

EDITORIAL

THREE S.P. FIGURES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHEN the Socialist Labor Party—despite its much smaller vote and membership—maintains that its tactics, hence, its principles make it a permanency, whereas the Socialist party—its much larger vote and membership notwithstanding—is a transitory affair because of its heterogeneous tactics and principles, the S.L.P. states a double fact that is founded upon granite.

There are in the S.P. three leading figures—Berger, Haywood and Debs. What are the views they enunciate upon the vital issue of the economic organization, hence, upon fundamental tactics and principles?

Victor Berger, most conspicuous as a “doer of things,” has as his motto in his *Social Democratic Herald*:—

“WAGE EARNERS, WAKE UP!

“Join the union of your craft and the party of your class—always demand the UNION LABEL and shop CARD. Cast your ballots for emancipation from wage slavery.”

William D. Haywood, distinguished as the incarnation of the proletariat, expressed himself Sunday the 18th in the Yorkville Casino in this city as follows:—

“I want to say to you that no Socialist can be a Trade Unionist. The ethics of Trade Unionism forbid such a possibility. Socialism proclaims the class struggle. When Trade Unionists enter into an agreement with the employer they are perpetuating the capitalist class and system for the time that the contract lasts.

“Every Trade Unionist will swear that he hates the soldier and militiaman like poison. But who enlists to feed the soldier, to make bullets and guns for the militiaman? The Trade Unionist—when he signs a contract with the capitalist class!

“Not only that, but the Trade Unionist makes the soldier himself. How? By the apprenticeship system. The number of apprentices is restricted. Fathers in the Trade Unions say to their sons, ‘You can’t learn this trade.’

Thus the youth are forced out of an occupation into jail, the army and the navy. Why is this apprenticeship system? Because the Trade Unions are not unions but job-trusts. They are ruled by craft, not class, consciousness.

“They insist, again, on the closed shop. Closed to whom? Not to the boss—he has the key to the front door! The Trade Unionist closes the shop on the working class. I say open the union to all the workers, then you’ll have the only closed shop worth having.

“When the apprenticeship system does not suffice to keep out workers, the Trade Unions raise up an initiation fee—\$50 to join the Hod-carriers’ Union, \$150 to join the Electricians in Chicago, and even \$500 to become a member of the Glass Bottle Blowers. Do you yet see the necessity of organizing one Labor Union big enough to take in all the workers? The Trade Unions are not organized to fight the battles of the working class, they are organized to protect the few favored individuals fortunate enough to get inside the wall.

“What we Industrialists propose is the organization of one union, not for America only, but big enough to wipe out all state and even national lines. We would organize according to industries. We are going to start the Co-operative Commonwealth, and we’re not going to ask Milwaukee how to do it. The best they can do in Milwaukee is administer affairs in one small section of the Public Service department. That is not the whole Industrial Democracy by any means. For that the millions employed in food production, mining, manufacturing, transportation and every other industry must also be organized, instead of about one million as organized to-day.”

And, as if all this were not yet clear enough, upon the question being asked him whether the Socialists in the A.F. of L. should leave that body and join the Industrial Union, the points were considered and driven in with the answer:—

“I would so advise everywhere the A.F. of L. was not able to deprive the worker of his bread and butter. Where the A.F. of L. controls your living, stay in it, where you are free to follow principle, join the Industrial Workers.”

Finally, Eugene V. Debs, the party’s orator, in a letter to Tom Mann published in the *International Socialist Review* for August, says:—

“In answer to your direct inquiry I have to say that I, too, am opposed, like yourself, to undertaking to destroy the old Unions. Such a policy can be fruitful only of mischief to Industrial Unionism, as we have reason to know on this side. . . . Nor do I believe in organizing dual Unions in any case where the old Union substantially holds the field.”

The “Union of your craft” in Berger’s motto, the “Trades Union” in Haywood’s words, the “old Unions” in Debs’s letter—all refer to the same thing—the A.F. of L. and kindred Unionism, pets of the Civic Federation. How to handle that “proposition,” Berger stands at one extreme end, a rounder for the A.F. of L.; Haywood at the opposite end; Debs in the middle with a theory for avoiding mischief that all experience denies.

A Revolutionary Movement—and not all the sheep’s skins Berger would cover himself with can wholly smother even within his own throat the revolutionary voice of Socialism—can not be “all things to all men.” Coalitions may steady Movements reformatory of a social system in existence, and the perpetuation of which is the object of reform. To a revolutionary Movement coalitions are either checks to the march; or, if they do not from the start check the march; they in the end obstruct it, and then throw it back demoralized. Bungling is the Debs posture of seeking peace where there is no peace. At war with the law of evolution is the Berger posture: A.F. of L. Unionism is a blind-alley. Only Haywood’s posture is the true because it alone fits all the facts;—and that posture is, in the spirit and the letter, the posture of the S.L.P.

A.F. of L. Unionism has become a fraud on the word Union. Etymologically it is false—it disunites the working class; sociologically it is an obscene monstrosity—clad with the trappings of Labor, it is the bulwark of Capital. Capital, the unwilling handmaid of Progress, is itself compulsorily sapping the foundations of A.F. of Hellishness. In the measure that Capital does that it strains to hedge in the now ever more hollow hull with superstitious reverence, with the reverence due to bona fide Unionism only, a quality that, if the A.F. of L. ever partook of, has long since fled from it. It is the task, the imperative mission of the Socialist, to supplement the work of Capital by tearing down and demolishing the superstition. This message was first delivered, the *mot d’ordre*¹ was first sounded in the land by the Socialist Labor Party. To the task of carrying out that condition precedent for Socialist progress and triumph, the S.L.P. has serenely bent to the oars, undeterred by the vindictiveness of its opponents, untouched by the poisonous arrows that flew and

¹ [Word of Command.—R.B.]

still fly thick upon it—untouched, because armored with integrity of purpose; undeterred because unerringly guided by the light of Science to the only goal worth striving for by our generation, the emancipation of the Working Class, and thereby the final abolition of Class Rule.

Not the heterogeneity of a Japanese quilt, but, in fundamentals, the homogeneity that alone can insure unity of action, can alone insure permanence to a party of Socialism. And that homogeneity must be planted upon the rockbed of fact, not upon the quicksand of illusion.

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