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EDITORIAL

## NO MISTAKE AT ALL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**I**N its publication, the Altruist Community of St. Louis speaks of “The Fatal Mistake of the Socialists,” which is that the Socialists insist on “waiting until a majority vote of the people should adopt co-operation,” instead of “any number of people who want it” adopting it “for themselves,” without waiting for the rest.

The Dutch physician-sociologist Van Eeden who two years ago made a tour of this country in favor of co-operatives, had the same idea. “Don’t bother voting; don’t bother with an economic organization; don’t teach revolution,” was the tenor of his talk; “if you want co-operation, select your members, gather your funds, and start co-operating.”

Van Eeden admitted thousands of dollars’ loss on his schemes. No matter how carefully the members were selected or how well gathered the funds, somehow they one and all went to smash. And yet the industrially undeveloped condition of Holland prevented Van Eeden from seeing whereon they smashed.

That whereon is the powerfully developed tool of production in the hands of the upper capitalist, against which competition is impossible. A body of men, however “carefully selected,” unless equipped with that tool, will be forced to work as hard, and for as little financial return, as if they were outright wage slaves. In both cases it is the lack of ownership of the tool to produce with that renders them helpless. Merely combining helplessnesses, without removing the cause of the helplessness, will not lift them from the slough of overwork and want. For that the advanced tool must be had; and the advanced tool can only be had at such a price that those having it to expend would be in no need of co-operatives to start with. They would be capitalists already.

As above stated, Holland’s backward industrial development befogged Van

Eeden's spectacles and prevented his seeing the reason of his failure. Here in America the advanced state of capitalism should have cleared up that mist and left the Altruist Community free to use its eyes to a purpose. "The Fatal Mistake of the Socialists" is no mistake at all. Socialists have no more ambition to starve collectively than to starve individually. The only co-operative that can prevent its members from starving is the revolutionary co-operative of the whole people. For that the Socialist teaches and builds—and "waits."

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

Uploaded by Donna Bills, September 2010

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