EDITORIAL

The Haverhill Incident.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A party—carrying the world “Socialist” as part of its name, and with a platform taken substantially from that of the Socialist Labor party—, has recently sprung up in Haverhill, Mass., and virtually carried the city, electing its Mayor and several other municipal officers. A stranger, unacquainted with men and things in this country, would, if a capitalist, take alarm, and, if a Socialist, be filled with joy at the occurrence. Both would have been wrong in this particular instance: indeed, the capitalist class, through its press, has shown every thing but alarm; while the Socialists throughout the land have been filled with everything but joy.

The official name of the victorious Haverhill party, as well as its Socialist platform, is a piracy committed by a few political adventurers, who have for some time been trying to be wafted into notoriety and office. They used every “reform” movement that had come along, and finally appeared in the paint and feathers of Populism, preaching all the absurdities and indulging in all the tinsel of that movement. Success for their sordid ambition seemed certain, but the bubble burst, and adventurers were once more stranded.

Long before the tide of Populism had ebbed in the West, it dropped from its high promises in the East, Massachusetts particularity, and there remained above the waters the Socialist Labor party alone,—growing out of small beginnings, radiating in all directions, winning friends by its soundness and integrity, overthrowing foes by its vigor. The Haverhill coterie of political adventurers promptly changed coats. The word “Socialism,” thitherto sneered at as un-American, the Socialist platform, thitherto denounced as preposterous, had shown to have that in them that none of the movements that had come up seemed to possess. They adopted both its name and platform (although in Haverhill itself they go by two or three other and less offensive names) and, possessed of the necessary low cunning, they succeeded in drawing to themselves a sufficient following to gain both notoriety and office.

That the leaders of the misled Haverhill workingmen, who voted them into office,
are no Socialists; that they have only caught a few phrases with which they strut about
like the Jackdaw in the fable with the stolen peacock feathers; that, indeed, they are of
the common genus of “reform” adventurers,—all that is now made clear enough by
their post-election utterances, and will be made still clearer in the near future to those
who yet can not see. To those with eyes, however, the character of the Haverhill
“Democratic Socialist,” “Social Democratic,” “Independent Citizens Reform,” etc., etc.,
party have for some time been known. Three facts some time ago stamped it what they
are.

In the first place, Mr. James F. Carey, one of the leaders, and elected last year
Councilman, is, by the unanimous accord of his Democratic and Republican colleagues,
forthwith made President of the body. Democrats and Republicans may not know
much, but they surely have the instinct of all animals: they can tell whom to trust and
who endangers their existence. They scented safety in Mr. Carey. A Socialist never
could have accomplished the feat that Mr. Carey did; a Socialist never would have had
distinction, and, thereby increased power bestowed upon him by the politicians of
Capital.

The second fact attested to the unerringness of the scent of those capitalist
politicians. Barely a few months in office, when a bill turned up for an appropriation of
$15,000 for an Armory, Mr. Carey voted for it, and his “Socialist organization” allowed
the act to go by unreproved, did not demand his prompt resignation for such treason to
the working class!

The third fact preceded the second and was preparatory thereto: Mr. Carey
withdrew from the Socialist Labor party, of which he was a member, and on whose
platform he was elected, and thus freed his hands for the peculiar “reforms” that he
had in mind.

In view of all this the mystery is explained of the joy of the capitalist press at the
success of the Haverhill “Socialists”: it is in the interest of capitalism, particularly at
this season of sound Socialist growth, to seek either to smirch the name of Socialism
or cause the American proletariat to be decoy-ducked away from the S.L.P. camp
whither they are evidently tending. In the latter case, the lightning will be run into the
ground, a successful bogus Socialist party would be a valuable political lightning-rod;
in the former case, the workingmen may be so disgusted at the treason or incapability
of “Socialist” officers as wholly to throw up the sponge of resistance.

But neither case will happen. The vigorous repudiation of the “Democratic
Socialism” of Haverhill on the part of the S.L.P. will break the lightning in two, and
will also free the S.L.P. of all responsibility for the pranks and the wrongs of the
Haverhill victorious candidates. Eventually, if not sooner, and starting with Haverhill itself, the proletariat will realize that its party must be a party, not of irresponsible political pirates, but the well-knit Socialist Labor party of the land.