

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 171.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1907.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

FLASHES IN THE PAN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE flow of “radical speeches” has started in Congress. Already it is a strong stream. It will become torrential by the time Congress adjourns for the Christmas holidays. Towards Spring, the torrent will have overflowed its banks, and swamped the land with pamphlets containing the “efforts,” and published at public expense. One of these, a leading one, so far, and among the first of the series, is the speech delivered by the Senator from Arkansas, Jeff. Davis, on the 11th of this month.

The acts of the Capitalist Class make sufficient goose-flesh of the people’s skin. The lurid passages in Senator Davis’s speech need not be quoted. The speech can be turned to better use by exposing the density of the dapper reformer.

Senator Davis gives a list of fifty-one multi-millionaires. The list is headed by John D. Rockefeller, to whom a fortune of \$600,000,000 is imputed. The list closes with Fred W. Vanderbilt, who is credited with a \$20,000,000 fortune. So far there is no fault to be found with the list. The error lies in the middle column. That column is supposed to convey information on the respective industries that yielded the respective fortunes. Beginning with Rockefeller, the source of whose fortune is given as “Oil,” the list mentions “Real Estate,” “Finance,” “Railroads,” “Gold,” “Sugar,” “Street Cars,” “Journalism,” “Brewery,” “Tobacco,” etc., etc., as so many other distinctive industries that have fattened the remaining fifty Croesuses on the list. A serious social-economic error underlies that column—an error that leads into a blind alley.

It is not true that Rockefeller made his \$600,000,000 fortune out of “Oil.” He made it out of real estate, out of finance, out of railroads, out of mining, out of sugar, out of street cars, out of journalism, out of breweries, out of tobacco, BESIDES “OIL”—in all of which he holds stock.

It is not true that W.W. Astor made his \$300,000,000 fortune out of “Real Estate.” He made it out of oil, out of finance, out of railroads, out of mining, out of sugar, out of street cars, out of journalism, out of breweries, out of tobacco, BESIDES “REAL ESTATE”—in all of which he holds stock.

It is not true that J. Pierpont Morgan made his \$150,000,000 fortune out of “Finance.” He made it out of oil, out of real estate, out of railroads, out of mining, out of sugar, out of street cars, out of journalism, out of breweries, out of tobacco, BESIDES “FINANCE”—in all of which he holds stock.

It is not true that W.K. Vanderbilt made his \$100,000,000 fortune out of “Railroads.” He made it out of oil, out of real estate, out of finance, out of mining, out of sugar, out of street cars, out of journalism, out of breweries, out of tobacco, BESIDES “RAILROADS”—in all of which he holds stock.

And so on, down the line. ALL the multi-millionaires have to-day their tentacles in ALL the industries, and, out of ALL the working class engaged in ALL the industries of the land, the said tentacles draw the sap up and into ONE BODY—the Capitalist Class.

False premises lead to false conclusions. He who proceeds from the error that Rockefeller is only an oil man, Vanderbilt a railroad man, Morgan a finance-man, etc., naturally falls into the “one thing at a time” blunder. He proceeds to reform either oil, or railroads, or finance, etc., and, not knowing that one chord unites them all, he is unaware that the twitch he gives to any one of the set is felt by all, and he looks in amazement at the way his “innocent,” “safe and sane,” and “practical” reform pull brings the whole shooting-match like a pile of bricks over his ears, or a swarm of hornets around his head. The consequence is disheartenment.

Reform is a flash in the pan. Only the attack upon the central wrong—the private ownership of the necessities for work—is a shot with a bullet in it, and that hits bull’s-eye, and one that NEVER CAN BRING DISHEARTENMENT.

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

Uploaded November 2009

slpns@slp.org