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EDITORIAL

## OBVERSE AND REVERSE.

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**A**MONG the numerous incidents that give an insight into the mental and moral caliber of the birds, that, flocking together, constitute the directing geniuses of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic party, its utterances on the party's press at its late national convention take a place abreast of the leading ones. The question was the ownership of the press, whether the party should set up a press owned by itself, or whether its press should continue to be private property. Two utterances will designate the party's stand, they furnish the obverse and reverse of the medal of the party's condition, or its inside and outside status.

Delegate White of Massachusetts said:

"I believe that if there is one thing that has kept this man De Leon before the Socialist movement in this country it is the publication of that paper called *The People*, and it is within the possibility that if you give that right to a committee [the establishing of a party-owned paper] that we would have a repetition of that again."

Of course, by "De Leon" is meant the Socialist Labor Party. It is a well known feature of the weak mind that it is incapable of grasping a vast and powerful subject. Incapable of doing that, it immediately proceeds to incarnate the thing so as to give it shape and size that may be grasped. Thus we see the phenomenon of the deity, that "First Great Cause, least understood," carved in wood and stone so as to bring it within the tackles of the weak mind. It is so with the Socialist Labor Party. So magnificent a structure, whose soundness of foundation and principle withstands all shocks and conspiracies, is, of course, beyond the tackles of the weak intellect. The Delegate-Whites feel forced to incarnate it in some tangible shape. Hence, for the S.L.P. they take a man's name. When they mention him they mean the S.L.P.

Accordingly, what Delegate White said amounted to this:

“The S.L.P. is there. We have stirred heaven and hell to overflow it,—we failed. We have stirred heaven and hell to ridicule it,—the ridicule has fallen upon us. We have unchained the sluice-gates of slander against it,—it has risen serene, like the sun above the clouds, stainless, unreachable by our mud balls, and our poisoned arrows. I believe that if there is one thing that has kept the S.L.P. in the center of the stage of the Socialist movement of this country it is the publication of that paper called *The People*, which, being owned from top to bottom by the Socialist Labor Party, reflects at every point the collective sense of the organization, and thereby enables the whole organization to present a solid, compact front from whatever side it is attacked. Owned by, therefore controlled by, and reflecting the sense of an organized body, not a disorganized mob, that paper has proved both the value of the press as a weapon and the importance of its ownership to a revolutionary party. Therefore—”

And now Delegate White proceeds to afford an inside view into the mental caliber of his party’s leaders. Having shown by his own words how important the ownership of its press is by a revolutionary party, what conclusions can be expected other than that, therefore, his party should emancipate itself from the yoke of its present privately owned papers and set up its own, run by and subservient to its own wishes lest it go down? But no; true to the heels-over-head intellectuality of his kind, Delegate White turns a somersault back and concludes:

“Therefore, our party may not own its own press. If it does, it is within the possibility that we may cease to be a mob, become an organization and rise to the S.L.P. distinction that we all admire.”

That much for the inside, or intellectual, now for the outside or physical status of that so-called Socialist party. If the first passage, quoted above, seems incredible (it will be found in the *Appeal to Reason* report of May 5, page 3, col. 2), the next passage will seem still more incredible. We, therefore, shall begin by locating it. It will be found in the same issue of the *Appeal to Reason*, page 3, col. 6, and as a perfidious fate would have it, the passage happens to be surmounted by a joint cut of the Rev. Herron’s private fellowshipee Spargo, together with a typical cut, almost an allegory, of Delegate H. Slobodinoffsky, alias Slobodkin, alias Slobodin, the gentleman who is known to fame as having declared, during a recent tussel when

his Volkszeitung Corporation was stamping out the attempt of some of the few American members of his party in New York to set up an English paper independent of his corporation, that the English-speaking members should “sit at his feet.” The passage is from the national secretary William Mailly. The gentleman says:

“I believe also that the existence of an independent press, free from party control, is one of the strongest safeguards toward protecting the party’s integrity that we have to-day.”

At first blush this sounds like a cross between insanity and knavery. Knavery, in attempting to palm off as a virtue, and that virtue “independence,” what in such instances is a vice; insanity, in holding that a revolutionary party, or any party, for that matter, can be safe and its integrity guarded if its chief weapon of defence and attack, its press, is beyond its own, and within somebody else’s control! Closely looked into, the insanity drops but the knavery remains in increased dimensions.

It is true. If the so-called Socialist party were to attempt to set up its own press it would instantaneously go to smash. Why? Just because the various private corporations that now own “its press” would immediately turn their guns upon it—as the Volkszeitung Corporation did with the Socialist Labor Party; and what the S.L.P. could stand triumphantly and raised to a issue of principle, would simply shatter the party of the Maillys. These private corporations will brook no competition; their placemen will, like all private holders, protect their graft to the bitter end; instead of there being one tapeworm-like, invertebrate party, there would be at least three wriggling worms and thus the “integrity,” such as it is, of the concern would be a thing of the past, many moons before it will be that anyhow. And thus, notwithstanding at this very period one of these privately owned concerns, *Volkszeitung-Worker*, stands convicted of having sold out the brewery workers for cold cash (advertisements) and is thereby smashing its own party in this locality, and not withstanding another of these privately owned concerns, the *Appeal to Reason*, was only recently convicted of sweat-shopping its employes in the interest of sweat-shopper Wayland, and notwithstanding the wail of Delegate Tool (*Appeal to Reason*, May 5, page 3, col. 2) that in his town that privately owned paper

“has more influence than any other organization in the Socialist party, and I believe that it needs a competitor”—notwithstanding all that, the private owners and editors cracked the whip, the convention saw the “independent” guns trained upon it, and it meekly walked under the Caudine Forks. It decided that “its press” should be independent of itself!

A party must own its press, or the press will own it. The internal and external reasons why the so-called Socialist party does not, will not and cannot own its own press read it out of the category of a bona fide party of Socialism. It is a private concern run for the private profit of its private owners, who pool their issues within it and dupe the dupable,—a fact well reflected in its bourgeois platform.

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

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