

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 6, NO. 149.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1905.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

## CIVIC FEDERATION LUBBERISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE performance recorded in the fable of the ass that disported himself kicking against pricks seems to be perennial. Mr. Wm. Macarthur, the Editor of the *Coast Seaman's Journal*, and, no doubt, a star pupil of the "literary educational club" established by the Civic Federation, and run by Mr. Ralph Easley for the benefit of "Labor Editors," is the latest performer. The prick against which the gentleman kicks is Socialism. Upon "Socialistic Fallacies" he runs down the sails of his ship bellying full with a stiff Easleyan breeze on his quarters, his hand firm to the helm, and his experienced nautical eye fixed aloft like a heroic Cap. Bunsby.<sup>1</sup>

"Wealth," explains the learned Macarthur, "is produced mainly from two sources, land and machinery": "land, as a producer of wealth, is far ahead of machinery"; "it is conceivable that man could live very well without machinery, but even a Socialist must admit that men could not very well live without land"; "despite this self-evident proposition, the land question with Socialists is not nearly so important a question as the question of machinery"; consequently, Socialism is a fallacy, and Socialists muddleheads. All of which is very original, as original twaddle as if some landlubber were to reprimand the coast seaman Macarthur for giving so much thought to ships and so little to the sea, arguing that: "coast commerce is produced mainly from two sources, sea and ships"; "sea is herein far ahead of ships"; "it is conceivable that the sea could get along very well without ships, but even a Macarthur must admit that ships could not exist without the sea—unless they were prairie schooners"; "despite this self-evident proposition, the sea question with the Macarthurs is not nearly so important a question as the question of ships"; consequently, Macarthurism is a fallacy, and the Macarthurs are muddleheads. Undoubtedly the tar Macarthur would

---

<sup>1</sup> [A character from Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*.]

give that landlubber the loud guffaw; so does the Socialist to the Civic Federation-lubber Macarthur.

Great as are the stores of wealth drawn and to be drawn out of, or reached through the sea, vast as are the comforts that flow from such wealth, the comforts could not be enjoyed because the wealth could not be got at without ships—the machinery with which to plow the sea, and make it yield the wealth that directly or indirectly comes from it. The seas are free; and yet without the machinery of the “ship” all such wealth is as if it were not—inaccessible. Identically with land and machinery. As man is not a porpoise, able to utilize the sea without ships, neither is he a mole able to utilize the land without machinery. As the sea, “free” though it is, remains locked to the shipless man, so is the toolless man barred from the land, however “free” that may be made. Land, like the sea, is natural opportunity. That natural opportunity, however, man is barred from without he is equipped with the social opportunity—machinery, in other words, capital. The role played in the affairs of man by the evolution of the tool of production is concealed from the superficial observer by the fortuitous circumstance that the land is appropriatable; that role is, however, forcibly brought home even to the most superficial on the trackless main. Without the modern tool of production, the gate to natural opportunities is locked. Machinery picks that lock. As monumental an imbecile as he would be who gave his thoughts to the sea, and ignored the ship with which to get at the sea, so monumental a visionary is he who raises the “Land Question” to paramount importance, above the machinery with which to get at the land.

There is no “Land Question,” except in the sense that there is a “Sea Question.” In short, to-day THE question is the question of getting at both—and that is the Question of Machinery. With the machinery, or capital in the hands of Labor the “Land and Sea Question” is solved to the Working Class—as completely solved as, and for the same reason that, it is to-day solved to the Capitalist Class. To kick against this proposition is to kick against pricks.

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

Uploaded January 2009

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)