
The Workers and the Trusts (August 31, 1899)

Labor, at least that part not reduced to the dullness and servility of “the man with the hoe,” will arouse and unify in the next year or two and take cognizance of the trend of the economic development from which there is even now evolving a new and progressive trades unionism, which will be arrayed against capitalism, not alone on the industrial but also on the political field.

Such alleged leaders as [Peter M.] Arthur and other high officials who are on terms of intimacy with the oppressors of labor and whose leadership consists in keeping labor in chains will be ignominiously retired.

Labor will realize that its only means of salvation lies through united political action along class-conscious lines, and then, in spite of the protestations of fools and knaves, labor will mass its forces beneath the emancipating banner of the Social Democratic Party, whose platform declares its object to be “the establishment of a system of cooperative production and distribution through the restoration to the people of all the means of production and distribution, to be administered by organized society in the interest of the whole people, and the complete emancipation of society from the domination of capitalism.”

In the campaign of 1900 this party, by the support of that part of labor that can be fooled and bunkoed no longer, will surprise the country; in 1904, if it does not carry the country, it will take second place, and in 1908, when it will sweep into power in spite of hell and all its furies, what will it do to the trusts? In the language of the Bowery, “Oh, not a thing!”

Labor (and I am talking about intelligent labor) will take no hand in “smashing the trusts.” Labor’s voice will not be heard in the political pick-pockets’ clamor to “down the trusts.” They have sense enough to know that they might as well attempt to force the waters of the Mississippi back into the millions of tributaries when they come.

Labor will meet the “swift and intense concentration of capital” by the “swift and intense concentration of labor.” The swifter and intenser the concentration the better. The trust is the final manifestation of this

concentration before labor has its inning. Here is the order of development: the individual, the firm, the trust, the people.

As a socialist, therefore, I hail the trust. I view its development and expansion with supreme satisfaction, and I would not, if I could, check its growth by laying so much as a straw in its way. The socialists want the trusts. When they are ripe, the people will be ready, and then there will be a change of ownership and operation.

The people will come into possession of their own. No man will then labor, but all men will work. Wage slavery will disappear, the machine will be the only slave, economic equality will prevail, and labor, for the first time since the earth was flung into space, will be free.

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