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EDITORIAL

ENTHUSIASM BY THE \$\$.

By DANIEL DE LEON

It is not often that occasion offers to prove crushingly the connection between “noble enthusiasm” and material interests, and thus to demonstrate the important fact that views, opinions, sentiments, etc., are essentially only reflexes of man’s physical needs. As a rule, that which is enthused over can be so tricked out as very much to conceal and blur the connection between the effect and the real cause. Quite recently, however, a scene took place in this city that brings out clearly the principle.

There is in this country an organization called Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association. Its purpose is to secure tariff legislation with an eye to preventing American travelers in Europe from making large purchases there, and in that way increase sales here. The President of the Association is one Shayne. The body had a banquet, and Shayne made an address. The reports of the affair were remarkable.

Shayne’s address was clumsy, low, vulgar, and yet none of Blaine’s most impassioned orations ever did, in our days, arouse the paroxysms of enthusiasm that Shayne’s address aroused from the banqueting members of the Association. When he told how, since (thanks to his lobbying work) the present Custom House regulation pry into the trunks of American travelers from Europe, one Paris firm’s sales had come down \$50,000 a year, the guests jumped up with cries of “Patriotism!”, “Patriotism!”, and when he summed up the various items, and declared that \$100,000,000 had thus been turned into the coffers of “our American merchants and manufacturers,” the joy of these merchants and manufacturers knew no bounds; they became delirious; jumping on their chairs and even on the tables, they broke forth into the anthem “My Country it is of thee!”—

Where the material interests are groveling in their nature, the “noble enthusiasm” they evoke will be low, despicable, and harmful. Only where the material interests are helpful to civilization, like in the instance of class-conscious proletarian interests, is the enthusiasm they evoke noble indeed. The nobility of the enthusiasm of the

Shaynes, of the capitalist in general, implies a degraded, impoverished people; the nobility of the enthusiasm of the proletariat implies a free, happy, civilized race.

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

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