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EDITORIAL

## MATTER AND MIND.

## **By DANIEL DE LEON**

OLLOWING the lead of the State convention of the Socialist party of Arkansas, the State convention of the Socialist party of New Jersey adopted last May a platform that closely follows the rationale of the Socialist Labor Party platform on the purpose of "Government," the theory of "politics," the theory of "economics," and the evil results of the existing contradiction in practice between these principles. The essence of the rationale of the S.L.P. platform is that the "true purpose of Government is to secure to every human being the enjoyment of his right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but that under the prevailing despotic system of economics, where the means of production are private property, the purposes of true Government, as admitted theoretically in our system of public politics, are frustrated." Against this position Mr. Wm. H. Leffingwell of Arlington, N.J., takes a stand in this month's West Hoboken Socialist Review. Mr. Leffingwell pronounces the rationale "thoroughly utopian and unscientific"; the expression "true government" he repudiates as lacking "historical basis," and "Right" and "Wrong" as having no place in "scientific Socialism." Of course, the gentleman makes an effort to prop up his claim with the prop of "authority." The attempt is made in two places. In both places its break-down is signal.

The first attempt consists in a quotation from Engels' preface to the *Communist Manifesto*. The passage is a short summary of the class struggle, summarizing the principle of the materialist conception of history. The passage is sound. The trouble with its application is that it does not apply. A passage on the centripetal force in Nature, taken from a standard writer on physics, will never do the office of refuting the supplemental law of centrifugal force; he who would essay the feat merely lays bare the fact that he has only read one chapter of the book of Nature—probably only the preface to the chapter. A passage from some standard medical authority to the effect that death sets in when the heart is lacerated, will never serve as a refutation

of the impossibility of life with torn kidneys; he who would make the attempt but betrays his fractional acquaintance with the human anatomy. The quotation from Engels does not come within a forty-foot pole of touching, let alone refuting the rationale of the S.L.P. platform. As will be shown, the platform is planted squarely upon the materialist conception of history, and is closely knit with historic sequence.

Even more signal is the breakdown of Mr. Leffingwell's second attempt at propping up his criticism with "authority." The second attempt consists in the wholly unsupported use of the name of Marx. Marx has not yet become a synonym with lame thought. Not until he shall have so become, will the mere mention of his name stead as a prop for nonsense, or half-truths, which is the same. There is infinitely more of Marx than just his name, and a good deal more of the *Communist Manifesto* than just its preface.

The mold in which is cast the criticism of the rationale of the platform of the S.L.P., as lacking historic basis, and unscientific, is a mold that denies place and function to the Ideal in the theory of the materialist conception of history.

There is a type of folks, who, of all things, wish to be taken for "scientific," and whose conception of "science" is cynicism-that being quite cheap, easy of attainment, and apt to impose the groundlings. Galileo was scientific, and he shocked the theologic habits of thought of his day; Lewis H. Morgan was scientific, and he scandalized the owls who looked upon the family as the original unit of society. Therefore, with these cynic folks, whom we may call "Preface Socialists," in order to appear scientific the thing to do is to look grotesque. We recall the instance of a British Social Democratic Federation "scientist," who appeared in Justice with an article that was expected to make "havoc of superstition" by "pouring the light of science" in floods over the "superstition of maternal and filial love," and to "prove" the exclusively material and selfish basis for the sentiment. The reasoning was that what is called "a cow's love for her calf" is merely the material selfish desire to be relieved of the pressure of the milk in her udder, and that what is called "the calf's love for the cow" is the need of the physical warmth imparted by the latter. The Social Democratic Federation "scientist" argued that exactly such were the cause and motives of a mother's love for her child, and the child's affection for its mother! What this "scientist" did was to travesty science, to deprive a great scientific principle of its beauty, to hamstring it and to render it repulsive. Quite otherwise

does Haeckel, unquestionably the most outspoken materialist natural philosopher of our day, treat the identical subject. With the full and elevating grasp of science he explains the power and beauty of maternal and filial affection as part and parcel of a material and creative force itself. And before Haeckel there was Kant. Kant's analysis of "die Macht des Gemueths" (the power of the mind) has remained classical. Although "Christian Science" runs the principle into the ground, no scientist to-day denies the power of Imagination often to accomplish results that would seem impossible without material agency; and psychology recognizes Imagination as a constructive force. The long and short of it all is that the Mind, together with its kin Sentiment and Imagination, dovetails so intimately with Matter that it is part of Matter itself, as completely as light is of heat. Translated to the field of Social Science the principle acquires a significance, which to overlook emasculates the fiber of the Socialist, and which to deny renders Socialism grotesque.

