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EDITORIAL

BEFOULING HIS OWN NEST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN its issue of August 22, the Holyoke, Mass., *Evening Telegram* tells of a member of the Socialist Labor Party who withdrew from the Party because it forbade him to serve on the Police force. Angrily commenting on the “tyranny” of the S.L.P. to place party above “civic duties,” the *Evening Telegram* says:

“When Socialism puts forth such ideas we must class it with those institutions which have undermined other growing governments, and obliterate it if possible. America, the home of the free, has no place for a party which would make slaves of its followers.”

This Holyoke capitalist paladin of Freedom is befouling the reputation of his own State.

The Police, like the military and the militia, is an executive arm of the “force element” in government, from the rank and file of which “implicit, unquestioned obedience,” to use Gen. Miles’ recent language, is demanded. In other words, the rank and file in those bodies is pledged to receive and execute the commands of the ruling class. The present ruling class has been demonstrated to be a tyrant, vampire class, living in idleness upon the sweat of the brow of the working class, whom they keep in wage slavery; and likewise it has been demonstrated that the tools which the capitalist class uses to curb the workers under the yoke of capitalism, are these self-same “forces,” the police, the military, the militia. To take office in the ranks of any of these bodies is, accordingly, to place oneself at the orders of the modern slave-holder class in order to trample on and prevent the emancipation of the modern slave class, the wage slave, the working class. Socialism,—the Abolitionist movement of this generation—, is enlisted in and pledged to the task of uprooting Capitalist Copperheadism—the Bourbon Copperheadism of the present generation. Animated by a noble aim, Socialism is sincere; standing on the rock-bed of facts, Socialism is practical and consistent. It follows, as night does day, that the Socialist will not be caught blowing hot and cold; he will not be found denouncing a Wrong

and its upholders, and then found in the ranks of these, a myrmidon for that which he condemns. It follows also that when such contradiction is found in any individual, one has to deal with a fool or a knave,—a dust that Socialism quickly wipes its shoes of.

Not otherwise did the immediate lineal politico-social ancestor of Socialism—Abolitionism—act. And brilliantly was the action illustrated by Massachusetts' greatest son,—Wendell Phillips. He, a law graduate, who had made the science of jurisprudence his study, and whose high literary and forensic attainments insured a brilliant career, forewent the laurels ready for him. To enter the bar an oath of allegiance had to be taken to the Constitution of the United States and of Massachusetts. These Constitutions, said Wendell Phillips, recognize the traffic in human flesh. I spurn them. He refused to take the oath. The moral Idea of Abolitionism forbade him to enlist on the roll of barristers; he was characterful enough to obey the order; and to-day the name of no son of Massachusetts reflects greater brilliancy than his upon the State.

When in this year of grace, 1901, a Massachusetts paper denounces Socialism, as does the Holyoke *Evening Telegram* for forbidding its apostles from taking the pledge on the roll of policemen and seeks to brand such action as un-American, it befools its own Massachusetts nest.

The language has the identical ring of the anathema hurled at Wendell Phillips by the Copperheads of fifty-years ago. Socialism recognizes the old note; and welcomes it. Whither the Copperheadism of fifty years ago went, thither also will travel the Copperheadism of 1901, burying in one ignominious grave the memory of both the "Cause" and its scurvy upholders.

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

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