

DAILY PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

MAKING READY FOR THE THIRD ACT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON the 3rd of this month the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* published a call, or manifesto, for the organization of a “Socialist League” of the *Volkszeitung* Corporation’s Germans, euphoniously termed “the German Social Democrats” of America. The call opens with an attempt to account for the recent decline in the Socialist party vote by negligent agitation “among the Germans”. That this expression is not an unintentional slip appears from the argument that follows, and which confirms the hint, thrown out in this initial expression, to the effect that the *Volkszeitung* Corporation Germans are THE thing, and the only reliable thing. The call then proceeds to declare that the said “German Social Democrats” of the country are the “trunk” of the Socialist Movement here in America; that they are the “backbone” of the Movement; that, it pointedly implies, they are the beacons of that “idealism” without which there can be no true Socialism; that that necessary idealism “finds no good soil here”; and that, for all these reasons, theirs is the duty to educate, to train the “English speaking” element of the land, in short, “to point the way” to this element—presumably towards “idealism” and the other qualities that go to make “trunks” and “backbone”. What the “ideal” is that the callers of the call pursue and would “point the way” to, and what they are the “trunk” and “backbone” of was speedily made clear by the editorial article that the call was followed up with in the issue of the *Volkszeitung* of the following 19th of this same month.

The A.F. of L. labor-fakir brigade that has been running the capmakers union in their private interest, trafficking on labels, doing a business out of strikes, and otherwise deporting themselves as worthy sub-lieutenants of Samuel Gompers, have latterly been justly throwing wrathful fits. Some ten months ago they had a strike, which they stretched out as long as it paid the inside ring. The best of things

must end; so had this strike. The thing now was to hypnotize the rank and file into the belief that they won a “glorious victory.” How else could the ring expect another strike-picnic for itself? Accordingly, the headquarters of the unhappy capmakers was decorated gaily in flags and bunting, cake and drinks were dispensed, music was discoursed, speeches were on tap. The glorious victory was celebrated. Gompers’ *Federationist*, the Journal of the Capmakers, last not least, the *Volkszeitung*, contained glowing reports of the victory and its celebration. There was one paper that immediately told a different tale: that paper was the *Daily People*. The festivities were barely over when the rank and file discovered that they had been egregiously cheated. The fight was for the closed shop. The ring had promised certain victory, and claimed to have gained it. The men discovered that the “treaty of peace” patented their defeat: it contained an express clause guaranteeing the employer’s right to employ whom he liked, whether Union men or not, and the employer religiously lived up to the contract. Upon this discovery, rank and file members of the duped capmakers came in full committee to the *Daily People* and to *Der Arbeiter*, the Yiddish organ of the Socialist Labor Party. The documents the committees brought were verified, the charges they alleged were looked into. Both were found true, and these papers published the fact. The capmakers’ labor fakir brigade foamed at the mouth with indignation; Gompers’s *Federationist* growled; the Capmakers’ Journal snarled; the *Volkszeitung* yelped. They all set up the cry “*Daily People* Lie!” “De Leonism!” Whereupon, from New York to Detroit, a regular De Leonite bait was set on foot by these American doubles of the Russian Police Officers who set up Unions to bamboozle the Working Class. Every member of the capmakers Union who was caught reading *The People*, or *Der Arbeiter*, was hounded, waylaid, and, as happened in Detroit, was made the object of persecution through trumped up charges. In short, it was the methods of the Czar’s establishment applied through the agency of the obscene labor fakir in America as Cossack. No more than the workmen in Russia are now being intimidated by the Cossacks, were the sturdy members of the capmakers Union, to whose minds *The People* and *Der Arbeiter* brought enlightenment to be intimidated by the fakir brigade’s persecution. They organized themselves and, as soon as the I.W.W. was launched, joined its ranks with flying colors. The latest stage in this sequel of

events was the resort, against the I.W.W., on the part of the labor fakir brigade in the capmakers Union, to the identical methods that fakirdom in general resorted to against the S.T. & L.A.—wholesale lies, recklessly uttered. Such a document was, accordingly, anonymously set afloat. It is based upon, fathering the allegations of such a mendacious document, adding to its mendacity, and improving upon it by the injection of a goodly mixture of stale quibbles and mouldy sophistries which hint at the sanctity of the “boring from within” theory, that the *Volkszeitung* editorial of the 19th instant, above referred to, is gotten up. Such is the editorial utterance with which the Corporation supplements the call or manifesto which it published on the 3rd instant over the signature of a set of old stagers of its inner ring. Either—manifesto or editorial—alone, might signify nothing more than routine impudence, imbecility and crookedness of the Corporation. Coming together, however at this season, when the Socialist Movement of America is taking its third and longest plunge forward, the document that calls upon the “German Social Democrats” to organize a separate body, and the editorial that takes open side {with} the A.F. of L. against the I.W.W., loudly announce the approaching appearance of the *Volkszeitung* Corporation in its favorite role, a role in which it has appeared twice before since its unhealthy advent in the movement—once in 1889 and then in 1899—the hateful role of seeking to hamstring the Socialist Movement of America every time the Movement threatens to outgrow the Corporation’s power to exploit it, to dominate it, and to dwarf it down to the Corporation’s own dwarfish intellect and purpose.

