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EDITORIAL

LOCAL HAMLIN.

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FROM the Socialist party's organization (?) in Hamlin, Tex., there has issued a motion for a general vote to amend the party's platform with the declaration that "use and occupancy should be the sole title to land."

Taking its life in its hands, so to speak, the *Daily People*, aware of the risks it faces of being, so to speak, sand-bagged for placing its index-finger upon one more S.P. economic and sociologic, we would call it drollery were it not so pitifully pathetic,—taking, accordingly, its life in its hands, the *Daily People* exclaims: "Shades of Marx! Genius of Socialism! How fly-blown ye are getting!"

When the Duchess of Sutherland, fired by the high price that wool was then commanding in the market, depopulated her vast domain of its human tenantry, she populated the vacated territory with sheep. Even if, theoretically, the herdsmen who tended the flocks were not the lady's chattel, the rest of the live-stock was. Every bleating lambkin, so promiseful of wool, "occupied" the land. The sheep being My Lady's chattel, through them she "occupied" their pastures, including the rocks on which they gamboled—and she "used" the same. According to Socialism, as taught by the S.P., and reflected by Local Hamlin, the Duchess of Sutherland had rightful title to the land; did she not "use and occupy" the same?

But, accepting the prevalent theory of the S.P. "carriers of the message of freedom" that a knowledge of history is "priggish vanity," and to use such knowledge "intolerant bossism," surely Local Hamlin, located in the pastoral section of the pastoral State of Texas, needs no history, but just eyes, to know that princely domains are "used and occupied" by horse and cattle "raisers" within a radius of 350 miles of the said Local, and that, according to the formula of Local Hamlin, the said users and occupiers should have title to the land.

This is balderdash, vulgar bourgeois balderdash, at that.

The only land, title to which may, in a sense, justly rest in individuals is land actually occupied for habitation—for habitation within comfortable, that is, sensible bounds. What such bounds are society will not find difficult to determine, and, from time to time, alter according as the wisdom of society may dictate. Outside of that, title to land vests unqualifiedly in society, being and mediately or immediately wanted for production.

The principle is obvious. The modern plants of industrial production are not operatable by the individual. They are operatable only by collective labor. The fact determines the tenure of ownership. Collective labor dictates collective ownership. Identically with land. Within limited dimensions, land is not operatable by the individual: it is operatable collectively only, and that collectivity dovetails closely with, and branches intimately into the collectivity of industrial labor; and vice versa. The fact that determines ownership in urban industry, is of equal force with rural production. Even if necessary supervisory functions be attributed to a Duchess of Sutherland, or a Southern Texas King, she or he is no more necessary a factor in the collective labor that raises the sheep, horses or cattle, than are the herdsmen. Collective labor dictates collective ownership—with wage slavery, at the one end of the line, and bourgeois overlordship, at the other end, as the only possible alternative—and stripped of their private title are our “users and occupiers,” with Local Hamlin, S.P., as the sorry candle-bearer of the feudo-bourgeois monstrosity.

Yet Local Hamlin, S.P., is not without title to something. The Local is entitled to whatever praise is due him who correctly sizes up a situation, and proceeds from the principle that, if a thing is funny, it might as well be made funnier. The S.P. platform is so pathetically droll for a Socialist platform that Local Hamlin has set its face to rendering the droll pathos a little more so.

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