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EDITORIAL

“SIMPLEDOM” AND “BORING”.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE are two terms—“pure and simple Unionism” and “boring from within”—that have figured so conspicuously in the intellectual conflict, now raging in the Labor Movement, that the dust they have raised threatens to obscure them, to cause their real meaning to be lost, and thereby to endanger the intelligent solution of the issue from which they have sprung. Lest so serious a misfortune befall the Question at stake, it will be well, at this season above all others, to brush away the dust from the two terms, and restore them to the purity of their original and only real meaning.

“Pure and simple Unionism” has been twisted by the labor-lieutenants of the capitalist class into a meaning to suit themselves—a meaning that conceals the ulcer, and draws attention away from it. The meaning they seek to attach to the term is: “strictly economic Unionism”, as distinguished from “political Unionism”; and many an unguarded wayfarer has fallen into the trap. Such a meaning is false.

The feature of “pure and simple Unionism” is that it is untrue to its own economic pretensions. It pretends to be a “Labor organization”, whereas it is, in fact, an “anti-Labor” affair, in that it prevents the organization of the Working Class through a thousand and one schemes, of which high initiation fees, high dues, frequent assessments, restriction of apprentices, etc., are but a few; it pretends to improve the condition of Labor, whereas, in fact, the condition of the Working Class, its own organized membership included, steadily declines; it pretends to fight the battles of the Working Class, whereas, in fact, it fights the battles of the capitalist class by inoculating its membership with every poisonous virus that capitalist practitioners prepare for besotting the workingman and leading him to waste his energies in a blind alley—such viruses, for instance, as that “Capital must be fought with capital”, that “Capital and Labor are Brothers”, etc.; it pretends that

the wage system is right and good, and only needs improvement, and it thereby conceals the fact that wages are the wage-slave’s chain and the best of wages is but a longer chain; it pretends that the Union is all-sufficient for the protection of the workingman, whereas, in fact, it is up to its eyebrows in politics through its lobbying and other similar committees. Such are the ear-marks of “pure and simpledom.” It gave itself the name through Gompers at the Detroit Convention of the A.F. of L. in 1890, and the name was turned against it in satire, seeing that it was neither pure, but corrupt as hell, nor simple, but full of duplicity,—unless by “simple” silliness were meant. The parade, made by the “pure and simple” leader against “POLITICAL action”{,} was but a manœuvre to draw the discussion away from his ECONOMIC crimes. The root of the conflict between bona fide Unionism and the abortion of Gompersism is pivoted upon the economic, and not upon the political field. Long before the political phase of the question could be discussed, the two elements were rent in twain upon the fundamental principles of economics.—The conflict will be found well reproduced and elucidated in the [De Leon-Harriman New Haven debate](#).

A similar perversion of meaning has been attempted upon the term “boring from within.” Against this term the same manœuvre is tried that was tried against Bebel by the Anarchist delegation that sought admission at the Zurich International Congress in 1893. At Zurich, the Anarchists who sought admission pretended that the difference between them and Bebel was that they believed in physical force, whereas Bebel would have none of it. Bebel tore the false pretence to shreds by showing that the actual difference consisted in that the Anarchists wanted physical force ONLY, whereas the armory of the Social Democracy of Germany held BOTH the peaceful weapon of the ballot and the weapon of physical force. In the same way can the perversion of meaning attempted upon the term “boring from within” be disposed of.

The term “boring from within”—, to which the Socialist Labor Party attaches the same contempt that bona fide Unionism attaches to “pure and simpledom”, and to the tune of which the Party has riddled the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party—does not mean what the said so-called Socialist party claims it to mean. It does not mean, as they would have it appear, a

condemnation of boring from within, what it does mean, and has amply been stated and proven to mean, is the condemnation of the policy to bore from within ALONE.

The history of the term, aided by the conduct of the said so-called Socialist party, will illustrate the point.

