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EDITORIAL

THE S.L.P. ORATORIO.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is to be hoped that every member of the Socialist Labor Party, and every sympathizer with it, will himself carefully read the report made by George E. Boomer, the national committeeman of the “Socialist,” alias “Social Democratic” party for the State of Washington, and published in full in these columns.¹ It is to be hoped that, after reading the report, every Socialist Labor Party man and friend will see to it that the report be read and studied by all seriously inclined people.

Boomer was at one time a member of the Socialist Labor Party in Rhode Island. During the whole term of his membership he was at odds with the Party. He had a paper in Providence; he dropped that, and finally left the Party; drifted down to Maryland; there became a populist, and started another paper; dropped that; drifted westward to Girard, Kans., and the *Appeal to Reason*; dropped that also, and drifted still further westward; landed on the Pacific slope, and started a third paper there; drew near to the Party, but soon drew back again, and joined the present so-called “Socialist,” or Social Democratic party, in which he now figures, and whose condition he now graphically exposes.

In the days of Boomer, what has since been broadly designated as the “Trades Union Policy” of the Socialist Labor Party, had not yet taken sufficient shape to give occasion, or furnish a pretext for objection. What Boomer objected to was the “narrowness,” the “intolerance” of the S.L.P.,—the rigid class-line along which the S.L.P. hewed. The integrity of Boomer was never questioned. Making allowance for the superstition that haunted him, that he was a God-ordained Editor, Boomer was honest. His “broadness” had no boodling in mind. Boomer, accordingly, presented a problem: How utilize for the Movement the man’s abilities and probity, without

¹ {See “A Document,” *Weekly People*, March 7, pg. 2}

slackening the Party policy? In short, how educate and instruct the man? how uproot his sociologic illusions? The problem received the only solution possible in such cases. Boomer and the Party parted company. Unable to profit by the experience of others, he started in to make his own experience. He has made it. To-day, Boomer's language on "broadness" differs in nothing from that which seven and eight years ago irritated him as "intolerant," and was stigmatized by him as "narrow." To-day, he sees in middle class sentiment "an overshadowing danger" to his party. To-day he realizes that "mere honesty" is not a sufficient qualification, and justly derides it as "a middle class idea." To-day he is clear on the fact that "unity of mind on the ultimate ideal" is, of all bonds, the most deceptive. To-day he perceives that, between a class-conscious working class element, that "looks to the ultimate" (abolition of wage-slavery), and an element that looks for "an immediate advance" (middle class demands), "contentions and splits" are unavoidable, due to their "separate and opposing immediate interests." Finally, to-day he is alive to the fact that the danger arising from such broadness "will not be seen clearly until some of the middle class members are elected," and—that "THEN IT WILL BE TOO LATE." In other words, Boomer sees the impending downfall of his party clearly enough; and he clearly enough realizes that the disease, that is carrying his party to its grave, is that very "broadness" microbe, that he once blamed the S.L.P. for insisting upon keeping out of its system.

George E. Boomer is a type of a certain class. Not all of that class will, like him, having by personal and bitter experience rid themselves of one illusion, forthwith fly off to another, at another extreme. Not all of them, having dropped "broadness," will take up, as he does, the theory that "the Trades Union, no matter how ignorant it may be of the ultimate demand of the workers," is all the same "a true working class movement, FOR THE SOLE REASON THAT IT CONFINES ITS MEMBERSHIP TO BONA FIDE MEMBERS OF THE WORKING CLASS,"—not all will do that, and, like Boomer, get next ready to commit their fate to such a keeping. Not all of the Boomer class will profit by Socialist Labor Party teachings only fractionally. Many will snap, not the chain that holds them to the illusion of "broadness" only. Tutored by the career of the Plebs Leader of Rome, together with that of the plebeian organization that the Plebs Leader ran, and which "confined its membership to bona fide members of the Plebeian Order," they will snap also at the

chain that holds them to that other illusion,—the illusion that the pure and simple Trades Union, led by the Mitchells, the Labor or Plebs Leaders of to-day, is a working class organization.

And that, with its singing, the S.L.P. will have done!

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