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EDITORIAL

“MORAL PRINCIPLES.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE ministers engaged in the work of closing the saloons on Sunday by law seem to have forgotten their text.

What is the favorite language with these reverend gentlemen when they prate upon the wrongfulness of Socialism? Some of them, but very few, venture into the deep water of economics. Most of them are too cautious to take any such risks. With them the language is in the nature of the plea that lawyers call of confession and avoidance. “Socialism is ideal,” say they; “it is very beautiful; but it is a high moral principle; but moral principles are not clubbed into men by laws; moral principles must be preached till they permeate society; give up arousing the animosities engendered by partisan warfare; educate public opinion; public opinion can be relied upon, it is the only way to bring about Socialism.” Such is their theory of propaganda in a matter involving “high principle.”

Can it be that these reverend sirs don't mean what they now say when they claim the crusade they are engaged in to close the saloons on Sundays is a movement that involves a “high moral principle”? If they do mean what they now say on this subject how come they to strain for legislation, the effect of which would be “to club a high moral principle into men with the club of laws”? Why do they not confine themselves “to preaching the moral principle” until it “permeates society”? Why do they incur the evils of “arousing the animosities engendered by partisan warfare”? Why do they not “educate public opinion” and rely upon it to close the saloons on Sundays? Why one measure for one “moral principle” and another measure for another “moral principle”?

Either the reverend worthies, who are advocating a political crusade to bring about legislation that will close the saloons on Sundays, take no stock in their claim about aiming at “a high moral principle” and are in the fight only for the financial

principle of shutting the doors of what they consider to be their Sunday competitors—either that, or, when the gentlemen advise Socialists to “permeate,” instead of to organize for expressly bouncing purposes, what the gentlemen aim at is to seek to lead Socialism into the ground.

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

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