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EDITORIAL

THE TRUTH IN IT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Milwaukee, Wis., *Social Democratic Herald*, of the 22d instant has this to say:

“De Leon owes the Social Democrats a debt of gratitude this time, and no mistake. His party made gains where it had no organization whatever, and his vote was largely that of careless people who meant to vote for the larger party, but were not familiar enough with the movement to know which was which. And De Leon, in the face of this fact, calls his the class-conscious vote. In Chicago, where his party was split with the quarrels of boss and sub-bossism, the votes he received were clearly, most of them, intended for the regular Socialist ticket. Comrade Oneal informs us this was the case also in Indiana, and in Minnesota, where the candidate for governor was legally denied the use of the party name, the same experience was had. In Wisconsin where there was no stupid similarity of party names there was less confusion on the part of the voters, although it was not entirely absent. However, we do not begrudge the New York sachem the few votes he got away from us. We had enough, and to spare!”

It is not for the sake of the amusement, which the above will afford the stalwart Socialist Labor Party organizations of Chicago, Minnesota, Indiana, New York and elsewhere, that it is here reproduced. It is reproduced to the end that the one per cent. of unwilling truth and sense contained in it, may not be lost in its ninety-nine per cent. of nonsense. That one per cent. of sense is so valuable, is so pregnant, throws such strong light upon the practical workings of the special laws that underlie the work of propaganda in the country, that it renders the whole passage an inestimable contribution to the study of the Movement in America.

It IS true. A perceptible amount the S.L.P. vote is due to the Social Democracy. How?

The Social Democracy, by the very law of its structure, can reach by far a broader

area of the country than can the Socialist Labor Party,—as yet. The S.L.P. cannot yet, without giving up Socialism, step in places where the S.D.P. can tread giddiheaded. Thus the S.D.P. auditorium is infinitely vaster than the auditorium of the S.L.P. From this it would seem, at first blush, not only that the S.D.P. following and vote must be larger than the following and vote of the S.L.P., which {is} true—for the present; but also that the S.D.P. would completely blanket the S.L.P., block its making any headway, and scuttle it,—which is false. In the reason of this lies the pregnancy of the one per cent. of truth and sense in the passage quoted above.

In the course of its career, the Social Democratic, alias “Socialist” party organization confronts a trying dilemma. On its back, firmly settled in the saddle, with the sharp rowels of the rider’s spurs buried in its flanks, is seated the Socialist Labor Party. What to do for the S.D.P.?

Seek to ignore the rider, and thereby seek to give the go-by to his irrefutable arguments, his unshakable allegations of fact, his unerring blows? A vain endeavor that would be appreciated by none better than the Social Democracy itself. The fervid agitation and education, carried on by the Socialist Labor Party with the trumpet of its press, and with the aid of hundreds of inspired apostles, cannot, ’tis true, as yet reach in all its fullness every ear in the nation. Nevertheless, such is the quality of sound, healthy, genuine propagandistic seed, that it resounds everywhere; everywhere creates an atmosphere of its own; everywhere is felt, tho’ yet indefinitely seized. Wherever the Social Democracy sets up its circus tent, it is made aware of that Socialist Labor Party atmosphere. Aye, it carries the atmosphere on its own back. Vain were the endeavor to ignore it. Seek to, and the whole S.L.P. position is granted. The S.D.P. would go under on the spot.

Seek to throw off the rider, thereby attack him? If it does, then the Social Democracy itself and directly introduces the Socialist Labor Party, the rider on its back, to its audiences. Once introduced, the S.L.P. is inquired into. The elite of S.D.P. audiences will sift evidence and as certain as steel is attracted to the magnet, the fittest, because ripest, are won over to the Socialist Labor Party.

Thus seeking to escape one horn of the dilemma, the Social Democracy impales itself on the other; seeking to free itself from this, it proceeds to impale itself on the first;

and winds up by finding itself pronged by itself on both. It cannot rid itself from the rider. Thus, so far from blanketing, the S.D.P. adds to the swell of the S.L.P. sails; so far from blocking, it opens the way for S.L.P. progress; so far from scuttling, it insures S.L.P. success;—and thereby establishes the line and the law of the line of the trajectory that it traverses toward its own extinction. Truly, a cruel fate!

Inscrutable are the ways of Providence. The Socialist Labor Party, and, with it, the Cause of the Social Revolution, owes assuredly, a debt of gratitude to the Social Democracy. The S.D.P. is certainly a recruiter of strength for the S.L.P. Paraphrasing the immortal New England philosopher, Artemus Ward, “like measles and New England rum” the Social Democracy has its place in the scheme of Nature.

Git up, horsy!

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