

EDITORIAL

SENATOR BEVERIDGE OPENS THE CAMPAIGN TO THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

SENATOR Beveridge,¹ in opening the Republican campaign at Ogden, Utah, delivered himself of an oration in which he sweepingly and grandiloquently praised the Republican administration and the system of trustification which it fosters and protects. Of course his aim was to show that both had been beneficial to all classes of the nation, especially the working class. In so doing he was careful to confine himself to broad generalities. In one instance, however, he particularized, and his particularization opened a hole in his argument through which a flood of facts can flow and drown it out.

Referring to the vast consolidations of railroads, Beveridge said: “The little separate lines of a generation ago, acting in competition without scientific or sensible connections, paid the laborers 15 to 50 per cent. less than the same men receive to-day. And yet the opposition to the Government demands the dissolution of these consolidations.”

Now, what are the facts in this case? A writer in the current issue of *The American Journal of Sociology* in calling attention to the alarming increase of railroad disasters in the United States, and arguing that overwork on the part of the workers is the cause of it all, presents some facts that do damage to Beveridge’s statement. According to this writer, in 1893, for freight service, for instance, there was a movement of 107,129 ton miles of traffic per employee, while in 1900 there were 139,143 ton miles. This is an increase of labor of one-fifth in seven years. But as the men work by the trip their pay has decreased about 30 per cent., while the cost of living has increased 35 per cent.



ALBERT JEREMIAH BEVERIDGE (1862-1927)

¹ {Albert J. Beveridge, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000429/>}

Thus, extra work at less wages is thrown on the railroad employees. And why is this done? To decrease operating expenses, or, as the writer referred to puts it: “Each general manager who takes charge of a railroad is confronted with the figures of the gross and net earnings of the property under the management of his predecessor, and is expected to show an increase over those figures, while the operating expenses decrease. * * * There are only two avenues open to him—one is to neglect the physical condition of the property under his management, the other to make the employees produce more for the money they get. He chooses what he considers the less of the two evils—that of making the employees produce more.”

Here, then, we have a statement which knocks Beveridge’s roseate picture of prosperity in a cocked hat. Railway wages are not only not from 15 to 50 per cent. higher, but they are less when the increased work and cost of living are considered. The danger attending this means of making a livelihood, as shown in the increased disasters, is, fortunately for Beveridge’s argument, not computable on a percentage basis. And what is true of railroads is also true of the iron and steel industry. As has been repeatedly shown in the *Daily People*, every increase of wages in this industry has been accompanied by an increased output and an increased death rate, the number of violent deaths from accidents, etc., etc., in Allegheny {Allegany?} County, amounting last year to over two thousand persons. The census of 1900 shows that the wages of the entire working class have absolutely and relatively declined. It is upon such a foundation that Beveridge’s sweeping generalities are built.

But they will not down. The working class perceive that, deck the facts as the Beveridges will, let them pile up the totals regarding the expenses of government, the decrease of the national debt and interest charges, the increase of the gold reserve, the national balance, bank deposits and export trade, the prosperity of Republicanism is the prosperity of the capitalist class. And so it would continue to be if the Democrats were in power. In a land where all the means of making wealth are in the hands of the capitalist class, prosperity redounds only to that class. If the working class would have prosperity it must own the means of producing wealth. It must make capital social property.

The Socialist Labor Party alone stands for and logically pursues this programme.

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