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ONE CENT.

CORRESPONDENCE

JAMES CONNOLLY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO the *Daily and Weekly People*:—I enclose a letter to me from Comrade Fannie Chernin of El Paso, Tex. Connolly seems to be covered with sore spots. The information Comrade Chernin wishes to have should be given in *The People* and I believe will have a salutary effect. With best wishes to the immortal S.L.P.¹

A.S. DOWLER.

Des Moines, Ia., January 3.

(Enclosure.)

Dear Comrade Dowler:—I went Saturday night to Labor Hall to hear James Connolly of the S.P.² speak. Not a baker's dozen were in the hall, except the S.P. members, therefore it was decided not to hold a meeting. Sunday night I went again, and there were about 20 in the audience, including members, but he spoke—not on Socialism, as he had intended, for the reason that “most of those in the hall were acquainted more or less with that subject”—but he spoke on conditions in Ireland from a Socialist point of view. After the lecture I asked him if he advises the workers to join the A.F. of L.³ He answered very quickly, “Certainly not; if I would advise that I would not be here to-night.” Then I asked if the S.P. has endorsed the I.W.W.⁴ He answered: “No—it is not necessary; the economic movement must look after itself—the political must take care of itself. The S.P. does not forbid its members to join the A.F. of L.” I then asked: “If the A.F. of L. denies the class struggle and the S.P. does not, but on the other hand is neutral to the action of individual members joining the A.F. of L., is not that a contradiction?” Of the answer he gave I only recall clearly that he said it is not a contradiction. Whether the fault is mine in failing to comprehend his answer, or the fault is his in not clarifying the issue I am

¹ [Socialist Labor Party.]

² [Socialist Party.]

³ [American Federation of Labor.]

⁴ [Industrial Workers of the World.]

unable to say.

When I found myself outside of the hall walking toward the car, Connolly said to me: "So you are an S.L.P.? You have my sympathy." I thanked him for his kindness, but declined his sympathy on the ground of not needing it. Then he said, "Many a good man and woman have sacrificed both time and money for the S.L.P. only to find it wasted. Why? As quick as they work up the movement, that quick Daniel De Leon disrupts it. I was in the S.L.P., too; but I couldn't stay in it unless I would agree to lose all my individuality. De Leon wants followers not comrades. He even has the minutes edited. Frank Bohn, Brimble, Miss Roulston and others had to get out because they wouldn't knuckle under De Leon. Only that is acceptable which boosts him. I was on the National Executive Committee in New York. I know."

Now and then I tried to answer him. Then at some remark I happened to mention your name—speaking of the N.E.C., if he knows you. "Yes," he said, "Dowler and Mrs. Johnson voted against one of my resolutions—think of it!—and they (you and Mrs. J.) being thousands of miles away and not knowing conditions as they prevailed in N.Y.!" which he (Connolly) knew, being on the ground. He stated in plain words that De Leon split the I.W.W. before the referendum vote on the political clause was taken. He uttered a string of uncomplimentary remarks, but nevertheless made a statement to the effect that there are things and doings in the S.P. that would make one vomit.

Oh, yes! I must not forget this—De Leon in denouncing Connolly said he is "a Jesuit spy" trying to sell out the Movement to the church and appealed especially to race prejudice by dubbing Connolly an Irish Catholic. Mr. C. speaks again to-night at the court house, but I will not hear him.

How I wish a good S.L.P. man were here who knows the why and wherefore of Connolly. With time I hope to overcome my ignorance of men and methods in the movement.

F.C.

[The "career" proper of James Connolly as a member of the S.L.P. began in the spring of 1904.

Connolly had settled in the country about six months before, and applied for a position on *The People*. In the course of previous correspondence, when he was still in Ireland, he had given his occupation as "laborer"; in 1902, when he made his first visit here and toured the U.S. at the expense of the S.L.P., he had given his occupation as tile-layer; when he returned to settle here in 1903 and applied to *The People* for work, he stated his occupation was machine compositor. He was found unfit for that; was secured a place elsewhere and could not hold it; he asked for

work in the editorial department and was courteously shown that somebody would have to be discharged to make room for him, and that could not be. He finally settled down as insurance agent in Troy, N.Y.

