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EDITORIAL

THE BUFFER PUNCTURED.

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THE vote of the so-called Socialist party in Massachusetts this year is of determining importance to the Socialist Movement in America.

With the campaign of 1890 in this State, a struggle started that reached its crisis on the night of July 10, 1899, in this city. Before 1890 there was in existence a crazy thing that called itself the Socialist Labor Party. It had its minor nerve centers in several outlying cities but its main and controlling center was the *Volkszeitung* corporation in this city. The corporation consisted, as it consists to-day, of bourgeois interests—small dealers, money lenders, labor fakirs, beer saloon keepers, and sundry “intellectuals,” the ashbarrel refuse of the German criminal classes, etc. This element knew of Socialism but the phrases, and was, as it is yet, animated by dislike and even hatred for America. Among them the term “Americaner” was and is synonymous with scamp. To this body, political party of pretended superior aspirations, little as the body understood these, was mental solace; moreover, such a party was a necessary adjunct to the business interests of the body and corporation. Thus arose the Socialist Labor Party. Needless to say its career was one of alternate imbecility and corruption. Advertisements of capitalist political candidates were taken; labor fakirs were boomed for a consideration; bogus strikes were set up and bona-fide ones, when started by non-German workingmen of the *Volkszeitung* coterie were browbeaten; moneys were solicited and accepted from the old parties, etc., etc.—in short the interests of Labor were betrayed and Socialism was rendered ridiculous. In the campaign of 1890 a new element came in and took control. The old element sought to overcome the new by corrupt blandishments. It failed and the struggle started. On July 10, 1899, the crash came and the two elements parted company, the new preserving the Party’s name—the Socialist Labor Party—and its English organ.

The line of cleavage was the clean and the unclean Socialist elements. With the Socialist Labor Party went all the elements, of various race and nationalities, that recognized the fact that, this being America, the battleground had to be this country, and the methods the advanced ones, that American civilization furnished; with the *Volkszeitung* corporation there remained the exclusively alien element that was too ignorant of Socialism and the land to appreciate American opportunities, and consequently despised them. The result was that while the former element spoke and wrote English, the latter was tongue and pen-tied. What to do to save its low "dignity"? It began by importing from distant States such English spokesmen and penmen as are purchaseable in such cases. But even that could not suffice. It knew that here, in this city, it could draw only upon such limited German and Yiddish elements that were inaccessible to English print. It needed an English vote; it needed a buffer. The armory-building Carey Socialist party of Massachusetts furnished the thing. The *Volkszeitung* corporation quickly merged with Careyism in Massachusetts, and always keeping control of the combine, shoved the Massachusetts vote forward. The Massachusetts vote of the so-called Socialist party served as a buffer for the *Volkszeitung* corporation, also as a veneer of "Americanism." That fly-paper vote grew steadily for three years and it even sent three representatives to the Bay State Legislature. The *Volkszeitung* corporation political swindle seemed to prosper; the corporation imagined itself on the highway to success.

Such was the lay of the land when the last elections took place. The buffer collapsed, as it had to. The hurrah clothing methods don't work in Socialism. The 33,000 votes dropped by over 25 per cent., two of the three former seats in the Legislature were lost.

With the Socialist Labor Party, votes are a secondary consideration. Education is of primary thought. Even if the S.L.P. were wholly stripped of its vote, the Truth it stands for would remain; the Party would remain undaunted in the field; and in the fullness of time would bend the spheres obedient thereto. Not so with the *Volkszeitung*-controlled "Socialist" party. With it, votes are all. It had no other argument why it should be supported than its ever increasing "big vote," and to increase this it sacrificed all principle and dignity. Stripped of its English vote in

Massachusetts, such a concern stands naked; and when the vote of such a concern drops, it is no retrievable accident, it is the beginning of the receding of the tide, that will ebb never to return,—as happened with Populism and so many other such flashes in the political pan.

For these reasons the vote of the so-called Socialist party of Massachusetts was pivoted, for this reason its downfall is of determining significance. The absurdity of a political Movement in any country being dominated by an alien, an offensively alien element is preposterous. Such was the case with this so-called Socialist party Movement. It was a preposterous sight to see the offensively alien Volkszeitung corporation stalk as the “deus ex machina” of a Socialist party in America. The buffer once in full retreat, how much longer can the buffed Volkszeitung corporation impede the progress of bona-fide Socialism in America? None better than the Volkszeitung corporation knows that its day of rout now draws near; and the sickness in its stomach is betrayed in its papers.

November 3, 1903, marks an epoch.

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