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Throwing Washington Overboard.

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The present war days are furnishing an opportunity to study the spirit of capitalism at close range. Much that we have said about the inner make-up of the capitalist system must have seemed “theoretic”; the historic facts upon which we based our arguments not having fallen within the personal observation of the masses, our conclusions were disregarded. Now, however, the facts are at hand; all can see, hear, feel, smell them.

Capitalism, threatened from behind by the Social Revolution, turns around to the uprising Proletariat, and with a sanctimonious scowl invokes the past as a sacred thing, to be worshipped and bowed down before. What?! Does the Socialist Movement want to break with the “time-honored” habits of the land? What?! Shall the principles of Americanism, consecrated by the Revolutionary Fathers, be done away with? What?! In horror the Pillars of Society throw up their arms, and the conviction leaps from their eyes that, as the Socialists have no reverence for the past, they must be wiped out.

Nevertheless, we have again and again maintained that there is nothing more infidel than Capitalism; all its gods, its idols, its principles are readily sacrificed whenever it can thereby turn its sacred things into money. It came into the world decapitating everything in sight and out of sight; uprooting churches, overturning altars, kicking down idols, and it ever is ready to do the same over again.

This war proves it.

Among the most venerated figures in the land, Washington holds very generally a leading place; to him our capitalist politicians, professors and parsons have ever turned; his words have again and again been quoted; and among the bad things imputed to the bad Socialists more than once has an intention to “repudiate Washington” been mentioned.

And yet, what do we see now?

In Congress, in the press, in the pulpit, the Washingtonian warning against entangling alliances, conquests, etc., now frequently uttered against the plan to keep the Philippines, take Hawaii, etc., etc., is met with, what? With nothing short of a sneer at Washington, a declaration amounting to pronouncing him a “back number”, in short, by throwing him overboard.

Washington, these same recent devotees of the past now say, could not have foreseen the changed conditions in which we now live; Washington, they tell us, wrote and spoke and thought in other and for other times; Washington, in short, is not now of any account.

Of the many symptoms of the times, this capitalist breaking loose with their own gods is the most certain symptom of impending revolution. The capitalist ship is cutting loose from its moorings. Set adrift, what will become of that water-logged craft?

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