

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Hoisted With Their Own Petard

Mr. Oswald Ottendorfer, a member of the German American class of Pharisees, has recently indulged in a long wail about the “financial heresies” that are disturbing the repose of the gold bugs. That he and his should view these heresies with alarm is not surprising. The surprising, and withal amusing, feature of his lamentations is, however, that he, of all men, should find fault with the tendency of the “financial heretics” to believe, as he puts it, “the United States is the center of all the universe, to the demands and whims of which the whole world has to submit, and it would not be astonishing to hear that some bill is introduced in Congress, to provide for the amendment and repeal of the laws of nature.”

The notion that the “United States is the center of all the universe”, and that the laws of nature do not operate here, is one which the Jingo capitalists have carefully cultivated. Tell them that the same causes that pauperize Europe will pauperize us, and the answer comes like a flash from them: “Not at all, America is wholly unlike Europe”; ask them why the law of wages should act differently here from elsewhere, and they promptly answer “because we are not in Europe”; they will admit that the working classes of Europe are on the point of voting themselves into power there, but here they claim such a thing wont happen because it is not necessary, we being a republic; ask them whether we are any more of a republic than France or Switzerland, and they will say, “certainly, here everything is different”; ask them whether people can earn a

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living here without capital and land any more than in Europe, and the answer is,} “Why, certainly, American genius has ways of its own”; talk to them of the “American proletariat”, and they fly at you with the remark that such a thing as “proletarian” is utterly un-American. In other words, their position is tantamount to claiming that America is not a portion of our globe or planetary system, and that the law of nature don’t apply here.

The native Jingo is a preposterous enough being; but he does not begin to hold a candle to the imported Jingo, especially of the German variety. This latter class, of which our leading brewers, the Steinways and the Ottendorfers are types, consists of upstarts, who came here with piebald antecedents at a time when capital was not as concentrated as it is now, and who had all the vulgar and hard-hearted requirements to grind out money from the sweat of labor. They became wealthy and out-Herod Herod in their Jingoism. In the same breath that they will order “einmal bier und sauerkraut”, they will turn around and declare that they have ceased to be German, are wholly American, and that here everything is different from everywhere else.

With this claim, the capitalist Jingo—native and imported—have been narcotizing our people, sucking their blood while telling them that such an operation is an impossibility here in America, and misleading them into all sorts of false steps. Whenever the American proletariat proposes doing any sensible thing in its own favor, and its proposition, being sensible, falls in line with similar moves by its fellow toilers in other lands, “un-American” is the anathema hurled at its head; “Never mind how things are done in other countries, here you must not act in that way, because this is America”; “Let the working class have their own party in Europe, here politics and sociology are unique; you don’t need a party of your own; if you set up one you are un-American in your sentiments!” etc., etc. So say the capitalist Jingo.

Quaint it is to find these same capitalist Jingo now object

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to having this their own way of reasoning turned upon them by the “finance heretics”; passing quaint to see them hoisted with their own petard that “America is not subject to the laws of nature.”

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