

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 7, NO. 202.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 1907.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

TRANSVAAL SOCIALISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

UNDER the title “Two Letters” a correspondence will be found elsewhere in this issue between the Independent Labour Party of the Transvaal and the Socialist Labor Party of the United States.¹ In response to a request from the former for funds towards its campaign, one of the main purposes of which is the exclusion of Chinese labor, the latter declines to render aid towards an agitation so anti-Marxian as to rend, instead of uniting the proletariat of all countries, to play into the capitalist’s hand of rupturing the world-wide Nation of the Proletariat by race distinctions.

The S.L.P. is well aware of the existence of that frame of mind that causes some folks to deny unto others the capacity to utter themselves on any general principle because of lack of intimate knowledge with some detail. In Congress, just now, Senator Tillman of South Carolina, has been disputing the fitness of Northern Senators to discuss the question of negro lynching, seeing those Senators do not live in States having a majority of negroes, and have not, like himself, “lived fifty-nine years among negroes.” And so there will presumably be folks in the Transvaal who may deny the fitness of the American Socialist Labor Party to express itself upon the Chinese Question in the Transvaal, seeing that, neither the Party as a body, nor any of its members has resided long enough in the Transvaal to be acquainted with the unspeakable horrors that Chinese labor has introduced there. As in the case of Senator Tillman and negro lynching, the attitude of the Transvaal anti-Chinese labor men would neither hold water, nor bear criticism. The S.L.P. of America is fully aware of the revolting, the unprintable practices that have been brought home to the Chinese barracks in the Transvaal. The columns of *Reynolds Newspaper* on

¹ [See Appendix, page 3—R.B.]

the subject are no secret here, nor is the S.L.P. unaware of the stenchful explosion that these revelations produced in Parliament. At the same time, such incidents cannot blur certain general principles, any more than isolated cases of negro bestiality in South Carolina can repeal the principle that lynching is mob-law, more baneful a practice to society than any individual negro crime.

Behind the mask of indignation at isolated instances of negro bestiality, there hides the Southern manufacturer's despot-hatred of Labor, whom the white exploiter would cow, terrorize and keep in abject submission for his private purposes. So likewise behind the indignation at the revolting practices discovered in the Chinese camps of the Transvaal, there lurks, consciously or unconsciously, the bourgeois-instilled spirit of competition between race and race, creed and creed, nationality and nationality—man and man.

With a loud howl did the Amsterdam International Congress throw out the proposition presented mainly by Socialist party delegates from America, looking to the establishment of differences in races. That "backward races" resolution was not even allowed to come to a vote at Amsterdam; its sponsors were shamed into withdrawing it; and the delegation of the Socialist Labor Party acted as a unit in joining to put the seal of condemnation upon so inhumanly stupid and stupidly inhuman a proposition. The answer of the S.L.P. of America to the Independent Labour Party of the Transvaal is in line with the action taken by the International Congress of Amsterdam, which the S.L.P. is proud to have contributed in emphasizing through its delegation.

(Continue to Appendix)

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APPENDIX

TWO LETTERS.

Correspondence Between the Independent Labor Party of the Transvaal, and the American S.L.P.

I.

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY, TRANSVAAL.

Johannesburg, Transvaal,.

Sept. 30th, 1906.

To our fellow workers in Great Britain, Australia, America and other parts of the world:—

Comrades,

The Independent Labour Party and workers of the Labour Movement in the Transvaal, are on the eve of one of the greatest battles between capital and labour ever fought in any part of the world. With a population of less than 200,000 white adults, divided by nationality, we have to face capital united in every possible way to serve its own interests. The gold mining industry here represents capital to the extent of over £200,000,000. There is still a larger vested interest in land. It has been authoratively stated, that some seventeen men own three-quarters of the whole of the area of the Transvaal. They are further backed up by one of the largest amalgamations of Capital extant, with its headquarters upon the Continent of Europe.

This body of Capitalists have the control of the entire South African Press, and dominate the Governments of adjoining Colonies, Chambers of Commerce and Trade, and every Legislative, Municipal, and Administrative body throughout the Country, besides subjecting to their own interests by indirect ways, the wishes and freedom of Merchants and the middle class.

Up to the present time the Independent Labour Party and Trades Unions have escaped their machinations. This has not been accomplished without a bitter struggle, or without leaving many a former comrade in the movement, behind, on the way, a victim to the snares of bribery, corruption or oppression. We also submit that, the importation of Chinese Labour into this country, had for one of its objects the crushing of the Labour Movement in its inception, by supplanting the white workers by a cheap, servile, non-voting class of labour.

