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# The Lesson of Albany: An Editorial from *The Toiler*

by Elmer T. Allison

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Although unsigned, this appeared under a masthead naming Elmer Allison as editor.

By a singular circumstance the farce “trial” of the five Socialist Assemblymen at Albany came to a conclusion on All Fools’ Day. It is fitting that the final conclusion of this travesty on justice and representative government received such a sitting. It also happens that the vote of the wily members of the Assembly upon the seating of the Socialists was set for one day after the last day upon which the Governor could legally call a special election to fill their seats were they found guilty of the charges against them, thus precluding their reelection at the hands of an outraged constituency as was true in the [Victor] Berger case. The “trial” ended as planned. The frame up worked like a charm.

It is folly to feel remorseful at this blow directed at the principle of representative government. Rather may we feel grateful that the hand of the buccaneers has been brought into view and the class character of capitalist government shown up so glaringly.

While we would LIKE to see that principle embedded in the foundation of the government so deeply that by no means could it be pried loose by the capitalist conspirators, we realize that government is a class institution — erected in the interests of one class and against the interests of all other classes. This is as true of the government of the United States as of any monarchy. The uselessness of remorse becomes at once apparent. Whatever was intended of the provisions of the Constitution 140 years ago, its interpretation has passed under control of the capitalist class. So whatever be its interpretations, they are but in conformity with the needs of capitalism. The henchmen of capitalism at Albany sensed danger in the election of Socialists to seats in the sacred body of the State Assembly. As a result a scaffold was at

once erected upon which the Socialists and apparently the Socialist Party as well were at once strung up.

The deportment of the Socialists and their attorneys during the proceedings was anything but calculated to strengthen their position before the court of last resort — the working class, whatever their conduct was calculated to win at the hands of the judges. Apparently the Socialist Party lost sight of the larger jury in its desire to win the approval of the one sitting at Albany. They sacrificed the last of their revolutionary tenets for the sake of their seats. They attempted to barter their revolutionary soul for a mess of pottage — and didn't get it.

Since the trial began the gaze of the working class of America has been riveted upon it. For upon its outcome depended to a great degree the immediate future development of a working class tactic. The radical, "red" element of Labor has been pointing out the uselessness of parliamentary action by the working class to achieve its emancipation. And now the capitalist class in solemn conclave proves beyond contradiction all its claims! It has been teaching that the present state is a machine for the perpetuation of capitalism and could not be used for the production of anything else even though the workers should be successful at the elections. The Albany trial proved it.

The lack of revolutionary attitude of the Socialists at the trial coupled with the utter disregard of the principles of representative government by the persecutors will have a tremendous effect upon the minds of American workers, who have been schooled in faith in the so-called freedom of the ballot, representative government, etc. They must now swing to the Left — for there is nowhere else they can go. Had the Socialist Party shown the revolutionary integrity which a working class party must have to lead the working class out of bondage, it would have come out of the fray with at least a moral victory to its credit.

With its leadership at stake, in fact its whole future as a proletarian party, it played for small stakes, played out its whole hand for five paltry seats in the New York Assembly — and lost.

The Albany trial marks a milestone on the long road the workers have trod toward the New Day. It will be easier going now with Albany behind and showing the way — class action on the industrial field.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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