The *Volkszeitung* Corporation is run by a ring of about forty men. Of these men very few at all speak the English language; for America and her people they have contempt only; of the country they speak disparagingly as “Malheurica”, a word-play signifying “Badluckica”; of our institutions they know next to nothing, and care less, thus rendering themselves hopelessly inept; of our language they say, and published it in their paper, that it is “dishonest”; of the Irish, by whom they mean the whole English speaking element, they say, and have published it in their paper, that they are “corrupt to the marrow”; one of them, Alexander Jonas, expressly says: “the Americans are hopelessly ignorant and corrupt”. With few exceptions, the members of the ring were not Socialists abroad, and those that were belong mostly

to the category of frayed back-numbers of the old Lassallean Movement of whom Engels correctly and wittily said that they were to be found only as “ruins abroad”; most of the members of the ring set up their Socialist colors here, they were none abroad: they sought to add artificial inches to their stature by seeking to identify themselves with the rising Socialist movement in Germany—and do business thereby. Despite their crass ignorance and unquestionably corrupt life, the members of the ring have of themselves the exalted opinion that is characteristic of the ego maniac degenerate. As Schlueter, one of them said: “We Germans speak from above down”; as Slobodin, another one said referring to the American element that was joining the Socialist party, “they should sit at our feet”; in their paper they declared, in an article translated a year or so ago in these columns, that the Socialist press of this country was not safe except it was controlled by them. Of course, this ring consists mainly of caricatures of the German race, here or elsewhere, and are a disgrace to it. As Adolf Hepner, who knows both them and the Socialists of Germany said, “in Germany the members of the ring would not dare even to make their existence known at party meetings”, yet here they have successfully exercised a degree of low cunning by which they have managed to impose themselves upon the unwary, and thus rifle their pockets and the treasuries of Unions. The Socialism of the ring is a cross between German Jingoism and bourgeois radicalism. It takes time before the unwary makes his experience and discovers that the *Volkszeitung* is but a paper for business first. The organization, run by such a body, is a dangerous rock below the surface of the waters of the Socialist Movement of America. It lures and seeks to wreck. The *Volkszeitung* Corporation has tried the game twice; it is now at its third attempt.

In 1889, when the first visible influx of the American element took place in the Socialist Movement, and, of course, began to get “onto” the *Volkszeitung* Corporation, the Corporation promptly smashed the American Branch of the then “Socialistic Labor Party”, as dangerous to the Corporation’s interests. The feat was heralded by a call upon the “German Social Democrats” to rally as the “backbone” of the Movement to “the defense of Socialism”, and it was accompanied by obsequious shekels-fetching support of then incipient “pure and simpledom” as now understood.

The *Volkszeitung* Corporation conspiracy of 1889 was substantially thwarted

by the rise of the Nationalist movement, that happened at that time. That movement, with all its shortcomings, may be said to mark the beginning of the Socialist movement, to the manner born, so to speak, in America. The agents of the Corporation sought to recruit their forces and to raise a mask for their own misdeeds by welcoming the Nationalists into the “Socialistic Labor Party”, which the Corporation dominated. The manoeuvre cost the Corporation dear. The Nationalists, who joined, rapidly developed into full fledged Socialists: the Socialist Labor Party was started: bona fide—theoretical, practical and aggressive—Socialism began to be preached: the Trades Union Question was, of course, immediately grappled with: the Corporation’s “business” began to suffer: the A.F. of L. pulled its wires: the struggle commenced: the founding of the economic organization of the S.T. & L.A. set the ring wild and scheming: blandishments and bribery were attempted upon the now rapidly developing S.L.P.: it all availed naught. Either the *Volkszeitung* Corporation had to wheel in line with Socialism and stand straight, or there would be war. The Corporation then prepared to smash the S.L.P. The steps taken in that direction were essentially those taken in 1889, only improved up to-date. Again a “call” was issued to the “German Social Democrats” to “save Socialism”, and the *Volkszeitung* started to vilify the S.T. & L.A. Every rascality of the A.F. of L. against the S.T. & L.A., was defended and even praised as “Marxism”; no correction from the S.T. & L.A. was accepted; and when the intrigue was thought to be ripe, the crash of July 10, 1899 took place. It differed materially, however, from the affair of 1889. This time the S.L.P. could not be bagged. It kept its press, name and emblem and proceeded unterrified, aye, strengthened by the Corporation’s hostility.

Six years have since elapsed, and now we see the *Volkszeitung* Corporation preparing for the third performance. We are now traversing the third epoch in the onward march of the Socialist Movement in the land. A magnificent Labor Movement is shaping itself. The earnest Socialists in the camp of the two parties, the S.L.P. and the S.P., are coming together on the rockbed of bona fide Unionism—the I.W.W. At this stage the old song of 1889 and 1899 rises anew in the *Volkszeitung*. The powerfully developing Socialist Movement through the I.W.W. is a new threat to A.F. of L. fakirdom. Accordingly, the old “call” is once more issued to

the “German Social Democrats”. The start is the same; the method is the same—suppression of the truth with regard to the I.W.W. and all that the I.W.W. preaches, and echoing whatever infamy the A.F. of L. may choose to utter; the aim is the same: to smash the Socialist Movement. Having clung like a barnacle to the S.P., and hoped to run it, now that the Corporation finds things are shaping themselves against its business interests, it is preparing to again start a party of its own that may serve as stool-pigeon for its petty interests.