Since the formation of the Independent Labour Party here, our whole efforts have been concentrated on propaganda and organizing work. This has used up every penny of our income, and we are practically penniless at the present time. We have but three short months before our First Elections to raise funds for Labour Candidates.

Our Trades Unions have no accumulated funds, as they are all of recent formation. As a consequence of the terrible state of depression existing throughout South Africa, these Trades Unions, however willing, are totally unable to subscribe for the purpose we desire. Their funds and members have been taxed to the utmost degree, to meet the necessities of their unemployed members. It is our opinion that this depression has been purposely manufactured, to drive out of the country men who would certainly not support a party which for three and a half years used the legislative and administrative machine solely to cheapen working costs on the mines to the detriment of every labour interest.

In making this appeal to you for funds to assist in returning Labour Representatives to our First Parliament we would point out that the Independent Labour Party here is thoroughly representative of all sections of labour. It numbers among its members all men who have stood foremost in the Labour Cause for a number of years, and also the Executive Members of Trades Unions. PUBLIC OPINION is entirely in its favour, and it is rapidly gaining the ENTIRE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE.

It is the hope of the Party, to gain sufficient Seats to dominate the future Government of the Country.

The return of 20 candidates will probably be thus rendered necessary. We estimate that therefore some 35 seats will have to be contested. We have plenty of able men, but no money, and in a country like this where the dominance of wealth is so great, we cannot in our present circumstances expect to contest even one seat successfully. Any of your members who know the Transvaal, we feel sure will verify this.

The coming Parliament is to be elected for five years. We submit that unless successful in returning our Candidates, the Chinese Importation Ordinance will be renewed in a still worse form, viz.:—That the Chinaman WILL BE PERMITTED A FULL RIGHT TO PERFORM SKILLED WORK, which the present Ordinance, if carried out properly would debar them from doing. This will mean driving out of this country thousands of skilled workmen now here, and their entering into competition in the already overstocked Labour Markets elsewhere. We further feel sure that the coming elections will settle the question once and for all, of South Africa becoming a white Settler's Country.

We therefore urgently appeal to all Socialist and Labour bodies for their immediate assistance. As the Elections are but three months off, immediate action is necessary.

Should at any time we receive appeals of this nature from your organizations we feel sure it will meet with the ready response which we hope this appeal will received.

All monies should be forwarded to the Bank of Africa (Johannesburg Branch), to the credit of the Independent Labour Party, to be drawn upon by the following Trustees at a Conference held to-day.

P. Whiteside, J.P., Town Councillor and Gen. Sec.,
S.A. Engine Drivers and Firemens' Association.

T.J. Kneebone, J.P., Organizing Secretary, Amalgamated Society of Engineers (South Africa).

And John Reid, J.P., Secretary, Pretoria Trades Council.

The foregoing appeal was ordered to be sent to all Socialist and Labour bodies throughout the world, by a Conference representing the whole of the branches of the Independent Labour Party of S. Africa, this 30th day of September, 1906.

Signed

T. Bain (Chairman.)

H.W. Sampson.

John Reid.

J.P. Anderson.

M. Lucas.

J. Campbell.

A. Ross.

A. Crawford.

II.

Executive Committee,
Independent Labor Party,
The Transvaal, South Africa,
Gentlemen,

In my letter to you dated Nov. 8th, I promised to submit your communication of Sept. 30th to N.E.C. Sub-Committee of our Party. This I did at the regular session of that body held Nov. 16th. Pursuant to its instructions, I must inform your committee that we find it impossible to assist your Party in the way you request. We have come to this conclusion, because, from your statement, we are led to believe that the Independent Labor Party of the Transvaal is not a revolutionary party. We hold that the condition of the working class can be permanently improved only by complete emancipation from slavery. A bona-fide party of the working class, therefore, should have for its purpose the seizure, not only by capitalist government, but what is of vastly more importance, the confiscation of capitalist property. In America we have found that all political and economic movements which look only to the reform of capitalist society, always end, when in power, by disgracefully compromising, or by brazenly selling out the interests of the working class. We have learned through bitter experience, that, so long as the government protects individuals in the possession of private property in the means of labor, it matters not at all whether it is administered by capitalists or by individuals who were sometime workingmen. If you would give to the revolutionary socialists of the world a guarantee that, in case you are successful

in the coming election, you would banish all capitalists from the Transvaal, instead of the doubly enslaved Chinese workingmen, I am sure that the response would be as enthusiastic as so glorious a purpose would justify.

With assurances that we have faith in your good intentions, and venturing the hope that your movement in South Africa may become revolutionary in method and purpose, I remain,

Yours for the emancipation of the working Class.

FRANK BOHN.

National Secretary

Socialist Labor Party, U.S.A.

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

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