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EDITORIAL

THE 10TH OF JULY.

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THIS day two years ago, by the very act of treacherous men intent upon its disintegration, the Socialist Labor Party achieved its organic unity and instantly became the most compact body of Revolutionary Socialists that the modern movement of proletarian emancipation had yet produced anywhere.

We do not propose here to relate in detail the occurrences of that memorable day. The attempted “coup-d’état” of the *Volkszeitung* conspirators, its failure, its immediate effects and its final results are still fresh in the memory of those who, throughout the country, took part in the struggle. But this is certainly a fitting occasion for a broad survey of the lines along which the movement developed on its way to the inevitable, critical climax of July 10, 1899.

It was in 1890 that the S.L.P. entered the political field. Not for local or occasional experiment, as it had timidly done from time to time a dozen years before, when it was only an educational association, chiefly composed of German workingmen, for the propagation of Socialist doctrines. Nor in conjunction with a “labor movement” of the Henry George type, for instance, as it had foolishly done in 1886. Nor for the utopian purpose of “getting something now,” as the capitalist politicians in charge of labor affairs expected it to do according to “labor” traditions. But resolutely, as a class-conscious, militant and revolutionary body, determined to fight it out to a finish with Capitalism and all its parties, upon the natural lines of the class struggle, under its own name and its own flag, with its own candidates and its own hammer.

Observe that during the long period that preceded its development of energy, the S.L.P. had by no means been free from internal strife. Anarchists, pure and simple unionists, small traders and other such incongruous gentry had wormed themselves into its membership for their own purposes, and their machinations frequently gave rise to angry debates.

The new departure astonished those schemers. The constantly rising energies of the party and its consequent progress in the political field irritated to madness

the anti-Socialist cliques which had until then controlled and exploited the labor movement. Hence the desperate activity of their secret agents, both in the party and in the economic organizations already affiliated with it or in which the growth of Socialist sentiment was becoming manifest. There is no room here for even a list of all the cases in which the S.L.P., at that time, had to protect its integrity from the schemes of political tricksters and speculative adventurers, not known as such or apparently clean when admitted to membership.

Of the cases relating to the party press we must, however, make here a special though brief mention.

The press of a social-revolutionary movement is its most precious weapon. The party itself, in its corporate capacity, must always, therefore, hold it tightly in its own hands, for instant use in attack and defense. The case of the N.Y. *Volkszeitung* affords a vivid illustration of the soundness of this rule and of the penalties consequent upon its non-observance. Originally founded and actually owned by the New York Section of the S.L.P., that paper was placed in the hands of a “publishing association,” composed of trusted German members of the S.L.P. In the course of time, some of these trusted “comrades” degenerated into office holders for life in pure and simple unions, and they looked aghast at the temerity of the S.L.P. in assailing the labor fakirs. Others, who had lifted themselves into the cockroach mercantile class, yet from pure habit were still calling themselves workingmen, began to think that the Democrats were right, as against the S.L.P., in contending that the workingman paid the taxes out of his wages and would revel in luxury if the middle class was freed from taxation. Lastly, a few became Anarchists and were listened to complacently by their pure-and-simple and petty “bourgeois” associates when they preached “union”—against the S.L.P.

Governed in such a spirit, the paper itself became a “business.” To attack the labor fakirs might cost it the \$500 “ad.” of a certain union label; the “ad.” of the Democratic party or of some capitalistic “reform” side-show on the eve of election would bring money into the treasury; etc. The party had long been its patient milch-cow; it should continue so and hold its peace until the Social Revolution had taken place—in Germany.

But while the *Volkszeitung* had been evolving backward, the Socialist Labor Party had been steadily evolving forward. It was in no mood of holding its peace; in no mood of seeing its members milked by fakirs in pure and simple unions or by tax reformers in a publishing association. Through its official organ, THE PEOPLE, it

first gently reminded the unofficial *Volkszeitung* of its plain duty, under its own constitution, moral pledges and written contracts. The reply was a direct attack against the fundamental principles of the party's policy and an insolent threat against its National Executive Committee, soon followed by that ridiculous "coup-d'état" which earned for the *Volkszeitung* and its fellow conspirators their now universally recognized title of "Kangaroos." Forty of them, "in meeting assembled," assumed that they were the S.L.P.; "deposed" its national, State and local officers; then started at midnight to break into its offices, take possession of its property and get their own mischievous heads broken in the burglarious attempt.

And right here a fact must be noted, which is eminently corroborative of the truths already made quite plain by this degeneracy of the *Volkszeitung*. Not only was the Philadelphia *Tageblatt*, which was in exactly the same position as its New York "sister," but the Cleveland *Citizen*, the Chicago *Workers' Call*, the San Francisco *Class Struggle*, all suddenly jumped "Kangaroo," thus repudiating in one day their previously unqualified approval of the Party's policy. All those papers were "enterprises" over which the national party had no authority, and each of which had been devised by a local gang of schemers, with a view to its own political control and commercial exploitation of the Party.

But the S.L.P., rid at last of all incongruous and maleficent elements, showed what a truly Socialist, class-conscious proletarian body could do. Not only it fought at all costs and at all hazards for the possession of its WEEKLY PEOPLE, which the enemy had attempted to confiscate "by injunction," but established the DAILY PEOPLE, through which it soon became a terror to Capitalism, Organized Scabbery and Bogus Socialism from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

It stands out to-day before the world, with the record of its own experience, a living proof of the statement that there is no possible union, no possible compromise, no possible suspension of hostilities between the true and the false. The conflict between them is as natural as the class struggle itself, of which it will, no doubt, remain a peculiar feature so long as a moribund middle class may stand between the plutocracy and the proletariat. And it must extend, growing in intensity, as that doomed class, fertile in "intellectual" fakirs, and driven by desperation to the advocacy of so-called "first steps in Socialism," will find more dupes among the working people to believe that their own proletarian class would thereby "get something now."

It is extending in area and growing in intensity, not only in America but in

Europe, and from it, in America as in Europe, true Socialism must emerge stronger than ever, purified by fire and enlightened by experience, thoroughly united nationally and internationally, self-disciplined in the highest degree, ready for the Social Revolution.

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