

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 40.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

NO CAUSE FOR GRIEF.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NEWS comes from England that H.M. Hyndman, long the leader of the Social Democratic Federation, has withdrawn from the organization and given up "English Socialism" as a failure. It might be safer to await official confirmation of the announcement. Nevertheless, two circumstances combine to render the news item trustworthy: first, our knowledge of Hyndman and his organization, as portrayed in these columns more than once, and the further circumstance that the item places in quotation marks the reasons given by Hyndman for his action, to wit:

"The working class are not sufficiently penetrated with class-consciousness and class antagonism to make an effective revolutionary propaganda possible."

Not slight is the value of corpses in the health-promoting study of the human body. Let the Socialistic corpse named Henry Mayers Hyndman be placed upon the dissecting table of the Social Question, and answer in death the good purpose that there was not in it to answer in life.

It is a common thing with people of narrow horizon to impute exclusive features to occurrences that happen in their own immediate neighborhood. Villagers, suffering from the pest of gossip, are often heard to say that there is no place like their particular village for back-biting; uninformed workingmen are frequently heard to say that the make-up of their particular craft is "peculiar"; Jingoism asserts that patriotism is a native product of their particular native heath. This is all false. Back-biting is a universal affliction of small communities or coteries; machinery has wiped away former "peculiarities" of individual craftsmen; patriotism, both in the good and the bad sense, is a native growth wherever man is. And so with Socialism. It is not "English Socialism," as Hyndman calls the thing, that is "a failure." What is a failure is a thing not at all peculiar to England; it is a thing that grows

spontaneously out of the Utopian mind, and as such minds are not the exceptional bane of any one country but afflict all, “English Socialism,” so-called, is an article that turns up everywhere, everywhere is a nuisance, and everywhere is a failure.

Utopianism in Socialism is a term that to-day, with the ripened experience of the militants, is no longer circumscribed to the limits it had when Engels wrote about it. Since then a number of specimens have come under observation who theoretically offer not a flaw in their economics, aye, even in that important portion of Socialist tenets that may be termed its sociology. Their theories are sound as a bell on “surplus value,” its source and what it leads to; and the term “class struggle” is written of by them with elegance and eloquence.—But only written of. In practice all their preachings go by the board. The matter with these people is that they lack the intellectual fibre, usually also the physical fibre, requisite for consistency, and concrete application. They eschew the struggle; they are logomachists. Of this genus Hyndman is a specimen.

The writer and talker, down to these his last utterances, about “class consciousness” and “class antagonism” was one of those who, not quite 12 months ago, supported the Kautsky resolution, declaring the possibility of “impartiality” towards the working class on the part of a capitalist government; and so zealous was he in his support of that bit of Utopianism that he acted like a boor towards the delegation of the S.L.P., which took firm ground against the resolution; he went even so far on that occasion as to try, though unsuccessfully, to arrogate to himself the right to cast the vote of the sturdy Irish delegation.

No wonder Hyndman has found out that sort of “Socialism” to be a failure; he is not the first, nor will he be the last. Nor is it any wonder to hear him now throw, as he does, the blame of his own pusillanimity upon the working class. It is ever so with the gentry whose “class struggle” is on their lips, and who throw up the sponge after some years of inevitable failure in the attempt to throw down the battlements of capitalism with fine-spun phrases, rhetoric and posing.

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

Uploaded June 2006