

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Our Andy Once Again

In his recent defense of the millionaires, Mr. Carnegie, among other very foolish things, said:

Look at the countries that are without millionaires. Take India, where there are no millionaires excepting the Indian princes, and there is no country in the East where the mass of the people are in such poor condition. In Russia where there are no millionaires excepting those that have been made so by the inheritance of royal wealth, the condition of the people has excited the criticism of the world. In Germany, where there were two millionaires, but where there is now but one, and in France, where you can count the millionaires on your hands, the condition of the great mass of inhabitants is an unfavorable contrast to that of England. England, which has great millionaires, produces a race of working people whose condition and surroundings are immensely superior to those of any other country in Europe, and whose political rights are clear defined, more thoroughly respected. In this country the condition of the workingmen is so far better than in any other civilized country that the American workingman is able really to waste, I say waste, what would serve to “keep” a workingman in Germany or France.

The millionaire is really a product of the prosperity of the masses. He is the legitimate outgrowth of their material advancement. We have millionaires here because the masses are prosperous. They know something of luxury. If any one is agitated about what he fancies is an undue number of millionaires in this country, I will ask such a one to stop and think what does the millionaire get. I make the statement as a fact that, be a millionaire ever so miserly and selfish, it is not possible for him to divert his wealth from enterprises that

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contribute to the prosperity of the country. His very passion to multiply his riches of necessity enhances the prosperity of the nation. It is a fact undenied that the man who recently died, and who at his death ranked as the richest man of the country, had every cent of his fortune, except that which was necessary to support himself and his family, invested and at work night and day in the development of the vast railroad systems of this country. It is true that the millionaire may live in a finer house than some of his neighbors, he may wear finer clothes, he may eat a finer quality of food, he may adorn his dwelling with paintings and a few trifles of art fancies—after all, what does he really get? And frequently he toils like a slave at his business. Why, the community simply gives him his board and lodging. It is certain he can't carry away any of the fortune that he is accumulating.

This would all be very nice, if it were only all true. But in most assertions, “our Andy” puts the cart before the horse. There is no good reason, for instance, why, if a millionaire makes a country prosperous, a millionaire Indian prince should not by his sacred presence as wonderfully develop a country as one who has been made so by the protective system of a paternal government.

The statement that there {are} only two millionaires in Germany is one of the most reckless and daring misstatements of fact ever uttered.

What about the old commercial house of Fugger, known all over the world as one of the earliest to trade with the Orient, as far back as 1450? Anton Fugger, who died in 1596, left behind 6,000,000 gold crowns, besides invaluable jewels and landed property in various parts of Europe and the East and West Indies. His sons lived in Augsburg, possessed of the largest and finest collection of books and paintings, supported artists, composers and musicians with unstinted liberality; their houses were miracles of architecture, their gardens samples of paradise, and like their modern imitators, they had razed old quarters, and built at Augsburg 108 dwellings which have ever since been let to the poor for a bare pittance. Besides Krupp,

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Wolfe, Siemens, Heye, Loewe, Singer, etc., there are now scores of millionaires in Germany, and have been for many years past.

“In France, you can count the millionaires on your hands,” says Mr. Carnegie, and yet the inhabitants are unfavorably situated as compared with England.

How many millionaires does it take to make a country prosperous?

It is not true that the very passion of the millionaire to multiply his riches adds to the prosperity of the country. It is true that the millionaire is the product of the prosperity of the masses, and that he prospers on their misery as well.

But the millionaire does not bring prosperity to the masses. He employs his great wealth to increase his store. He profits by the labor power of others. He pays them in wages, less than the value of their product. Hence in this country, where we have most millionaires, hundreds of thousands are suffering for the necessities of life, and hundreds are putting an end to their miserable lives by suicide.

The plea that the poor millionaire who owns a palatial residence on Fifth Avenue, New York, and two baronial castles in Scotland, is underfed and miserably housed, is too ridiculous to reply to.

If the wage earner is so much better off than the millionaire, why doesn't Andy put on his overalls, hob nailed shoes and hand leathers, and hop down into the casting pit where the beatles can belch their fiery sparks about him, and the swinging ladles of molten steel and the hot ingots will keep his ears and his shins warm?

But Andy is not sincere, and his actions prove it. He is becoming as much of a clown as dear Chauncey!

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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