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EDITORIAL

THE “SALOON” AND OTHER EFFECTS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE following letter is not the first that has been addressed to this office upon the subject:

New York, Sept. 20, 1905.

Editor *Daily People*.

Dear Sir: Will you kindly inform me as to the position of the Socialist Labor Party on the Saloon, or Liquor traffic. Is it their intention to work against it with the object in view of eventually overthrowing the traffic? In other words, are they against the legalized saloon? If this is the case why is your platform silent about it? Is it not true that the laboring man is not in favor of closing the saloons?

Would be pleased to have an answer to these questions.

Yours respectfully,
Jos. Johnson.

18 Spruce street.

The position of the Socialist Labor Party begins and ends with two principles—one economic, the other sociologic.

The economic principle is that involuntary poverty is ineradicable, and will continue to make ever wider and deeper inroads into the people's welfare, so long as the natural opportunities (land) and the equally essential social opportunities (capital) continue to be private property. In other words, the economic principle upon which the Socialist Labor Party is planted is that the method of production having become integrally co-operative, the system of ownership, under which the necessities for production are held, must square with the method of production, and must be likewise collective. So long as the latter continues individual, while the former has become collective, poverty, misery and their long train of evils are unavoidable. The struggle for existence will breed and compel crime, and will incite bad habits.

The sociologic principle upon which the Socialist Labor Party is planted maintains that the issue is a revolutionary one; that it involves the evolution of society from the capitalist into the Socialist system, an evolution supplemental to that which this country traversed when it moved from the feudal into the capitalist stage; and that, the same as the latter evolution was compulsorily the task of the bourgeois or capitalist, this next evolution is the task of the Working Class, united on the political field to capture and overthrow the capitalist State, and united on the economic field to take and hold the above named natural and social opportunities, in order to operate them for use and not for private profit.

In a way all the questions put by our correspondent are inferentially answered by the above. We shall, nevertheless, take them up by the light of what precedes.

"The saloon," together with all the evils that arise therefrom, is no cause, except in the sense that all effects react back and intensify their cause. The abolition of the saloon would leave untouched the cause of widening and deepening popular misery. Supposing the saloon abolished, seeing that the cause of widening and deepening misery would continue, the effects of misery and of the struggle for life would find other channels to run into. Both De Quincey and Dickens tell of the increased sales of laudanum and opium in the manufacturing towns of England where the sale of intoxicants was forbidden. The unnatural conditions created by the private ownership of the necessaries for production, now that production has become collective, on the one hand drives competing capital to some new wrongful method of sustaining itself as fast as it is driven from an old one: opium and laudanum are invested in instead of liquor; and on the other, stimulants or nerve-deadeners, which means pain-killers, are resorted to by the lower strata of society. The Socialist Labor Party, accordingly, while preaching sobriety and practicing, as its conduct proves, what it preaches, makes no more an issue of the liquor traffic, than it makes an issue of capital punishment, the Negro question, woman's rights, or any of the many issues which, however burning are not issues in themselves, but bubble on the surface of the great issue below—the Social Question. This being settled, the others settle of themselves.

So long as there is profit in liquor, drunkenness will exist. So long as the "sober," "Christian," "patriotic" Capitalist Class is in power, it will see to it that

profit remains in liquor, and that drunkenness continues so as to stimulate the profits.

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