

EDITORIAL

BANGING ITS FETISH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE is no description, among the many thrillingly amusing ones, of how heathens occasionally treat their worshipped fetishes when these misbehave, that can compare with the treatment accorded by the *New York Evening Post* to its fetish Free Trade upon Bryan's brilliant speech on the tariff.

Mr. Bryan's tariff speech was a shower of cuts administered on the face, the back and the chest, to say nothing of the shins, of the "Protected Interests." True enough, the argument concerns only the property-holding divisions of the property-holding class; true enough, it is all one to the wage slaves whether their exploiters be free trade or protectionists; in so far, true enough, Mr. Bryan's argument was hollow; but, as far as that goes, that would only add to the admiration of the *Evening Post*. Instead, however, of indulging in paroxysmal canticles to its Free Trade fetish, the *Evening Post* roundly abused the same. It "was left cold," the *Evening Post* declared; and, over the back of Mr. Bryan, it kicked and cuffed the poor fetish in tones that were unmistakable.

What had the fetish done, poor thing, to deserve such treatment?

As usually with fetishes, it did nothing; but one of its praise-singers sinned for it.

Mr. Bryan explained the Free Trade position as demanding no imports except for revenue, and he proceeded to prove with unerring logic that such, as all other tariff imports, are in the nature of a tax on income—of course, the income of the property holding class.

An "Income Tax"! No red rag before a bull is redder than the rag of "Income Tax" to a plutocrat. His instinct tells him unerringly that the moment a tax is levied knowingly upon his income, that moment the windows are opened for the hand to enter that may seize the whole of his stolen goods. Say not "Income Tax" to a

plutocrat, no more than mention the word “rope” in the family of a hanged criminal. The bare allusion to an “Income Tax” sends the plutocrat’s heels up in the air, kicking wildly with rage.

Bryan should have said nothing on the subject of “Income Tax,” least of all should he have identified the thing with even a tariff for revenue only. Abolish the tariff for protection; leave a tariff for revenue only—that’s orthodox; but go further, and simply point out that such a revenue-tariff is a sort of “Income Tax,” and the most orthodox and popular fetish immediately becomes heterodox and hated in the eyes of the species “Free Trader Vulgaris.”

Hence the kicks and cuffs the *Evening Post* suddenly administered to its fetish; hence the promptness with which the *Evening Post* hustled its fetish out of sight.

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

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