If in 1899 the Corporation failed substantially: now that it is crippled from that fight and the Movement is so much stronger, its utter rout is assured. The Volkszeitung Corporation ring is not the trunk of the Socialist Movement in America; it is not the Movement’s backbone; nor yet is it a beacon of Socialist idealism. What the Corporation is the “trunk” of is foreign nativistic ignorance and impudence; what it is the “backbone” of is the A.F. of L. labor fakir brigade of this vicinity; the idealism that it is the beacon of is the idealism of Niedermeyer Union funds embezzlers and sellers out of the working class by harmful contracts with employers, the idealism of rendering the cause of Socialism subservient to the business of advertising.

Czarism in Russia played once too often upon the string that it had often played upon successfully. The ring-run Volkszeitung Corporation, crippled from its 1899 attempt, likewise is at the end of the tether of its mischievous career. It is now rotten-ripe to be spewed out of the Socialist Movement.

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N.B.—The editorial in the *Volkszeitung* of the 19th instant will be found elsewhere in this issue under the caption: “At Its Old Game”.¹ The Corporation appears there in all the glory of a lackey, past and present, of Belmont’s lieutenants, except that it is whipped by *The People* into starting by accepting as true what it once called a “De Leonite Lie”—the fact that the capmakers had lost their strike.

¹ [See Appendix, next page.]

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REPRINT

AT ITS OLD GAME.

[The below is the English translation of the editorial published in the *Volkszeitung*, the secret organ of the A.F. of L., and referred to in the article "Making Ready for the Third Act", found elsewhere in this issue.]

It has often been pointed out in these columns that, all good intentions to the contrary notwithstanding, antagonisms must with natural sequence spring from the existence of several trade unions of the same calling, which in case of struggles with the bosses must lead to a condition where one labor organization takes a stand against another and that, in case of strikes and lock-outs, the one organization of the workers, by reason of its being supported by the bosses, becomes traitor to its own cause.

If this is self-evident from the mere existence of two unions in the same trade, even though both organizations have originally the best of intentions not to be guilty of any support of the capitalists and to live in peace with the rival organization, if at all possible, how much sooner must it not come to antagonistic acts against the rival organization, aye, to direct treason to the cause of labor, if, as has been the case with the Industrial Workers of the World, the organization regards, at the very outset, the fight against another labor organization as one of its tasks.

What was bound to come, has then come soon enough. Just as at one time the "Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance", of De Leonite remembrance, in the well-known Seidenberg affair attacked in the rear the striking cigarmakers, so has now the organization of the Industrial Workers of the World, with the aid of the same De Leon, again attacked in the rear a Socialist trade union, again created labor organizations wherewith to fight existing trade unions.

The facts, upon which this case is based, are contained in a leaflet recently issued by the General Executive Committee of the "Cap Makers Union of North America."

As stated there, the “Industrial Workers” have here in New York formed a local union of capmakers in opposition to the existing capmakers’ union connected with the American Federation of Labor, and indeed there were three members of the S.L.P., who,—we follow here the official declaration of the General Executive Committee—together with about twenty scabs, formed this opposition union. The capmakers had a strike which ended in a contract with the employers. This contract can, according to the whole of its contents, be only regarded as an admission of the defeat of the strikers, since it confers all rights upon the employers and none, or nearly none, upon the workers. This contract the three aforesaid adherents of De Leon now took for a pretext to leave their organization, the capmakers’ union, and, together with men who had during the strike attacked the strikers in the rear by playing the scab, form a counter organization which received a charter from the “Industrial Workers of the World”. Had these men had the honest purpose to serve the cause of labor, they would have endeavored to enlighten the members, WITHIN THEIR ORGANIZATION, as to the nature of the contract entered into if they did believe that something was wrong. But it was direct treason to their own colleagues when they went and formed an opposition union together with men who had degraded themselves as scabs during the strike.

Worse than in New York, was done to the capmakers’ union in Detroit. According to the aforesaid leaflet, over 100 members of this union were locked out on November 27, although the union had a contract with the firm in question. According to the contention of the General Executive Committee of the capmakers, eight members of the I.W.W. caused the firm to break its contract with the union and to throw its members upon the street. Again, as in the New York case, the eight instigators of the lock-out are members of the S.L.P. and they remained at work as scabs, while the members of the capmakers’ union were driven out of the factory with the aid of the police.

These were the facts published by the General Executive Committee of the capmakers’ union. They can serve as an example what it will come to in the trade union movement if the policy to fight existing unions with counter organizations is continued. The employers, the capitalists, have the benefit thereof; such counter organizations work into their hands. Factional division is created where unity is so

much needed.

And greater than on any other field is the need of unity in the economic field.

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