

EDITORIAL

LUCY PARSONS' CIRCULAR REASONING.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MRS. Lucy Parsons, the widow of one of the men executed as Anarchists in Chicago in 1887,¹ and by reason thereof enjoying some degree of “authority,” both among “reform” and capitalist papers, is quoted as having condemned the assassination of President McKinley as “the deed of only a lunatic,” the President having been “chosen by popular vote,” and she says:

“It is the Trusts—the heads of the Trusts—with whom we should now contend. The Trusts and those persons who control the necessities of life are the ones against whom the energies of all classes must be focused. Every article of food—the necessities of life—is becoming so dear as to be beyond the reach of common people. Such a state of affairs cannot continue. Everything I wish to purchase for the household has doubled in price, and its increase in value is chiefly due to the manipulation of prices by combinations of capital. But with this the President of this grand nation has nothing to do.”

Mrs. Parsons reasons in a circle.

If the deed of Czolgosz is to be condemned as lunacy, not because of its homicidal aspect, but only because of its wantonness in that he did not strike the really guilty, but one from whose taking-off no change would result, then it must inevitably follow, differently from what Mrs. Parsons would seem to imply, that the shooting down of those whom she points out as the really guilty, the Trust magnates, would be no less lunatic an act. And so it would be, indeed.

The distinction between a President, elected by the people, and a Trust magnate, elected by himself, is more in seeming than in fact. If the people did not give their consent and assent thereto, a man could no more be a Trust magnate than he could be a President. The political aspect of a commonwealth has an economic-industrial condition for its basis. The two are inseparable, as inseparable

¹ [Albert R. Parsons.]

as the skin from a man's anatomy, the skin being an external development from within. Where a certain economic-industrial basis is, there also will be found the corresponding political integument. It follows, that to assassinate a Trust magnate is no less a act of folly—leaving aside the criminality involved—than to assassinate a President.

The blowing up of a Czar but crowns his successor; the assassination of a capitalist President only inaugurates the next capitalist President. Experience has proven this to repletion, and the experience has served the double purpose of both pointing out the real evil to be removed, and of chastening and civilizing the methods to the end,—with those intelligent enough to profit by experience.

Accordingly, not the taking-off of an individual, not assassination, but the overthrow of the obnoxious system, of which an individual may happen to be the visible head, is the method to the civilized man's end. Back of this method lies agitation and education, and these, in turn, are flanked by hostile criticism, together with the purifying fire of the hustings' battle field, where, in the end, Wrong is ever downed and Right ever prevails.

The bullet that will rid society of the incubus of Capitalism is not the product of any lead foundry. It is the ballot, seething hot from the political foundry of Socialist Labor Party education, and aimed straight at a social system that dooms the masses to poverty and to the dependence bred of the fear of poverty, thereby engulfing the human race in a state of physical as well as mental Anarchy, of which Mrs. Lucy Parsons is herself a sad illustration.

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

Uploaded June 2006