

EDITORIAL

NOT A DANGEROUS MAN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Richard Olney's declaration in favor of [William Jennings Bryan](#) leads to the conclusion that either Olney has changed, Bryan has changed, or else they understand each other. In 1896, Olney was bitterly opposed to Bryan and, by letters, articles, speeches and interviews, did his utmost to defeat him.

The world had scarcely recovered from the utter indifference into which it had been thrown by the announcement, when [Russell Sage](#) stepped blandly forward and said that he does not consider Bryan a dangerous man.

The revision of opinion on the part of these two men, one a Democrat and the other a Republican, falls upon us when the campaign is growing hot and when opinions of this character come high. Olney's claim to consideration is that, as a Harvard professor, he was an able-bodied failure. As a cabinet officer, he was the same failure. In this lifting of his voice and repenting, he is the same failure that has been his specialty during all these years.

Olney's stand has always been against the working class. When he was a member of [Grover Cleveland's](#) cabinet, his strong hand controlled affairs at Chicago during the strike. It was he who drafted the wordy and dramatic [Venezuela message](#), and he it was who was responsible for most of the clever labor law dodging in which the Cleveland administration indulged.

Mr. Russell Sage has been one of the most artful and successful skimmers and fleecers of labor in the country. He has placed himself in opposition to his employees at every turn, and his management has been responsible for the skill with which



RICHARD OLNEY (1835-1917)

As U.S. Attorney General in 1894, he advised President Grover Cleveland to send federal troops to break the famous Pullman Strike at Chicago.

wages were reduced on the railroads and in other industries with which he is connected.

Olney is an enemy of the working class. Sage is an enemy of the working class. Bryan is a “friend” of the working class. Yet, both Sage and Olney are friends of this “friend” of the working class. Four years ago they opposed and fought him, but now they take him by the hand and say that he is not dangerous, that it is possible he would make a good president, that they believe [William McKinley](#) has committed many sins and that they will support Bryan.

Olney and Sage have not changed. The first, in his lectures, in his articles and in his business affairs, continues to act the part of the capitalist apologist and to extract the greatest possible profit from his investments. The second still grinds his men down and is as relentless as he ever was. They both remain capitalists of the capitalists.

Has Bryan changed? He still bemoans the hard lot of labor, as exemplified by the little man who cannot compete with the large one in the purchase of labor power. He still utters the same stale platitudes on the dignity of honest toil and he still gathers in the routed [Populists](#). Bryan has not changed. He is the same man on whom Sage, Olney, [Carl Schurz](#), and the rest of them, waged relentless war. The difference comes here. The Democracy, knowingly or unknowingly, has rendered a signal service to the capitalist class in eliminating a troublesome vote. It has carried on a wholesale disfranchisement. It has used the strong hand to beat down and keep back trouble with the working class.

Greater than all this, and towering above it with immeasurable magnitude, is the signal aid rendered the capitalist class by Bryan in running some of the lightning of the gathering storm into the ground. The driftwood, the derelicts and the flotsam and jetsam have been gathered in by the Democratic Party. This leaves the sea clear for the capitalist craft, excepting in one respect: The working class has its flotilla in the Socialist Labor Party.

The Democrats absorbed the Populist movement and all the independent reform and good government parties. It took to itself the Social Democracy and it scuttled the independent trades union movement. It has acted the part of a political scavenger and its meritorious efforts must be acknowledged.

It is not the intention of any of these converts to elect Bryan. Their object simply is to give him prestige and to draw to the Democratic Party as much more of the social scum as may be possible. The strange, oppressive inertia that has

overcome the campaign this year is due to approaching trouble in the business world. It cannot be staved off, until after the ballots are counted, and it might take shape in the form of a decided landslide in favor of the Socialist Labor Party. Rather than have this take place, the former shouters against Bryan now devoutly eat their words. They were harsh, unseemly, nasty words, but possible defeat is even harsher; so, they label him as a worthy candidate and an honest man. He is the prop of the falling house of capitalism—but props sometimes are buried in the ruins.

The Socialist Labor Party sees in the endorsement of Bryan by such men additional reasons for opposing him. It also sees the time when the inevitable amalgamation of the Democratic and Republican parties must take place. They are the common political enemy, and while they may swap converts, as frequently and as merrily as they choose, they still must be overcome. In order to overcome them there is but one line of action possible: Bring down the hammer of the Socialist Labor Party. Strike at the ballot box. Vote for Malloney and Remmel.

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded August 2005**