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FIRST EDITORIAL

TWO OF A KIND—JONES AND CHASE.

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Last week, Mr. Samuel M. Jones, the Republican Mayor of Toledo, O., delivered an address in this city to a workingmen's organization. What happened there is worthy of note. Mr. Jones spoke in impassioned strains on the sufferings of the working people and the tyranny of the capitalists; he did not indulge in generalities merely, he waxed concrete; he pronounced himself a Socialist, pointed to the growth of Socialist sentiment in the land, the wisdom and justice of Socialism, and to Socialism as the solution of the human problem. Two of the workingmen present, class-conscious and experienced,—hopeful to find indeed a member from the ranks of the enemy graduate into and join the revolution, yet too wise to accept words and phrases at their face value—, decided to test the Mayor with two questions; they asked:

“Why do you not join the Socialist Labor party; do you recognize the class struggle?”

A Black Crook transformation was not to be compared with the completeness and suddenness of the transformation that Mr. Jones underwent. Up to that moment, he had been bland and unctuous, gentle and suave; soon as the question was put he was an altered man. He grew livid and red with rage, and in boisterous, defiant, petulant and even rough language denounced the idea of “arraying class against class,” the “employé against the employer,” and the political party that was guilty of such wrongfulness.

The cat was out of the bag. Mr. Jones' Socialism was clap-trap.

The game would not be worth the candle merely to hold up this Toledo Mayor as a political charlatan; it would not be worth the candle even to utilize the incident as mere evidence of the growing popularity of the word “Socialism.” There is a much deeper lesson to be learned, one of weight in the understanding of the anatomy of the situation, and, consequently, of the caution that the situation demands, and the tactics that such situation renders imperative.

That there is a political break-up going on in the country is evident. The industrial or economic development, that congests capital more and more into few hands, is lashing the masses of the people into rebellion. Of these masses, one portion, the lesser, is substantially class-conscious; that portion is the middle class—the would-be plutocrats who have failed in the race; the larger portion, the working class, is still substantially class-unconscious. As a result of this, the capitalist and the middle class are organizing upon hostile political platforms into hostile political groups. Left to themselves, the middle class, being more numerous, might easily overthrow the capitalist class. But as this stage a complication steps in. There stands the working class, more numerous than both capitalist and middle class put together, and—ARMED WITH THE BALLOT. That is a quarry for votes. The class that can chip off for itself the largest portion of workingmen's votes must be the victor. Hence a scramble therefor. The tactics adopted by each is but the consequence of its special economic condition.

The capitalist class, as was seen during the McKinley campaign, need comparatively little buncombe; all it has to do is quietly, but firmly, tighten the screws on its employes: threaten them with lock-outs if its middle class political adversary wins; and, it having the largest number of wage slaves, rely in that way upon victory.

The middle class, on the contrary, being, not by reason of its humanity, but by reason of its inferior capital, unable to exploit as many workingmen, has not upon the working class the economic lever of influence that is in the hands of the upper capitalists. The middle class, accordingly, must resort to other methods in order to attract to itself the Labor Vote needed to prevail. Its methods are buncombe. Hence the political oratory of the middle class is the most misleading, the most insincere, the most fraudulent—it partakes of the nature of birdlime to attract and trepan the workingman.

Watched by the light shed by these facts, much that is otherwise obscure in the political apparitions of the day will become luminous; and the two Mayors of Toledo and Haverhill—Samuel M. Jones and John C. Chase—will not only be understood but will shed light on each other.

Both declaim against "capitalism"; but what both mean by that is, not the SYSTEM OF EXPLOITATION, but the exploitation of the middle class by the upper capitalists,—as exemplified by the Toledo gentleman, when he grows irate at the idea of a war upon the EMPLOYER CLASS; and as likewise exemplified by the Haverhill gentleman, when he takes his stand upon a platform that expressly pledges itself to protect the small farmers in their exploitation of labor, and when his party men spend their time in the Common Council voting for a reduction of the rate of interest from 7

to 5 per cent., a wholly middle class affair. Consequently both rear at the Class Struggle,—a principle that heads straight against the class they represent, by aiming at the abolition of all classes.

Again, both—their flanks and rear covered by the middle class—turn their main attention to the workingman as A VOTER, and, consequently, as indispensable food for their cannon,—as exemplified by the conduct of the Haverhill gentleman and his Haverhill companions in arms, when they are seen pushing themselves forward at labor meetings, as at Rockland, Marlboro, etc., and there, instead of, even at the risk of temporarily displeasing the workingmen, educating them out of their economic errors, talking to them approvingly of all the economic will-o'-the-wisps that these have been following to their sorrow, and thus seeking to insinuate themselves into the worker's good graces by flattering his superstitions; and as likewise exemplified by the Toledo gentleman when he is seen straining to rope in Socialist Labor party men of his own town, and here in New York pulls the strings for an opportunity to address labor organizations; and both wrap themselves in the cloak of Socialism—a term that, thanks to the conduct of the Socialist Labor party, is earning wide esteem for its soundness and character.

Toledo and Haverhill, the Joneses and the Chases are well worth close study; they are identical apparitions, peculiar to our political soil and atmosphere. Understood, they are valuable; misunderstood, no siren-capped rock is more fraught with danger for the welfare of the proletariat or the solution of the Social Question.

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