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EDITORIAL

ONCE S.P., ALWAYS S.P.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AFTER more than two days' strife this year's national convention of the Socialist party adopted by a majority of five what the majority leaders term the party's new position on the burning Question of Immigration, "in line with the Stuttgart Resolution."

The S.P. position on the Question of Immigration first crystallized at the Amsterdam International Congress (1904) in a proposed resolution which bore three S.P. delegates' signatures. The gist of the resolution—squeezed out of the verbiage in which it was steeped—was the branding of foreign immigrants as "backward races" (the original draft had it "inferior races"); "Chinese" and "Negroes" were specified; and an "Etc." was added to them so as to embrace any other race, according as occasion might require, and Civic Federationized A.F. of L. interests might dictate the advisability of such other races being pronounced too "backward" to deserve admission as immigrants. So brutally monstrous was that resolution that, without further ado, and the S.L.P. leading, it was hooted down, and out of the Congress.

The next step was taken at Stuttgart (1907). There the S.P. delegation appeared with an anti-immigration resolution, and under instructions from its Party authorities to present it. The Stuttgart performance differed from that at Amsterdam only in that the verbiage to conceal the purpose was more extensive and more choice. The substance was the same, to wit, the A.F. of L. guild spirit that rips up the proletariat of the land. That shuffle did not work. The resolution was defeated. The defeat was acknowledged by Hillquit, and the promise given to the Congress of abiding by the resolution adopted by it.

Then came the second shuffle—at the 1908 convention of the S.P. There the sense was overwhelming again the Stuttgart Resolution, and a committee of anti-

immigrationists was appointed to “study the question,” and report to the next convention.

The report of the committee to this year’s convention—the majority even more so than the minority report, but both, all the same—recorded the third shuffle of the series.

So clumsy was this shuffle that it angered both sides. The breath of the Civic Federationized A.F. of L. puffed hot; on the other hand, the pounding that the S.P.’s theoretically and tactically monstrous Immigration posture has been receiving during these last six years at the hands of the S.L.P. had its effect upon other delegates.

Thereupon followed a double shuffle in rapid succession. The identical Hillquit, who had read the majority report, first offered a substitute, and, as the conflict continued unabated, followed up his substitute by amending the expression “mass immigration” with the expression “mass importation.” In that shape, probably through the sheer exhaustion of the delegates, the substitute was finally adopted, and even then by the narrow margin of only 5. It barely squeezed through. It is as follows:

“The Socialist party of the United States favors all legislative measures tending to prevent the immigration of strike breakers and contract laborers, and the mass importation of workers from foreign countries, caused, or stimulated, by the employing classes for the purpose of weakening the organization of American workers. The party is opposed to the exclusion of any immigrants on account of their race or nationality, and demands that the United States be at all times maintained as a free asylum for all men and women persecuted by the government of their countries on account of their religion, politics and race.”

If the shuttling of a pack of cards produces a new deck—then the present S.P. position is new.

The statement that “the party is opposed to the exclusion of any immigrants on account of their race or nationality,” a strong sentence and clear and sound in itself, has the bottom knocked out of it by the objection to “mass immigration of workers from foreign countries, *caused, or stimulated, by the employing classes*”; nor does the final substitution of the word “immigration” with the word “importation” in the

sentence at all change its substance. There is no such thing as “mass importation” that is not “mass immigration”; and when it comes to ascertaining the line that separates immigration that is “caused, or stimulated, by the employing classes” from immigration not so “caused, or stimulated,” the doors are thrown wide open and invite pretexts for exclusion. The qualifying clause “caused and stimulated by the employing classes” was a sufficient “drawback,” “string to” and emasculator of the term “mass immigration,” and, therefore, sufficiently marked the resolution disingenuous. The additional change of “mass immigration” into “mass importation” brands the performance indecorous, besides disingenuous, by its paltering with a great issue.

The resolution can be fitly summed up in the clever satire with which the Berlin *Kladderadatsch* characterized Roosevelt’s recent lecture in that city:

“The citizen must stand for his individual opinions and defend them like a man, in a voice of thunder even against the throne;—but

“On the other hand, he must be imbued with those warm feelings for the dynastic rulers which are born of humble recognition of the divine right of kings.

“As a citizen of a constitutional state, he must be far above any paltry desires for official recognition from above;—but

“Nevertheless he should keep on his otherwise monarchical bosom a little place where there is room at all times for a row of decorations!”

Once S.P., always S.P.

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