

Mayor Jones and “All the People” (January 1904)

Mayor Jones, the prophet of the golden rule, denies the class struggle and proclaims himself “for all the people.” He is for the exploiting capitalist as well as the exploited wage-worker. Naturally he could not be against the one or the other and still be “for all the people.” He declares his opposition to the wage system, but just how he can be *against* the system and *for* the class who uphold and get rich out of it and will fight for it to the last ditch, he has not yet explained.

Perhaps Mayor Jones expects the capitalists themselves to abolish the wage system and go to work for a living. As well expect spring pullets to pick themselves of their last pinfeather and walk into the kitchen and ask to be fricasseed.

From a man who in the present struggle is “for all the people,” that is to say, for both sides, for master as well as slave, the following excerpts certainly sound strangely and require a little explanation:

The struggle for more wages will ever continue while the wage system lasts, until by an awakened social instinct and a more enlightened conception of our relation to each other we shall come to see that we are really brothers and must learn to live brotherly.

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Workingmen must not only make common cause with the workingmen of their craft, but with every other craft under the shining sun. They must learn not only to make common cause with the workingmen of their nationality and their color, but with all colors.

The capitalist will not hesitate to take his moneybags and go to the Orient if he can and make more money out of a Chinaman there than out of a white man here....

It is the capitalistic spirit — the spirit that would separate man from man and brother from brother — which must be overcome, and to this end let labor make its contribution and to the development of the idea of unity, of equality, liberty, and fraternity, if we hope to see the American ideal wrought out and democratic American conditions prevail, where every man can stand as an equal and a brother.¹

The question is, what is Mayor Jones doing to abolish this wage system? At the last election he supported the Democratic Party, that is he is pledged in every fiber of his corrupt being to perpetuate wage-slavery.

Mayor Jones keeps telling us that he is a man without a party; that he has no use for a party; and yet when the campaign is on and election day rolls around and he has a chance to vote for the abolition of wage-slavery, we find him regularly in the field, whooping it up for a party which this partyless patriot knows will defend the wage system, with its robbery of the working class, while there is a breath in its moribund body.

It may be pertinent to ask Mayor Jones what “struggle” he has reference to? And if he is on both sides of it? Or if it has but one side?

Manifestly, the mayor sees a “struggle.” If it is not a class struggle, what kind of a struggle is it? Will the mayor please explain if both sides of this struggle are opposed to the wage system? Is it not a fact that one side is fighting *for* that system and the other *against* it? Which side is Mayor Jones on?

If he is on the side of the working class, and a bona fide opponent of the wage system then he is *against* the capitalist class; and if against the capitalist class he is not for *all the people*, unless in his golden rule encyclopedia he finds that capitalists are in the mineral instead of the animal kingdom. However that may be just at present the capitalists are *the people* by a good working majority, and if Mayor Jones is *for* them in the “struggle” he admits is going to abolish the wage system he is not a socialist, nor is he for the working class, nor is he opposed to wage-slavery.

Mayor Jones makes out a tough case against the capitalist in the paragraph quoted above. All wage-slaves are alike to him. The Chinaman is as good as the American sovereign (?). Simply a question of price with the capitalist, and yet Mayor Jones is for him for he is “for all the people.”

Since Mayor Jones is for the capitalist and the capitalist is for the wage system — in fact is its incarnation and will perish with it — it follows that he is also for wage-slavery, his disavowal to the contrary notwithstanding.

Mayor Jones, in the name of the working class, defends their exploiters; in the name of economic freedom votes for wage-slavery; in the name of a “free untrammelled soul,” a “man without a party,” he is cheek by jowl with a gang of machine politicians and supports the decrepit and corrupt Democratic Party.

According to Mayor Jones, it is the “capitalistic spirit” that is doing all the mischief. But how are we to extract the “capitalistic spirit” from the

capitalist? And if we could extract the “spirit,” the capitalist would be dead.

We socialists perfectly understand the “capitalistic spirit,” but we are not wasting any time on the “spirit.”

The only way to destroy the “capitalistic spirit,” the breath of capitalism, is to destroy capitalism. And this means fight, and no living man or dead deity can be on both sides of this fight any more than he can go up on one elevator and down on another at the same time.

I feel a special interest in Mayor Jones because it was a speech of mine, delivered in Toronto in 1895, which started the mayor off, as he afterwards admitted to me, on his career of agitation. I would like to see him take his stand where all doubt as to his allegiance to the working class would be removed. His present attitude is not only hazy, equivocal, and uncertain, but since he trains with and supports a capitalist party, he must be set down as the friend of the capitalist class and the enemy of the working class.

Personally, I have a kindly feeling towards Mr. Jones. Not only this, but I have such a friendly interest in him that I would like to see him make the record he has the brain and heart to make in the great struggle for emancipation from the cruelty and crime, the slavery and horror of capitalist despotism.

The eccentricities of Mayor Jones will not always amuse the people of Toledo and keep him in the mayor’s office.

He is dallying on a foundation of shifting sand, and he will have to get on the rock or be swallowed up in oblivion.

Published in *Wilshire’s Magazine* [Toronto, ON], vol. 6, no. 1 (Jan. 1904), pp. 19-20.

¹ From Samuel M. Jones’s contribution to the symposium “Labor Day: The Day We Celebrate,” *American Federationist* [Washington, DC], vol. 10, no. 9 (Sept. 1903), p. 811. Debs’s quotation silently inserts numerous italics, deleted here.