

EDITORIAL

JOSEPH WELDON BAILEY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MANY a year before the luminous star of Robert La Follette rose above the horizon, many more years before the equally luminous star of Woodrow Wilson became visible, there shone the star of Joseph Weldon Bailey, first as a member of the House of Representatives, then as a Senator from the State of Texas, in the firmament of American politics. He shone alone. To-day he is a fallen star, rolling in the gutters of bourgeois infamy of character, the victim of bourgeois temptation, as worthless for good as a cast-off oil can of his corrupter the Standard Oil Company.

With his valedictory, pronounced in the Senate, Senator Bailey has furnished the gauge wherewith to measure the depth of his fall. One passage will serve for the rest.

“There never was an hour,” Senator Bailey said, “when an honest day’s toil would bring as many of the comforts of this life as it will to-day. The merchant of to-day lives better than the banker of twenty years ago; the skilled mechanic of to-day lives better than the merchant did twenty years ago.”

So speaks the canting Pharisee whose name is identified with the Standard Oil Trust. It is his voice that is heard.

During the last twenty years the application of improved methods of production has immeasurably eliminated skill as an economic factor. The trend of civilization is the increased facility of production accompanied with increased returns. The process makes for the elimination of toil, hand in hand with increased abundance. That process, fraught with blessings, is turned by capitalism into a curse. Relatively, the skilled mechanics become fewer; absolutely “unskilled,” though necessary, labor waxes in volume. The consequence is deepening misery for increasing numbers.

Even if it be true that the “skilled mechanic” lives better to-day than did the

merchant twenty years ago—an unqualified untruth—the alleged improved condition of the skilled mechanic is the measure of the positive deteriorated condition of masses of unskilled, or one-time skilled mechanics, whose skill is no longer wanted. Of all of these not a word from Senator Bailey. He stops short when he reaches them; and, if his words at all cause them to rise to the mind, they are damned by implication. Being “unskilled,” they, that indispensable element in the labor market, deserve no consideration.

The passage reads like a page from John D. Rockefeller’s Sunday school catechism. And Joseph Weldon Bailey, whose voice once rang sympathetically for the under dog in society, now earns his last Judas pence by acting as the mouthpiece of and Senator for the State of Oil.

Senator Bailey has long felt his position untenable in the Senate. The stench of his Standard Oil constituency and master long has been too strong even for the Senate. Son-in-law Aldrich retired; now Bailey retires, an intellectual skull-and-crossbones wreck of the many that strew the path of capitalism.

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