

EDITORIAL

SECOND OPEN LETTER TO DR. KARL LIEBKNECHT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO Dr. Karl Liebknecht,
On return tour through America.

Comrade:—Three weeks ago, at the time that you faced westward on your tour, and about two weeks before election day, we did ourselves the honor of addressing an open letter¹ to you conveying to you information upon certain facts, worth knowing and not to be forgotten, connected with the Movement in America. Now, election day with its lessons being over, and the date of your departure back to Germany drawing near, we once more take the freedom of addressing you for the purpose of again calling your attention to certain facts supplementary to and corroborative of those mentioned before.

What the “political lay” of the land is the elections you have just witnessed afford a matchless opportunity to appreciate. The political atmosphere is surcharged with Discontent, and Discontent is vibrant with Socialism. To what an extent this is so appears from the poll of the two parties of Socialism in the land. The Socialist party doubled its vote, reaching surely over 800,000 in the land, besides electing in the Western State of Wisconsin the first member to enter Congress under the designation of Socialist. More significant even than this showing—although the fact may not at first strike an outlander—is the showing made by the Socialist Labor Party, which also doubled its poll, emerging from the elections, according to all indications, with over 28,000 votes in the land.

Attempts are already being made by the bourgeois press to belittle this Socialist demonstration. The bourgeois press is already pointing to the fact that the nature of

¹ [“Open Letter to Dr. Karl Liebknecht,” *Daily People*, Oct. 23, 1910.—R.B.]

the elections throughout the land this year was such as to induce large numbers to cast a vote for the Socialist party, without their being at all Socialists and without meaning to stay with that party. Whatever color of truth there may be in such estimates, the estimates do not, and can not apply to the Socialist Labor Party. There is not a ballot in the land on which it is as easy to vote for the S.L.P. as it is to vote for the S.P. Though a careless, slipshod, unmeaning vote and in numbers not a few may be imagined to fall to the decidedly more “sympathetic,” because compromising, S.P., such a thing is not imaginable in the instance of the decidedly less “sympathetic,” because uncompromising, S.L.P. Whoever votes the S.L.P. ticket does so through careful thought, deliberately, with purpose prepense. When such a party—with its standard raised in the late campaign in twenty of the leading States from the Atlantic to the Pacific, that is, in four States more than it was able to contest two years ago—emerges, as does the S.L.P. this year crowned with double the vote bestowed upon it two years before, then the Socialist demonstration is beyond the power of complacent bourgeois reasoning to argue away. Moreover, even if the bourgeois reasoning did hold good, and even if it did apply to both the S.L.P. and the S.P. there is but cold comfort in it for the ruling class. Big with significance would be the mere fact of voters, discontented with both the dominant parties, choosing parties that fly the Socialist colors, and not, as in former years, the Prohibition party, for a temporary political roost. Looked at from whatever side one may, the election returns for both the S.L.P. and the S.P. illumine the field in the land with a light that unmistakably reveals the ripeness of the crop for harvest.

All this notwithstanding, pray look at the figures for the city of New York polled by the Socialist party.

For the last fifteen years, after nearly every election day, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* has issued a regulation “Jammergeschrei”—a howl over the obvious fact that it was losing its hold upon the German workingmen in this city and vicinity; that the same were dropping the paper; and that their presence at the polls was declining. This year—despite the mammoth and enthusiastic German workingmen’s meetings that you addressed in this city; despite the doubling everywhere else of the S.P. vote; despite the presence of, at least, 50,000 Social Democratic workingmen from Germany in this city;—despite all this the election

returns in this city were such as again to press from the *Volkszeitung* the identical “Jammergeschrei” on the 10th of this month. With a gigantic growth of the S.P. vote everywhere else outside of this city, and with the S.L.P. increasing here 31 per cent., the S.P. vote in the city of Greater New York registers an increase of only 15 per cent., while in New York proper, the increase was only 8 per cent.

Much matter this is for mental digestion.

Jubilant over your magnificent meetings in this city, the *Volkszeitung* of last October 12 declared you had “won the German workingmen” for its party—and so you had. Now, after election, on the 10th of this month, the same paper recognizes that it failed to hold the men you won for it—and so it failed. Even supposing—a preposterous supposition—that everyone of the 1,155 voters who increased the S.P. poll in this city proper, or the 3,687 who increased it in Greater New York, was a German workingman, even then, the insignificant number would have a tell-tale significance considering the vast number of Social Democratic workingmen settled in this city, and the more than 30 years’ existence of the *Volkszeitung*. Fact is that, probably, with only a couple of hundred German workingmen who heard you did the glow of your addresses last until election day. With the overwhelming majority, the clamminess of the *Volkszeitung*—due to the ignorance, the corruption, the immorality and the ineptness for which the paper has become proverbial among our German population, and on account of which its circulation, once about 25,000, has since become mythical,—offset the glow of your addresses.

The sound of the *Volkszeitung*’s this year’s “Jammergeschrei” has a familiar ring—and it is tragically historic in the history of the Socialist Movement of this vicinity.

Facing, in the course of 1890–1899, at almost every recurring election returns, the palpable fact that the German working class of this region remained untouched by it in larger and larger numbers, the *Volkszeitung* whined, like now; like now, it decided that “the causes of that fact had to be probed”; and, then, with a typical mixture of Jonastic-Schleuterian turpitude and stupidity, it threw the blame upon the Socialist Labor Party, split the Socialist Movement—and keeps it split to this day.

As Engels said that the Movement in each country has to settle its accounts

with its own bourgeois, so it may be added that the Movement in each country has to pull itself up by its own bootstraps. So will the Movement in America. As a farewell word to you—with whom the hearty well-wishes of the S.L.P. go out for your brilliant labors in tearing down Class Rule in Germany—we wish you to take the assurance home with you across the waters that the S.L.P. will never tire, and will never flag, and never will be overcome by any of the difficulties, however arduous, peculiar to America, but ever will be found on the firing line in the Cause of Emancipation of the Working Class.

Fraternally,

EDITOR DAILY PEOPLE.

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