

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Weaver as a Historian and Philosopher

Says Weaver, the late Populist candidate for President, in a recent letter:

Suppose Jefferson had insisted upon inserting the outlines of the contemplated Constitution within his immortal declaration, could he have united the colonies upon such an instrument? No! * * * Suppose, again, that President Lincoln and his coadjutors had outlined * * * the reconstruction measures and the necessary amendments to the Constitution, could he have rallied the people to his support? No!

After asking and correctly answering these questions, Weaver, the historian and philosopher, concludes that, for the same reason, “all subordinate questions” must be left aside and the people rallied around the “essential, fundamental and central idea of free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1.”

In other words, according to Weaver, free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1 is {to} the present social question, what freedom from England was in 1776 or the preservation of the Union {was} in 1861!

Both in 1776 and in 1861 a central idea and leading thought was put forward. Without freedom from England no republican constitution could be set up; and during the rebellion no reconstruction measures could be debated. Accordingly, the Declaration of Independence from England was and per force

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became the dominant thought of the Continental Congress, and in 1861 the restoration of the Union was and per force had to be the dominant thought of Lincoln.

How is it with regard to the money question?

The cause of the people's poverty lies in increasing numbers of them being deprived of the machinery of production through the increasingly concentrated size of such machinery. The ownership of the things one needs for production is the portal of well being and all that thereby hangs; without access to the land on which, and to the best available machinery by which, to work, man is enslaved to him who is possessed of these essentials. The public or collective ownership of these is, accordingly, to the social movement of to-day what freedom from England was to that of 1776, and what the restoration of the Union was to Lincoln. That and no other is the prime and main and only question; and that is the question to be seen to.

Will money, any monetary reform, touch that question? In no wise! Coin money as plentifully as the rankest moneyist may wish, it will only increase the per capita held by the millionaire and give a few middle-class men a new lease of life whereby to continue to skin their employees—clerks, mechanics and farm hands.

The money question is to the present social question what “reconstruction” would have been in 1861 or the Federal Constitution in 1776. To raise that question to the dignity of that of freedom from England in 1776 or to that of preserving the Union in 1861 is an act that marks the attempter thereof a veritable bungler in history and economics.

When the blind leads the blind, they both drop into the ditch. A movement that is led by the Weavers and their “philosophy” is marked Ichabod. Unhappy the nation whose people should in perceptible numbers listen to such scatter-brained seducers.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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