When, in December, 1898, the *Volkszeitung* Corporation began to feel the need of the cash which the labor-lieutenants of the capitalist class were withholding from it because of the exposures in *The People* of the crimes against Labor which these leaders were misleading their organizations into committing, the paper began to decry the Trades Union attitude of the Socialist Labor Party. What the attitude was which it attacked may be gathered by the occasions that it took to attack. One of these occasions was when the stone-cutters Union refused to admit new members, after it had raised its initiation fee to \$100 in the hope that such an initiation fee would keep them out. *The People* opened fire, and strongly urged the organization of a Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance Local by all the stone cutters against whom such a bourgeois guild manœuvre was attempted. Here was a case of “boring from without” simultaneous with the attempt to “bore from within.” The *Volkszeitung* raised the hue and cry against that. It did not dare to deny the iniquity of the stone-cutters Union, but it considered still more iniquitous the plan to at all bore from without. It claimed that the boring should be done from within ALONE. How that could be done by the men who were excluded, the sapient paper never explained.

The war was on, and the principle of boring from within ALONE developed into its full heinousness. It developed into what it could not choose but develop. It developed into turning alleged Socialists into train-bearers for the labor fakirs, the capitalist agents in the Union. “Boring from within” thus became tantamount to silence on, indulgence towards, and presently approval of fakirism. The privately owned press of the said so-called Socialist party suppressed the iniquities of the labor fakir; they went further, Max S. Hayes of the said party greeted with “Good, well done!” in his *Cleveland Citizen* the summary expulsion of Charles Corregan by the Syracuse Local of Hayes’ International Typographical Union for the exercise of free speech in criticising the fakirs of his organization, and without the semblance even of a trial; they went still further, the *Volkszeitung* reproduced, flaming headlines and all, the capitalist articles that jubilated over the court’s decision against

Corregan when he brought suit against the body of men who sought to deprive him of his civic rights and of bread, to boot; they went still further, when Corregan appealed from this decision and finally won out and had to be re-instated, they, the said so-called Socialist party press, shared with the whole and previously jubilant capitalist press the silence of the grave at the news; they went still further, with the said Hayes at their head, who is also the editor of the “World of Labor” column in the also privately owned *International Socialist Review*, they have regularly echoed the damnable false claims of victory with which the fakirs seek to cheat the workers at a distance from the place where they suffer defeat, as the said Hayes did in the case of the Chicago stockyard strike, where the A.F. of L. received the regulation knockdown and Hayes echoed the regulation fakirs’ cry of triumph; they went even further, and they capped the climax at their national convention by fawning on the miscreant fakirs and cheering the manœuvres of these, so disastrous to the workers, by styling the manœuvres a “noble waging of the class struggle”—That is “boring from within”, the policy of seeking fakir’s friendship (and cash?) by such a conduct within the Union as would never incommode the labor-lieutenants of the capitalist class. The “boring from within” of the so-called Socialist party meant, accordingly, boring from within ALONE.—This also will be found fully explained in the [De Leon-Harriman debate](#).

The capitalist class would care little for a Socialist organization that would limit itself to boring from within the capitalist parties, but never set up a party of itself to supplement the “boring from within” with the “boring from without.” Without the simultaneous “boring from without”, all “boring from within” ends in corruption. The militant Socialist bores from WITHIN and from WITHOUT.

Clearness upon these terms is essential at this season. Despite the confusion interestedly created by vicious elements, the terms are now generally well understood. How well understood the terms are now, and how successful the Socialist Labor Party has been in pillorying both to the execration of the serious element in the Labor Movement, may be judged from the Chicago Manifesto. The men who called together the conference from which the Manifesto issued, and who in the conference held the language reported by Frank Bohn, are “on to” both “pure and simpledom” and “boring from within.” The convention will, it is to be hoped,

turn over and keep down for good and all, the old leaf that the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance, jointly with the Socialist Labor Party, has for all these years been struggling to turn over and keep down upon the, to the Socialist Movement, vital Question of Trades Unionism, against the combined hostilities of “pure and simpledom” and of the “boring from within” so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party.

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

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slpns@slp.org