
In Dixie:

Things Seen from a Car Window — New Machinery for Cotton Production — The Negro and Politics.

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We were a little party of 4 in the smoking department of a 'Frisco train, speeding south from Memphis to Birmingham. One of the party was a North Carolina capitalist returning from a trip to Oklahoma, one a Democratic county official of Mississippi, another a representative Southerner of the blue-blood type, and the fourth the *Appeal* scribe. We grew friendly and communicative over our cigars and the changing scenery, as the landscape flitted by, induced a run of conversation which involved the whole industrial and political situation of the South.

To begin with, our North Carolina friend had secured the patent-right for his own state and Georgia of a new implement, which it seems to me is to revolutionize the cotton industry. This is a cultivator and chopper that automatically thins out and cultivates a row of cotton plants. The production of cotton is a tedious and laborious task. The seed is planted with a cotton drill, but when the plants come up they must be carefully thinned and weeded. This process is called chopping, and hitherto has been done with a hand hoe. Now the new machine does away with all this work, and according to our friend from the Tar Heel state, will save the labor of 10 hands over a given area. The machine is a demonstrated success, and the patentee has already realized over \$50,000 from his invention. The effect will be to increase the area of cotton over the level sections of the Southwest, and thus cheapen the production of this Southern staple. To the farm hand and small farmer in the cotton belt, this will mean a revolutionary change. Much of the South is dotted over with small farms whose occupants have cleared patches in this immensely wooded country, and on little slopes and valleys eke out a bare exist-

ence from the production of cotton and a little corn. To further reduce the price of cotton is to decrease the labor value of the small farmer. He is already proletarianized and ready for Socialism to free him from peasantry. The new machinery, that is bound to take the place of the antiquated methods of producing cotton, will impoverish the hillside farmer.

It was amusing to hear my Southern friends discuss this phase of the question. The capitalist did not care, for he saw in the machine only a means of increasing his own dividends, while the Mississippi official was dubious of the success of the new machine, and his opinion may well typify the fossilized conservatism of the bourbon element of the South. "That's only one way to raise cotton; a niggah and a mule, and stuck to it."

This brought the subject around to the negro, and there the Mississippian was thoroughly at home. "We can't get along without the niggah in the South, because he's dun got to do our wuk for us. We know how to handle him and keep him going. We keep him pore. Five pounds of bacon and a sick of meal will keep him going for a week, and in good wukin' trim. If we feed him any moah he gets lazy and fat, and a fat niggah won't wuk. If he gets sassy we use a club on him. Yes, sah; we understand how to handle the niggah."

"Do you let him vote in Mississippi?" I asked.

"Not to speak of, sah. I am the register in my county, and I take care of this mattah. He can't vote under the law, unless he pays his tax of \$2, and can read and write, but sah, I am the law, sah, in my county, anyway. If I want him to vote, he votes; if not, he don't, sah. We are all Democrats in Mississippi, sah, and we

mean to keep the state safe.”

The entire Democratic machine in the South would echo the foregoing. In the land of democracy, there is no democracy, for whenever this Democratic machine is threatened, it will attempt to count out the white working class of the South, along with the colored. I imagine that if I were Mr. Bryan I would feel awfully proud of having been the representative of a political party that its national platform mourns over a few million barbarians who have come under the rule of American capitalism, while my chief political support came from a region that has denied self-government not only to 5 or 10 millions of penurious negroes, but about one-fourth of that many whites. However, politicians are never consistent, and never mean what they say. The Democrats think they have done a cute job in the South, and flatter themselves that they have fixed it so that a gang of leaders, their relatives and friends, can divide the spoils of office for years to come, for statesmanship in the South means this and nothing more. Now this might all work out nicely, were it not for one thing, and this thing is just now tormenting the Emperor of Germany, the Tsar of Russia, and all the monarchs of the world. Our good friend Hanna says we have got to reckon with it seriously in this country. This one thing is Socialism, that is developing a political power that will soon measure strength with capitalism everywhere. The political barometer points for a coming storm that will stir things up, and rearrange political alignments.

There are but two positive forces in politics today, as there are but two positive classes in the industrial world. One of these is the Republican Party, representing the capitalist class, and the other is the Socialist Party, representing the working class. More and more, the Republican Party will be compelled to stand for capitalism, and more and more will the working class be compelled to come to the Socialist Party as the representative of the proletariat. Between this upper and nether millstone of class antagonisms, the

Democratic Party will be ground to atoms. In the South none of the working class are permitted in the sacred ring of democracy. It is a bourbon or aristocratic party, completely. Even quicker than the North has accepted Socialism will the South accept it. You ask me why? Two reasons. The working class element of the South, and here I include the small farmers, have nothing to lose but their chains, and the South is more proletarian than the West and the Northwest. My second reason is that the People's Party carried both Georgia and Alabama, but were counted out by the Democratic machine. In Alabama the Populists carried by big majorities 30 counties, tied the Democrats in 30 more, and then the Democratic machine returned enough majority in the 6 black counties to overcome all of the foregoing. The democracy counted all the negroes for the Democratic ticket. Now the Democratic politicians, thinking all opposition destroyed, has disfranchised the negro vote, and by so doing have severed their own jugulars.

The Populists of Alabama, who unlike their mongrel friends of the West, have never gone back to the old parties, will espouse Socialism. Of this I am certain, for every populist leader in Birmingham assured me of the correctness of this statement. The Southern Populist never got entangled in the web of Coins Financial School, and never sold himself to the silver barons for a mess of pottage. His struggle was a class war, and methods of thought ultra-revolutionary. He holds sway today in some of the counties of the state, and many of our meetings will be in the hands of county officials elected on the Populist ticket. What is true of Alabama is true of Georgia and Texas, and in a measure, of North Carolina. The sentiment is there already created and only needs crystallizing. We must not neglect any section of the commonwealth, but at the same time we must use the political sense, and just now the line of least resistance is in Dixie. Let us have your pledges, comrades.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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