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EDITORIAL

## AN OPEN LETTER, TO AN UNNAMED MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**O \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Comrade:—

Any answer to your letter would be unsatisfactory to the reader without it was accompanied with your letter itself. The publication in full of your letter would, however, expose you to a shower of vituperative assaults from the Officialdom-and-Press of your party. With a view to accomplish the good and avoid the evil, we reproduce your letter omitting signature and such matter as would disclose your identity:

“To the Editor of the *Weekly People*:—

“Dear Comrade:—

“I am sending you my subscription enclosed herein, and I wish to state also that I am a Socialist of the Socialist party of this country, or what I believed to be the only real Socialist party. But one night, while in \_\_\_\_\_, just before last election, I had the pleasure to hear Comrade Reimer, and in defence of a Socialist Labor Party. Before that I never knew what, or if this party did stand for the workingman or Socialism. And by what I heard it appeared anti, or anything but in harmony with the party I am a member of. And at the same time his preaching, I believe, was for the same principles, and same kind of Socialism. Now, if there is any difference between these parties, I want to find it out, as I always believed in two sides to a story, and want to know your side. If you can show me, Comrade, I am willing to do all I can to have this mistake made right.

“I am in no way a stranger in this or any other city I have ever been in. My home being in \_\_\_\_\_. But I must also admit it was only two years ago that I was in ignorance of the greatest ism ever known for my class and for all people who are in favor of having a world for all, instead of a world for a few, and slavery for many. Homes instead of tents and shacks, and a civilized world of harmony and peace, instead of war and murder. Real freedom in place of our present dream. Comforts and leisure, instead of a

continual slavery. Education, in place of ignorance. A world like that would be worth living for, and fighting to get and keep. And if you, Comrade, can show me where or why we will not get these things by the way of election of the Socialist party, or at least as many of them as we can when we lead the world in the course of time, of course, I want you, as a Socialist, to let me know, and if I am convinced, I will make a h— of a big noise to enlist many more of my kind, if it costs my life to do so.

“Trusting to get your reply as soon as the mail will bring it, I beg to remain yours in the fight for Socialism.”

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’Tis so. There are two sides to a story. The wisdom underlying this saying, more concretely expressed, is reproduced in the saying that he who knows only one language, knows not even that one. Upon the same principle, he who knows only one party knows none.

Leaving you to emancipate yourself, as each individual must, by referring you to Socialist Labor Party literature, and thereby to cast off the blinders which the Officialdom and Privately-Owned Press of the Socialist party endeavors to clap to the eyes of their rank-and-file, we shall proceed with a rapid summary.

Socialism has a goal, and that goal has its own means whereby to reach it. All roads lead to Rome; not so with a social revolution: all roads lead not to it: many a road leads away.

The goal of Socialism determines the methods to reach it; inversely the methods illumine the goal.

What is the goal of Socialism?

The goal of Socialism is a social system under which he who can and does work is guaranteed the fruition of his full share in the abundance which he co-operates in producing, and in which, as a consequence, Fraternity, Equality and Liberty prevail.

Such a happy social condition—materially impossible in the days of the Isaiahs, the Platos, the Jesuses and Mores—is materially possible to-day. What in their days was a utopian dream is to-day a realizable fact.

The economic and social development that renders realizable to-day what of yore was utopian, points to the causes and the reason for the causes that render the existing social system destructive of Fraternity, Equality and Liberty.

The causes are:—the private ownership of the necessities for wealth-production:—the consequent economic power of the private owners, called Capitalist Class, to enjoy wealth without labor, together with the economic enslavement of the many, called Working Class, who toil without enjoyment; and, last not least, a consequent system of government known as the “political State,” whose main function is that of the mailed hand, to keep order in such a social menagerie.

These causes point to the ultimate method for reaching the Socialist goal—the overthrow of the “political State,” and its substitution with the Industrial Government.

The ultimate points to the immediate methods.

The Socialist methods consist in the unification of the Working Class upon the political as well as the industrial field—the political, in order to preach and teach the Social Revolution upon the only field on which it is practicable to teach it; the industrial, in order to organize the constituencies of the Socialist, the Industrial, or the Co-operative Republic.

