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EDITORIAL

A CHIEF TAKING NOTES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON the 30th of last December a gorgeous affair took place in Boston. It was the annual banquet of the Boston Merchants' Association. The plates cost \$8 a piece. Secretary Taft was the guest of honor. Though himself a radiant star, most of the other guests themselves were refulgent luminaries in the capitalist firmament. What the characteristics of the celebrants were may be judged from the elaborate menu. Tell me what a man eats, and I'll tell you who he is—is a saying of no little weight. The menu started with "canapé caviar frais"—a rank appetite stimulator. The healthy man needs a meal for his appetite; the unhealthy man needs an appetite for his meal. The guests at the Boston Merchants' Association belonged to the latter category.

"A healthy mind in a healthy body" is an adage of old standing. It sums up the desirable state of things in man. Where the body is unhealthy the mind must suffer; inversely, where the mind is distempered the body is unwell. The truth of the adage is verified in the instance of the guests at the banquet of the Boston Merchants' Association. The unwell state of their minds was reflected in their speeches. A synopsis of the speeches was published in the Boston papers, but none of the synopses does justice to the patients. Secretary Taft made the principal speech, in the course of which "he mentioned Socialism not less than from fifteen to twenty times." At previous banquets of the Boston Merchants' Association the word Socialism was never, or rarely heard. To-day it is a word of such frequent recurrence on the lips of the banqueters that it is proof positive of its weighing heavily on and deranging the minds of its utterers.

And well it may.

In the days of the old Roman Empire the purse-proud and land-proud patricians took no more notice of their slaves, present at their debauches, than of

the dogs and cats who may have happened to stray in. The Roman lordling cared not whether his slaves heard, or did not hear, what he said; whether they saw, or did not see, what he did. The Roman slave-proletariat amounted to zero. The real information of value, cited above, concerning the banquet of the Boston Merchants' Association was furnished to *The People* not by the public press; it was furnished by one of the wage slaves present. The capitalist lordling of to-day is as little concerned whether his wage slaves hear or not what he says. In so far things are to-day as they were of old. The radical difference lies in this{:}) that the Roman lordling was right, his capitalist echo of to-day is wrong. The slaves of the Roman lordling did not yet constitute the class that was to overthrow slavery. Hence it mattered not what they heard, they could not understand. The wage slaves of the capitalist lordling do constitute the class that is to overthrow slavery. Hence they do understand what they see and hear. They are "chiel taking notes," and gathering from their notes, and imparting to their fellow wage slaves through their notes, that just respect for themselves and contempt for the lordlings that is necessary for the great revolution of civilization, now preparing, where slavery is finally to be abolished—once for all.

No wonder Secretary Taft's mind was unconsciously perturbed. The telepathic influence of the wage-slave chiel taking notes was the silent cause of the Secretary's mentioning Socialism "not less than from fifteen to twenty times."

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

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