As certain, and for parallel reason, as the affection of the mammals is a Creative Force that is generated in physical evolution, nobility of aspiration, the unfolding sense of Right and Wrong, the Ideal, in short, is a Creative Force, that goes hand in hand with social evolution, and has its roots in earliest society. Of course, the stateliest conceptions of the physical architect must await the material means to clothe them in physical reality, and these material means give a determining bent to the executed conception; so likewise do the aspirations of the Isaiahs, the Platos, the Jesuses, the Sir Thomas Moores (sic), need as a condition precedent, certain material conditions to verify them. These material means being absent, the aspirations clothe themselves in imperfection, often in vagaries; their substance—the aspiration after human happiness, the pursuit of the Ideal,—nevertheless, is there in advance of the material pre-requisites for their realization and definite shape. In the language of both Kant and Haeckel, the aspiration has acted like a guiding star, a guiding goal, however vaguely perceived,—with all the physical power that that implies.

American history, with its towering geniuses of the Franklins and Madisons to illumine it, illuminates, in turn, the history of previous social or class struggles, and it cleanses mankind of the smut in which it appears daubed upon the stage of the class struggle of the previous ages, and which the "Preface Scientists" would rub into humanity, not merely as part and parcel of its essence, but as THE SOLE HUMAN CHARACTERISTIC. Indeed, the manifestations of the class struggle before the American Revolution—whether because the light of noble aspirations was still too dim to be descried, or whether because the means to preserve the record of that light were then insufficient—do present the human race as logs of wood, or blocks of granite, rough hewn and shaped by material agencies exclusively. It took the American Revolution to bring out the fact that all previous revolutions HAD AIMED AT TRUE GOVERNMENT, as the ideal government that should insure the happiness of all. It also took the fate which rapidly overtook the American Revolution to bring out, emphatically confirming, the fact that the warmest belief in the Ideal cools off, the brightest light of the Ideal grows dim under the material conditions that interfere with its warmth and brilliancy. Effected, as no previous bourgeois revolution was effected, in a territory of unbounded and still virgin natural opportunities, with the implements of production still in a rudimental stage; effected, consequently, under conditions in which the dependent of one day became, not as an exception that proved the rule, but as the rule itself, the independent artisan of the next day; effected, accordingly, under conditions that rendered plausible the expectation of happiness for all-the American Revolution sincerely held and declared that it had found the long-looked-for "philosopher's stone" of the "true government." The ignorance of the Revolutionary Fathers on economics and sociology, which blinded them to the actual nature of the revolution which they had effected, and to the despotism that the government they had set up was inevitably bound to run into, neither does nor can argue against the loftiness of their aspirations; nor, on the other hand, does the appearance of individual wolves in human shape argue against the existence of the lofty ideals of the movement, collectively. The absolute necessity of material substructure; the place and function of the Ideal in social evolution; the further fact that the practical manifestation of the Ideal is a reflex of material possibilities; finally the fact of the determining power of material needs to dim the brightest light of aspiration, as the controlling, not the only Force in Matter,-that, and not the denial of the Ideal as part of the materialist conception of social evolution, that is what history and Social Science teach.

"True Government"—the government that may promote the happiness of all—is the latest aspiration that has warmed and continues to warm the class Revolutions of the past and the present, and that, periodically all but extinguished, ever reappears with fresh brilliancy at the periodically recurring revolutions of the race. This square-jointed Truth is the proud conquest of Modern, or Marxian Socialism. We wonder whether any "Preface Socialist" would risk the engagement to plank down a \$10 bill for every time the words "infamous," "hypocrite," "inhuman," "sycophant," and similar terms—terms which have no meaning unless rooted in the Sense of Right and Wrong—can be produced, though perhaps not in the prefaces to, yet in the works of Marx and Engels. Incidentally we would convey to Mr. Leffingwell, who refers to "Marxian economics" for support of his contention, that economics is only a part of Social Science, and that Marx was a sociologist.

The mental phenomenon of the "Scientific Socialist" who denies all place and function to the Ideal is a modern counterpart of the hoary-headed mental phenomenon which imputes place and function to the Ideal only. The former would make of man a grovelling worm; the latter turns him into a mooncalf. The latter would imagine children the fruit of desire only; with the former "the child would come to the hour of birth and there would be no strength to bring forth";—the one and the other remains barren. The visionary lives not in this world; the Gradgrind Socialist is an inert lump;—derelicts both on the track of the ship of the Social Revolution.

Socialism is Science. Science is a creature instinct with Life—not club-footed, but with well-arched foot planted upon earth, and thrilled at every inch with the inspiration of the Ideal.

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