Finally, Socialist methods dictate Socialist tactics. These consist in the uncompromising propaganda of scientific economics and sociology. No other propaganda, the sentimental least of all, can bring and hold the workers together in the requisite Unions for the Social Revolution.

These principles being grasped, the course of events in the Socialist Movement of America will be understood.

The Socialist Labor Party—the first permanent political party of Socialism established in the country, 1890,—closely adhering to Marx, ever devoted its efforts to promoting the organization of the bona fide Unions. In its efforts to do so the S.L.P. found its path blocked by a system of alleged Unionism whose clearest expression was the A.F. of L.—a body which violated every principle of Socialism. It preached and practiced false economics; it preached and practiced false sociology; and it has since developed logically into an appendage to the Civic Federation and ally of the Militia of Christ, until the *Wall Street Journal* hailed it the “bulwark of capital in America.” As a consequence, the Working Class was kept fractured—fractured with a compound fracture. It was kept fractured by a system of prohibitory initiation fees, hamstringing apprenticeship rules, oppressive fines, racial false pretence, etc.,

etc., etc., all of which were deliberately schemed to keep the relatively diminishing jobs for the organized minority, leaving out the majority in disorganized condition; the organized portion of the Working Class was itself kept fractured through a system of autonomy which “contracted” the several International Unions, and even the constituent Unions within these, into the obligation mutually to scab upon one another.

The S.L.P. warred from the start against the evil. It criticized and exposed the acts of Labor-betrayal, and of those who practiced them from Gompers and Arthur down; it endeavored to “bore from within,” only to find that the Officialdom of the A.F. of L. and kindred concerns would tolerate no enlightenment. Then, without giving up the policy of boring from within, the S.L.P. began to “bore from without” also, by promoting the organization of bona fide Unions. Thus arose, in 1896, the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, and later, in 1905, with the assistance of the S.T. and L.A., the Industrial Workers of the World.

From the instant the S.T. and L.A. was organized it began to be assault by the A.F. of L.-itic so-called Unions. They broke S.T. and L.A. strikes by deliberate scabbing, while setting up the claim that the S.T. and L.A. was a “scab organization”; then they sought to influence the councils of the S.L.P. by bribery. Failing in this and finding their existence threatened, they finally determined to smash the S.L.P. This they attempted but failed in. The attempt was the cause of the split in the S.L.P. The splitters, centering around the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, were beaten to a standstill, both in the courts, whither they dragged the S.L.P., and at the ballot box. This was in 1899.

In the meantime, Eugene V. Debs had started a political movement in the West. Debs’s instincts were against the A.F. of L. He had become noted through his activity in organizing anti-A.F. of L.-itic Unions; at the same time the utopianism of sentiment marked Debs’s movement. To that body, strange to say, the defeated splitters from the S.L.P. fled for asylum. The upshot was the organization of the present Socialist party, with the further consequence that, as happened at the late Rochester convention of the A.F. of L., S.P. men, such as Max Hayes and Duncan MacDonald, became the sponsors for the worst labor-disrupting measures of the A.F. of L. The officials of the A.F. of L. could stand back, their misdeeds were cloaked by

“Socialists,” as “Socialism.”

In view of developments that subsequently took place—the organizing of the I.W.W. in 1905; the subsequent split in the I.W.W. into an Anarch and a Socialist wing; the troubles that the S.P. got into by coquetting with the Anarch wing; finally, the numerous evidences that the S.P. must be making experience and finding out that the S.L.P. position was correct; that the building of bona fide Unions was a cardinal duty with a Socialist party; and that pure and simple political Socialism was a breeder of corruption;—in view of all this the S.L.P. thrice made unity overtures to the S.P. and the overtures were thrice rejected.

These being the facts rapidly sketched, the S.L.P. has continued in the field, unterrified by the larger numbers of the S.P.—and will continue in the field, aware that while S.P. methods may enrich individual leaders, such methods never can emancipate the Working Class.

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