In Troy, N.Y., Connolly's real "career" began. In the spring of that year he sent from Troy an article for publication in *The People*. The article denounced *The People* for teaching false economics; denounced Bebel's *Woman* as a lewd book; and, above all, denounced *The People* for attacking the Roman Catholic church. The article was published with the answer thereto, proving the man's ignorance in economics, and his ignorance of the sociologic subject of Bebel's *Woman*, and proving that his was an attempt to inject the race and religious question into the S.L.P. by twisting economic and social facts into "theology." [*Daily People*, April 3, 1904; *Weekly*, April 9, 1904.]

Connolly then came back with a still longer article. The second article, being so much longer and only an aggravation of the first, was refused publication; and the National Convention of the S.L.P. being about to meet, the matter was referred to the convention. There the second article was read in full and the Editor's action in refusing publication to the article was sustained by a unanimous vote. The two delegates from Section Troy, who had come with the intention to sustain Connolly, now voted against him, one of the two himself making the motion to sustain the Editor.

Connolly then moved to New Jersey, and in December, 1906, the New Jersey election for the State's member on the National Executive Committee having accidentally gone by default, and Connolly being the only candidate, he was elected. He attended the January session of the N.E.C. and in February, at the State Convention of New Jersey, made his report. The report was calumniously mendacious of the N.E.C. and of the Editor of *The People*, and was branded false by all the other five members of the N.E.C. who had attended that January session. [*Daily People*, March 9, 1907; *Weekly*, March 16.]

Being publicly convicted of betrayal of the trust reposed in him, Connolly was, under the Constitution, summarily removed from the N.E.C. by his New Jersey constituency, and at the next, the July session of the N.E.C., he was removed by the N.E.C. from the Sub-Committee on which he had himself appointed himself.

Connolly then transferred his main activities to the I.W.W. District Council in New York. From there he wrote letters on I.W.W. letterheads, right and left, slandering the S.L.P. and the Editor of *The People*, and also self-laudatory letters to the I.W.W. headquarters in Chicago concerning the great things he was doing for the I.W.W. and applying for a national organizership. One of the letters promised 8,000 longshoremen to the I.W.W. who had been fascinated by his addresses “since I can speak both to the Irish and the Italians.” Many of these letters are in the possession of this office. Of course nothing came of all this. Connolly, in the meantime, was drawing \$18 a week as “organizer” of the District Council and doing nothing at all. Finally the District Council pulled itself together, and abolished him, together with his associates, one of these being Jones, the husband of Mrs. Flynn-Jones. Parenthetically, be it stated, the house cleaning was done upon the report of the Secretary of the District Council, Francis—the Francis whom afterwards Jones, St. John and Heslewood slugged at Chicago and kept out of the “convention.”⁵ Whereupon Connolly jumped out of the S.L.P. into the S.P., whither Frank Bohn and others of his fellow conspirators followed him, and where he was speedily rewarded with a job. [See *Daily People*, Nov. 13, 1908; *Weekly*, Nov. 21, 1908; documentary evidence on Bohn’s conspiracy with Connolly to falsify the minutes of the N.E.C.; and *Daily People*, March 29, 1908; *Weekly*, April 7; on Bohn’s exclusion from the New York State Convention of the S.L.P. for having obtained an election to the convention under false pretences, and in the interest of the S.P.]

While still in the Party, towards the end of his career, Connolly, at a general Party meeting in this city, made a pointed bid for the editorship of *The People*. He said: “The Editor of *The People* is an aristocrat. That office should be held by a proletarian. I have always been a proletarian. I am one now, and shall always be.” On that same occasion, amidst zealous protestations of loyalty to the S.L.P. and denunciations of the S.P., he suggested the physical capture of the *Daily People* plant, saying: “Section New York has more than once saved the Party from treason and ignorance such as the present N.E.C. and the Editor of *The People* are guilty of. Let us do so now.” At the New Jersey Convention above referred to and at the previous one Connolly objected strenuously to the publication of the Eugene Sue

⁵ [See “I.W.W. Convention,” Etc., *Daily People*, September 27, 1908.]

stories. It was a matter of common talk with him that if he were Editor of *The People* the *Daily's* circulation would be at least 10,000.

It is the charitable view to take of James Connolly that the man has a diseased mind.—ED. THE PEOPLE.]

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