

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 10.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JULY 10, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

TEN YEARS AGO, TO-DAY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AS time passes, the anniversary of this date—July 10—rather gains than loses in brilliancy; it will rather grow than decline in importance to the Socialist Movement of America, consequently, of the world.

There are two distinct currents in the Movement that may be called broadly Socialist. In a sense, the goal of the two currents is the same, at least they give it the same name—Socialism. Closely looked at the goals differ.

One of the two currents has for its goal what is technically known as a “political structure” of government. To this current the Social Revolution is accomplished the moment the present machinery of government falls into the hands of Socialist candidates for the existing offices. To the other current the Social Revolution does not consist in the capture, it consists in the overthrow of the “political government,” and its substitution with the “industrial structure” of administrative authority.

Goals are reflected in the means adopted to reach them. The goal which consists in a political structure of government will be reflected in a policy of organization that takes no stock in the Economic Movement or Unionism. As a consequence such a policy considers all time spent upon the Union as time wasted. The final consequence of such a policy is the deification of the ballot as all-sufficient. The goal which consists in the industrial system of government centers its activity upon the creation of the Economic Organization fit to cast off and substitute the political form of Government.

It goes without saying that the pure and simple political organization, reflected by a pure and simple political goal, is bound to sacrifice, one after another, the constructive tenets of Socialism. The sole aim of such a political organization being “Votes,” nothing must be done to “displease” the voter. Does the voter entertain any bourgeois-cultivated dislike for fellow-workers of other nationalities, creed or

color?—why, preach anti-immigration on the ground of “backward races.” Does the voter show symptoms of being tainted with the bourgeois microbe of lower taxes?—why, preach the absurdity that “Labor pays all the taxes.” Does the voter belong to the large family of visionaries who imagine a class of usurpers in power can be cozened out of their fastness by sentimental twaddle?—why, preach Christian Socialism. Does the voter find his account in playing second fiddle to a labor-fakir in a craft Union?—why, sing the praises of the labor-fakir in question, and call him “a champion of labor,” as the Socialist party called John Mitchell in 1902, when he was obviously the champion of Mark Hanna and other bituminous coal mine owners. And so forth—anything for votes.

Equally does it go without saying that the Socialist political organization, reflected by the goal of the Industrial Republic, is bound to hew close to the Marxist line. Its aim being to call into existence the Economic Organization that will be fit to perform the necessary revolutionary act of overthrowing the political and establishing the industrial system of government, it will care nothing how it may “displease” the voters. The voter who can be “displeased” by a propaganda that brands as treasonable to Socialism the bourgeois-cultivated dislike for fellow wage slaves of other nationalities, and, consequently, all veiled or expressed anti-immigration moves; the voter who can be “displeased” by a propaganda that illustrates the law of wages with the fact that Labor does not pay the taxes, and, consequently, that stamps out all the superstitions concerning the possibility of Labor’s improvement except by its emancipation; the voter who can be “displeased” by a propaganda that tears to shreds all sentimental and “clever” twaddle, and plants the Social Question upon the material facts of the case; the voter who can be “displeased” by a propaganda that uncovers the lieutenants of the capitalist class and shows them up for what they are;—in short the voter who can be “displeased” by the only constructive propaganda to build up the revolutionary economic organization and framework for future society, that voter should be “displeased,” nor can he be “displeased” too hard or too soon. If he is good material, the pounding of the errors with which he is incrustated will do him good: he will be cleansed by such pounding: he will become organizable: and then he will be most highly “pleased.”

The two currents found themselves in the Socialist Labor Party. The distinct goals that each aimed at sought to shape themselves into the corresponding organizations wherewith to reach the goal. Friction arose, inevitably. The consequence was ultimate explosion. The pure and simple political Socialist current bolted. For a time it was houseless. It soon found its level with other and still more visionary Socialistic streams in the land. The final result was their coalescing into one party, now known as the Socialist party. Since then the issue presented by the original S.L.P. and the issue presented by the new S.P. have, by contrast, been put thoroughly to the test. For a time it looked to the superficial observer as if the S.P. goal, hence its tactics also, was the correcter. The S.P. votes were piled up to about 400,000, while the S.L.P. vote steadily receded. But sand banks bring with them their own law of destruction. The S.P. tactics, hence its goal, proved themselves inefficient. Since the last five years, and markedly at the last presidential election the S.P. vote went back in most of the industrial centers, beginning with New York, and had it not been for the flash-in-the-pan vote of Oklahoma the 1908 vote would have dropped arithmetically also as clearly as it has dropped sociologically below the vote of 1904. Losing the only thing it had and was after—Votes—the S.P. principle has proved itself a failure; the S.L.P., on the contrary, the S.L.P. which was to be quickly killed off “the next day,” then, “the next week,” then, “the next month,” then, “the next year,” the S.L.P. has all the while gained in the vigor which soundness of principle imparts, and upon which alone real votes can eventually be gathered to a purpose; it has gained so manifestly that the S.P. feels its genius rebuked by the S.L.P. to the extent of rendering itself ridiculous even unto itself. The S.L.P. posture stands to-day so completely vindicated that ultimate victory is only a question of time.

The circumstance that the maturity of the move and its outbreak against the S.L.P. position was signalized on the night of July 10, 1899, by a drunken men’s explosion of violence, the drunkenness having been resorted to as a stimulus for courage, and which the sobriety of the S.L.P. beat back; the further circumstance that the move was prepared with Jesuitic calumnies, since continued, and mainly manufactured and engineered by an adept, Herr Alexander Jonas of the Volkszeitung Corporation, a radical bourgeois and anti, at least, non-Socialist of

Berlin, who had left Germany for his own and his country's good, and who has since masqueraded as the "Nestor of Socialism in America"; the third circumstance that a necessary card in the move was the arousing by Herman Schlueter of the stupid nativistic superstition among the Volkszeitung Corporation Germans that "Wir Deutschen" (We Germans) must keep control of the Movement and not allow the "hopelessly ignorant and corrupt" Americans to "run us," and thus the inciting of and playing upon racial animosities engendered in Europe; the still further circumstance that the move did and had to attract professionals who, as lawyers, feared to be isolated from fees that lie around loose in craft Unions, or who, as literati, considered themselves God-ordained Editors and saw the prospect of "freedom" to turn dishonest pennies at the expense of Socialism, or were self-satisfied "orators," anxious for notoreity and perquisites;—all these circumstances, and what may be easily imagined flowed from them, tended and have continued to tend to, but can not permanently obscure the significance of what was at the bottom of the affair of the night of July 10, 1899, when the Volkszeitung Corporation folks tried by "direct action" to bag the S.L.P. and its press, and were themselves direct-actioned for their pains, being driven back a routed rabble. Every day the issue becomes clearer—thanks to S.L.P. fortitude.

There is in the whole history of the International Socialist Movement no page more heroic than the one written by the Socialist Labor Party during these last ten years, nor none that will eventually prove—in view of the fact that America occupies the strategic field in the International and is destined to hold the center of the stage in the coming social crisis—more beneficent to the Social Revolution.

That page was opened on the night of July 10, 1899, now ten years ago, to the tune of "Three Cheers for the S.L.P.!"—an undying cheer that is lustily repeated to-day.

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

Uploaded September 2010

slpns@slp.org