroused by a question which touches them immediately and individually. The injustice done to the Filipinos is not resented as it should be or as we resent a wrong to ourselves, and the costliness of imperialism is hidden by the statistics and by our indirect system of taxation. While the party must maintain its position on this subject, it cannot present this as the only issue.

"The party must also maintain its position on the tariff question. No answer has been made to the Democratic indictment against the high tariff, and yet here to the burden of the tariff system is concealed by the method in which the tax is collected. It cannot be made the sole issue on a campaign.

"The party must renew its demand for an income tax, to be secured through a constitutional amendment, in order

that wealth may be made to pay its share of the expenses of the government. To-day we are collecting practically all of our federal revenue from taxes upon consumption, and these bear heaviest on the poor and light upon the rich.

“The party must maintain its position in favor of bimetallism. It cannot surrender its demand for the use of both gold and silver as the standard money of the country, but the question must remain in abeyance until conditions so change as to bring the public again face to face with falling prices and a rising dollar. This therefore, cannot be made the controlling issue of the contest upon which we are entering.

“The trust question presents the most acute phase of the contest between democracy and plutocracy, so far as economic issues are concerned. The President virtually admits that the trusts contributed to his campaign fund, but he denies that he gave promises of aid or immunity. No well informed person doubts that the large corporations have furnished the Republican campaign fund during the campaigns of 1869 and 1900 and 1904, and no one can answer to logic of Judge Parker’s arraignment of trust contributions.

“The trusts are run on business principles. They do not subscribe millions of dollars to campaigns unless they are paying for favors already granted or purchasing favors for future delivery. The weakness of Judge Parker’s position was that the charge was made at the close of the campaign, when it was neutralized by a counter charge. The trusts cannot be fought successfully by any party that depends upon trust funds to win the election.

“The Democratic party must make its attack upon the trusts so vehement that no one will suspect of secret aid

from them. It will be to its advantage of it will begin the next campaign with an announcement that no trust contributions will be accepted, and then prove its sincerity by giving the public access to its contribution list. In public enterprises the names of contributors are generally made public in order to denote the character and purpose of the work. President Roosevelt has four year in which to make good his declaration that no obligations were incurred by the acceptance of trust funds.

“He will disappoint either the contributors or the voters. If he disappoints the contributors the trust problem may be put in the process of settlement. If he disappoints the people they will have a chance to settle with his party four years hence.

“‘Death to every private monopoly’ must be the slogan of the party on this question. Any other position is a surrender. The platforms of 1900 and 1904 declare that a private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable, and this declaration presents the issue upon the trust question. The party must continue its defense of the interests of the wage earners. It must protect them from the encroachments of capital. The fact that the laboring men have not always shown their appreciation of the party’s position ought not to deter the party from doing its duty in regard to them.

“The labor question is not one that concerns employers and employees alone, it concerns the entire community, and the people at large have an interest in the just settlement of labor controversies. For that reason they must insist upon remedial legislation in regard to hours and arbitration, and they must so limit the authority of the courts in contempt cases as to overthrow what is known as government by injunction.

“The party must continue its fight for

the popular election of senators and for direct legislation wherever the principle can be applied. It must not only maintain its position on old issues, but it must advance to the consideration of new questions as they arise. It takes time to direct attention to an evil, and still more time to consolidate sentiment in favor or a remedy, and Mr. Bryan is not sanguine enough to believe that all the reforms that he favors will at once be indorsed by any party platform, but *The Commoner* will proceed to point out the reforms which he believes to be needed.

“Among these may be mentioned the postal telegraph system, State ownership of railroads, the election of federal judges for fixed terms and the election of postmasters by the people of

their respective communities. Instead of having the government controlled by corporations through officers chosen by the corporations, we must have a government of the people, by the people and for the people—a government administered according to the Jeffersonian maxim of ‘Equal rights to all and special privileges to none.’

“Hope and duty point the way. To doubt the success of our cause is to doubt the triumph of right, for ours is and must be the cause of the masses.

“‘With malice toward none and charity for all,’ let us begin the campaign of 1908; let us appeal to the moral sentiment of the country and arraign the policies of the Republican party before the bar of the public confidence.”

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

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slpns@slp.org

