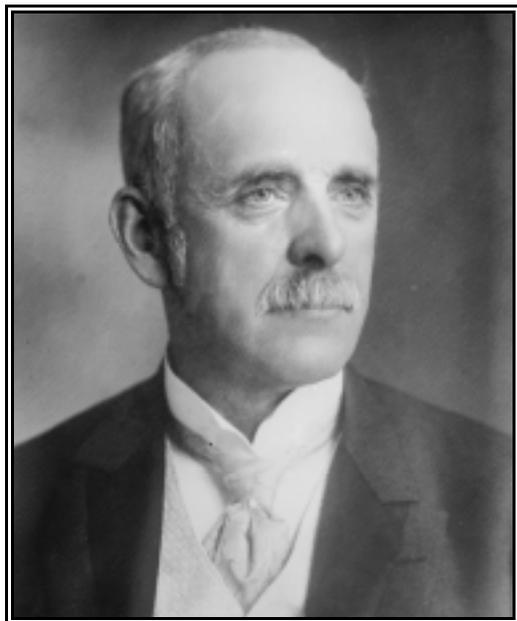


EDITORIAL

EX-SECRETARY SHAW'S DILEMMA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ADDRESSING the alumni of Dickinson College, Leslie M. Shaw, former United States Secretary of the Treasury, expressed his alarm at the trend toward Socialism, and declared he saw no power in the country to stem the trend except the "trained minds of college men."



LESLIE M. SHAW (1848-1942)

The staunchest ship makes bilge water; the prettiest of roses has its thorns; the best of principles its drawbacks. Socialism is no exception. It also has its thorns; it also makes bilge water, it also has its drawbacks.

The demonstration of the presence of bilge water is no argument against a ship's staunchness; evidence of thorns is no argument against a rose's beauty; drawbacks are no reason against the excellence of a principle. Neither would "bilge water," "thorns" or "drawbacks" disprove Socialism.

Nevertheless, cogent reasoning upon these "spots in the sun" might for a time perplex, bewilder and confuse, with the consequence that Socialism might, perhaps, be delayed. In order to give this result, however, the reasoning would have to be cogent.

Cogent reasoning against a thing requires accurate knowledge of the thing itself. However ineffectual in the end, cogent reasoning against the "bilge water," "thorns" and "drawbacks" of Socialism would have to proceed from accurate knowledge of Socialist Science. Only he who knows Socialism thoroughly could really throw up an "embankment" against the Socialist flood.

And there is where Mr. Shaw's expectations come to grief.

The last place to obtain a correct knowledge of Socialist Science is in our Colleges; the last means whereby to obtain the knowledge is the text books on economics and sociology—crude compilations gotten up “to sell”—that are used in the Colleges. A “trained mind” on the subject is the last thing to be looked for from the youth that has been made to pasture on such thistles.

A trained mind on economics can be looked for only from those who have drunk deep at the fountain of Socialist Science. Those who have done so have minds too well trained to fail to make allowance for “thorns,” “bilge water” and “drawbacks” in all matters of importance. Not from them need opposition to the trend of Socialism be expected.

And there Mr. Shaw's expectations are impaled upon one or other of the two horns of the dilemma:—

Stuff the students mind with economic trash, then he is incapacitated to discover the “spots on the sun” of Socialism;

Furnish the student's mind with sound Socialist information, then he will detect the said “spots,” but will be too scientifically trained to bother about trifles.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org