

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 45.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, 1910.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

IMMEDIATE DEMANDS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Socialist Labor Partyman is often asked why he inserts no “immediate demands” in his platform, why he confines himself to the revolutionary demands of Socialism. And the question is pressed with arguments to the effect that “half a loaf is better than none”; “’tis easier to catch flies with molasses than with vinegar”; “the wedge is not driven in broadside but thin side first”; and more to the same purpose.

To the extent that such arguments imply the denial by the S.L.P. of the principles they involve the arguments fall wide of the mark: the S.L.P. recognizes the principles. To the extent that such arguments are driven closer home, and imply that the S.L.P., though recognizing the principles, fanatically ignores them, to that extent the arguments are without foundation in truth.

The lesser ever is included in the greater. He who says 100 implies all the hundred units, each of them. There is not a single “immediate demand,” worth realizing, that is not embraced in the comprehensive demand for the unconditional surrender of the Capitalist Class. If so, what harm can come from specifying a goodly number of them? The answer to this question turns the tables upon the “immediate demanders.” The answer proves them—that is, the honest ones among them—the dogmatists, and frees the S.L.P. of the charge.

No principle is worth a pinch of snuff except in the application.

“Immediate demands,” tacked in America, to a revolutionary program, deliver the Movement tied, hands and feet, into the power of the Ruling Class—as illustrated by the Milwaukee Social Democratic party, among the first acts of which was the raising of the interest on city bonds. “Immediate Demands” are in the nature of traitors who inform the enemy by what passes they can flank, fall upon and rout their otherwise well entrenched adversary. “Immediate demands” are sops.

A Ruling Class is proof against such spit-balls. For every one sop fired at it, it can answer with a thousand.

Every Movement in the land, that has ever aimed at the overthrow of existing conditions, and that made the blunder of seeking to ingratiate itself by means of the “molasses” and the “thin edge of the wedge” of “immediate demands,” has by so much weakened the intellectual fibre of its followers, and thereby ripened recruits for absorption by the bourgeois masters. At times, as at first in Milwaukee, appearances seem to point the other way. But soon the song begins to carol a different and correct tune. The message which the Milwaukee shot, that we are told has been heard around the world, will carry; the lasting message which, it is to be hoped, will be brought home once for all around the world is that Sops are not the weapons of Revolution, and that “Immediate Demands” are Sops.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded August 2011

slpns@slp.org