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EDITORIAL

BRYAN AND MONOPOLY.

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FROM the way Mr. Bryan uses the word “monopoly,” which occurs frequently in his otherwise brilliant speech on the Trusts, the conclusion is obvious that the gentleman is hazy upon the subject.

What is a monopoly?

Does a “monopoly” arise when only one combine is in the field and is able to exclude all the others? And does “monopoly” cease to be where two, or three, or say a hundred combines exist and compete with one another?

According to Mr. Bryan such is the test of “monopoly”—does one combine render all others impossible, or practically so, then there is “monopoly,” and that is bad; is there no such one combine, and are there a number of them competing, then there is no “monopoly,” and that insures freedom, democracy, etc. That this is Mr. Bryan’s concept of “monopoly” appears clearly from the passage: “The Democratic party does not oppose all corporations,” etc.

What is a monopoly?

A monopoly is that which incapacitates even one man from exercising his powers of production. If but one man can not produce because of the power held by another, there is monopoly. It matters not whether hundreds or even thousands have a free field. If all the inhabitants enjoy not an equally free field there is monopoly interfering with their freedom.

To recognize the Standard Oil as a “monopoly” and to deny “monopoly” power to a single capitalist is as absurd and as pregnant with dangerously false conclusions as it would be to recognize the “animal” in an elephant and be blind to the “animal” in a mouse. They are both animals.

The essence of “monopoly” is that it subjects others to itself. The private ownership of the essentials for work subjects to itself those who are stripped of such

essentials. In this condition is the tool-less working class. The individual holder of an independent oil refinery, harassed for existence by the Standard Oil, is a monopolist towards his workingmen, an infinitely more cruelly grinding monopolist than is the Standard Oil towards him, even though he has a score of fellow harassees.

The difference between Mr. Taft and Mr. Bryan on the subject of monopoly is not that the one approves of the beast, and the other does not. They are both upholders of monopoly. The difference is that Taft's motto declares:

“Blessings upon monopoly and the devil take both the small fry capitalists and the whole pack of the working class.”

While Bryan's motto declares:

“Blessings upon monopoly, provided it be the monopoly of the small fry capitalists towards the workers—but the devil take the monopoly of the plutocratic capitalists towards the small fry ones.

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

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