

EDITORIAL

SIMPLE-SIMONISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ANOTHER of the planks which the Socialist party adopted at its late national convention as one of the “measures calculated to strengthen the working class in its fight for the realization of its ultimate aim, the cooperative commonwealth, and to increase its power of resistance against capitalist oppression” is the 5th:

“The collective ownership of land wherever practicable, and in cases where such ownership is impracticable the *appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation.*”

In the original the last sentence is not italicized. It italicizes itself. It is a stunner in a platform that claims to be Socialist, and pretends to be the gatherer of forces for the Social Revolution.

From the angle of view of economics, the “appropriation by taxation of the annual rental value of all land held for speculation” is as much of a “plaster on a wooden leg” as the demand of Plank 6, previously considered in these columns, for the “collective ownership and democratic management of the banking and currency system.” From the angle of view of economics, the appropriation of the rental value of land, would, like “democratic banking,” so far from strengthening the working class in its struggle with the Capitalist Class, rather tend to weaken Working Class.

For one thing, the rental values appropriated by taxation would not be bestowed, either directly or indirectly, upon the Working Class.

For another thing, being stripped of capital with which to build upon urban land, or with which to purchase the implements necessary to operate upon rural land, the appropriation of the rental value, even of land held for speculative purposes, would leave the land as far beyond Working Class tackles as it now is.

For a third thing, the governmental appropriation of rent relieves the capitalist of the necessity of sharing with the landlord the plunder he now levies on the Working Class: he would pocket the whole of it. The effect of such a “reform” could only add elbow grease to the employer. Of this economic fact the violent strikes that broke out only recently in Vancouver, B.C., in which that fiscal reform was introduced, sufficiently prove what the proletariat has to expect from it.

Can it be that the S.P. is in the dark upon these economic laws and sociologic facts? The Socialist Labor Party wishes to give the S.P. credit for knowing better than to expect strength to come to the proletariat from such Single Tax, or Single Taxoic “reforms.” The S.L.P. also wishes to give the S.P. credit for not intending deliberately to weaken the Working Class in its struggle with the Capitalist Class. How, then, explain the adoption of Plank 5? What’s its mission, for a mission the plank must have? The only explanation is the expectation to “pull in” the Single Taxers; their vote, thus wheedled out of them, would increase the S.P. poll; the increased S.P. heartened proletariat would then flock under the S.P. banner; and the flocked proletariat would then administer the grand bounce to the “pulled in” Single Tax and establish Socialism—hurrah!

All of which is a reminder of one of the experiences made by Simple Simon of Mother Goose celebrity.

The bona fide Single Taxer is—first, not pullable-in: Whosoever is himself pullable-in may at any time become a puller-in himself: the bona fide Single Taxer is to honest a man ever to become a puller-in, hence, is he not pullable-in; second, there is not enough left of them to pay for the effort of trying to pull them in.

As to the rest of the Single Taxers, they are numerous enough in all conscience,—but with them, the Single Tax is merely a cloak to dignify their political fishery after political jobs. These Single Taxers, have made the discovery that both the Republican and the Democratic party have “seen the light”; willing, themselves to “see the light,” if by refraction only, these “Single Taxers” have parted files, one file joining the Republicans, another file joining the Democrats, none of them being left for the S.P. huntsman.

Simple Simon went a-hunting,
For to catch a hare;

He rode an ass about the streets,
But couldn't find one there.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded July 2013

slpns@slp.org