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EDITORIAL

TWO LESSONS IN ONE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE victory of Mayor Tom Johnson in Cleveland, on the 3-cent fare proposition, and the simultaneous crushing defeat of Mayor Fagan in Jersey City, on the issue of taxes, raised against him, should be a double-barreled warning against the Socialist party delusion of sacrificing principle to votes.

Tom Johnson, with his successful 3-cent fare fly-paper program, the foes of Fagan, with their successful "Low Tax" howl, raised against the high taxes that Fagan's model school houses and other similar improvements brought on, is a double-barreled repetition of the admonition that the Socialist must hew close to the line of sound economics.

The working class does not pay the taxes. Taxes are paid out of that portion of the product of Labor that Labor never pockets. Taxes are paid out of that portion of the product of Labor that Labor is plundered of in the factories, the mines, the mills, the shops and the railroad tracks. Taxes are paid out of that portion of the product of Labor that the capitalist class confiscates. In short, taxes are paid out of the capitalist's "profits." Consequently, "lower taxes" means a larger portion of the confiscated wealth, left in the pockets of the capitalist class, for the capitalist to squander in "Seeley Dinners," Yachts, "Excursions" to Paris dives, in the purchase of foreign "noblemen" for sons-in-law, etc., etc., etc.; "higher taxes" means a smaller portion of the confiscated wealth left in the pockets of the capitalist class for the capitalist to live in clover on. It follows, finally, that the question of taxation does not concern the working class. When the capitalist raises that question he merely seeks to use the working class voters as cats'-paws to pull the hot chestnuts out of the fire for himself.

Cheap fares, or cheap goods are but a lure to catch workers' votes by mixing up

their understanding. Labor's share in the wealth it produces does not depend upon the cheapness or dearness of goods. Normally speaking, "cheap goods" means "cheap wages," "dear goods" means "dear wages"—with the workingman no better and no worse off in either case. When the abnormal conditions of the present, so useful to capitalist expansion, and consisting in an excessive supply in the Labor Market, have set in, then Labor's share in the wealth it produces, that is, "wages" will tend downward, and "cheap goods" will rather lend a color of "fairness" to the decline, which otherwise is sought to be concealed behind the thousand and one painfully contrived tricks, intended to give a color to the false pretense of "higher wages" that accompanies the fact of higher prices. Marx's biting satire against the Labor-loving Free Trader is luminous on the Tom Johnson "program." It follows, consequently, that the "cheap goods" program of the Tom Johnsons is but a sleight-of-hand whereby to rifle the pockets of the workers more comfortably by cheating them into the belief that money is being put into their pockets.

Fagan's discomfiture, Tom Johnson's victory are beacons for the earnest Socialist to steer the craft of his propaganda by. The two beacons are raised on rocks that the Socialist in America can neglect only at the peril of the Movement.

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

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