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EDITORIAL

## DUCKS IN THUNDER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**WO leading bosses—Roosevelt and William Barnes, jr.—have recently made a confession, that is, a virtual admission of their being but ducks in the presence of the economic-political thunder that has broken over their heads.

As to Roosevelt he announces in this month's *American Magazine*: "New issues are coming up. I see them. People are going to discuss economic questions more and more; the tariff, currency, banks. They are hard questions, and I am not deeply interested in them; my problems are moral problems, and my teaching has been plain morality."

Mr. Barnes puts the matter less pretentiously. In his *Albany Evening Journal* he draws a pen picture of himself, all the more truthful because unconscious. One can imagine Barnes' looks, his bulging eyes, his hair standing on end, his blanched lips when he penned the sentence "the mazes of public opinion" that are causing him utter bewilderment.

Roosevelt and Barnes are only types of their class. It is a class which has hitherto performed to perfection the role of the fly on the wheel. A gigantic nation, cast by the Revolution of 1776 into a certain mold, the capitalist mold, developed logically. The flies on the wheel imagined they did the developing. The nation grew powerful, regardless, indeed, despite them; they took the credit to themselves. All they had to do was to swim, or roll, with the current. They conceived the notion that they raised and ran the current; and, as the party, on the wheels of which they roosted, was the natural political expression of the economic development that was going on, they found themselves regularly on the side of the emphatic triumphs, which, of course, they regularly attributed to themselves.

In the meantime the evolutionary course was undermining the baby born in

1776. It had grown to maturity, to old age, and is now “a foot in the grave young man.” Within the decomposing body new elements were gathering for a new birth. Of that the flies on the wheel knew nothing. While the flies on the wheel were filling the world with speeches, articles and “messages,” in which all the tricks of rhetoric were resorted to except the hard study requisite for the mastery of the subject, other people were studying “economic questions,” and doing hard work. The flies elocutionized on the “tariff,” on “currency,” on “banking”—the future powers were studying, learning, knowing and shaping “public opinion.” A time was bound to come when the flies would realize that their stuff was twaddle. That time has come. With it a metamorphosis took place. The flies became ducks. The issues rolling thunder. And, like ducks in thunder, the one-time “leaders” now are amazed, bewildered by the “mazes of public opinion,” and, funniest yet, imagine they can run away from the “hard questions,” so much harder than spinning out “morality” essays.

The thunder, will overtake them, and its bolts, too. They will stand transfixed by the mazes of issues that fly duck-like they were too class-dull to grasp and grapple with, and that now have overtaken them to their undoing.

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

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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)