

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 81.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1900.

ONE CENT.

FIRST EDITORIAL

AN ETHICAL PARTY.

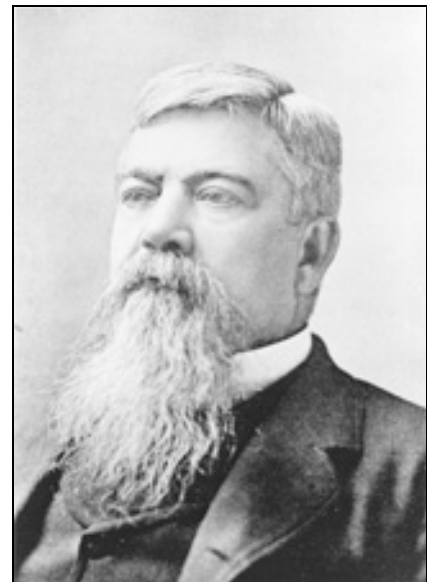
By DANIEL DE LEON

The party of high moral principles has at last appeared. It has plumped itself into the boiling pot of American politics, and is bobbing around in company with dumplings of like formation. It does not spare hard words in its condemnation of political corruption. Indeed, it soars into transcendent reaches of morality in denouncing “materialism in politics,” and calls on the citizen to join in a party whose object it is to change the human heart and imbue it with ethical motives.

Had this devoted body of men adjourned its convention after giving utterance to the trite platitudes in which it clothed its dissent from the selfishness, which it ascribes to all other political parties, thinking men would have given the anti-imperialist-gold-standard-ethical-motives-in-politics party credit for sincerity—and idiocy. But the ethical party destroyed all faith in its sincerity by doing a certain thing before it adjourned. Obedient to a law which decrees that the higher a lie attempts to soar, the quicker will it be punctured—they nominated ex-Senator [Donelson Caffery](#) of Louisiana for President.

Who is Caffery? Is he, perchance, one of those gentlemen whose ethical principles would not permit him to be governed by material motives? Not exactly. In fact, up to date, this nominee of the purely ethical party has established a record for self-seeking which cannot be beaten even by such openly selfish politicians as [Mark Hanna](#) and [Dick Croker](#).

Caffery was an active Democrat until the Democratic Party refused to pass the necessary legislation to give a big bounty to the Louisiana sugar growers. Caffery is an extensive sugar grower. He left the Democratic Party because of that sin in



DONELSON CAFFERY (1835–1906)

neglecting his material interests. His sordid selfishness overpowered his political loyalty. He is the logical candidate for the Presidency of the United States of that purely ethical party.

The Socialist maintains that every noble thought and lofty impulse must have its foundation in material conditions. Before the Nazarene attempted to teach, he fed the multitude. Men are moved to action by the sensible desire to better their material conditions. Whoever denies this truth, places himself either in the category of fools who know not, or of Pharisees who do know, but are too hypocritical to admit. Material interests determine one's actions. Where the material interests are in the line of progress, action will be noble; where they are the reverse, action will be base.

The nomination of Caffery, after the high-flown talk of "changing the human heart" and "purifying politics" indulged in by these highly ethical politicians, is a fine illustration of the strength of the Socialist position, and the honesty of the Socialist Labor Party in planting itself firmly on the basis of the material interests of a class that makes for progress, and openly proclaiming the same.

Rampant pharisaism denies the existence of material interests, and nominates a Caffery with grovelling material interests. That is the record of that and all other ethical parties.

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