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EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO A. Sadop,
Member of the S.P., 23d A.D.,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

My Dear Mr. Sadop:—

I have yours of the 26th instant urging me to withdraw from the contest in the Ninth Congressional District and thereby afford Mr. Hillquit, the candidate of your party, a chance of election.

Two facts leap clearly from the large mass of matter that your letter adduces.

The first fact, one on which you are to be congratulated, is that you are sober. You have resisted being filled with that worst of dope, hysterical mendacity, that some of your friends are filled with. You realize that, as things stand, not only is Hillquit's election not an assured thing, but his defeat is assured. As a sober man you can be reasoned with.

The second fact that leaps out clearly from your letter is the recognition that, without the vote that I shall certainly poll, Hillquit is as certainly knocked out. He cannot even hold his last year's poll.

From this fact the following conclusion presents itself to the sober mind:—If my candidature prevents Hillquit's election, then it follows that Hillquit's candidature prevents my election.

In sight of this undeniable conclusion, how must that Socialist reason onward who earnestly aspires to see the walls of Congress broken through by a Socialist Congressman?

The reasoning such a Socialist would pursue is obvious:

“No more than two words in a language represent identical ideas, do or can two opposing Socialist candidates represent the identical principle. There being two

opposing Socialists for Congress in the District, the principles they represent cannot be identical. The thing to do is to ascertain the difference in principle between the two; that being ascertained, choose the word, so to speak, that fits closest to Socialist thought; and discard the other.”

The work of ascertaining the difference of the principles represented by Hillquit and myself is of the easiest. It is all documentary.

It is fundamental with Socialism that the emancipation of the working class requires the unity of the international proletariat. This is not merely a principle of cold theory; it is a principle of vitally pulsating practice. The vitality of the principle is strongest here in America, where we have all races represented. The favorite manoeuvre with the capitalist class, in order to keep the proletariat divided, is to foment race animosities by fomenting race prejudices, and causing each to consider the other inferior, itself, superior. He who charges any race with “a lower standard of living,” and, upon that ground, seeks to keep out its immigrants, immediately throws the apple of discord among our own many-raced proletariat. Americans will set themselves up as a “higher standard” race than Germans, Germans than Italians, Italians than Swedes, Swedes than Irish, all as “higher standard” races to Russian and Polish Jews, and so on, all along the line. With a proletariat thus cut up into an indefinite number of mutually despising fractions the bottom is knocked from under Socialist progress—whatever profit politicians may derive from them. In view of this fact the International Socialist Congresses have emphatically put their foot down upon any attempt at restricting immigration—attempts to restrict immigration being the insidious manoeuvre of capitalism to disrupt the proletariat.

These principles are classic with Socialism—their soundness is undeniable—the records of the International Congresses are documentary.

How, now, do the two opposing candidates in the Ninth Congressional District stand towards these principles?

Likewise undeniable is the posture of each.

As to Hillquit, twice did he pester the International Socialist Congresses with resolutions that transparently aimed at just the kind of discrimination on immigration that is pregnant with evil to Socialism.

At Amsterdam, four years ago, even his fellow Socialist party delegate, Nicholas

Klein, declared that, as an American citizen, he felt disgraced to see such a resolution coming from that quarter.

At Stuttgart, last year, Mr. Hillquit re-appeared in the same rôle. What that rôle was is found graven in the records of that Congress. In the Committee the Hillquit proposition was branded as “in violation of the fundamental principles of Socialism.” (Congressional Report, p. 234); and, in the report to his organization, the delegate of the Russian Jewish Bund referred to Hillquit’s posture as “having called forth great dissatisfaction among the European Socialists,” and as having caused himself to “feel as if cut with a knife.” (Bund Report, pp. 54–55.)

Finally, at Chicago, Mr. Hillquit led the convention of his party, to the tune of “the hordes of Asia and Europe,” to adopt certain immigration resolutions, in line with those he had attempted to foist upon the International Congresses, and had failed to carry through there.

A man may commit a wrong unknowingly. The unerring mark of guiltlessness on his part is prompt recognition of the wrong when shown, and a prompt appeal for pardon. As unerring a mark of guilt is dodging, duplicity and shuffling. In face of these charges Hillquit’s conduct has been that of shuffling, duplicity and dodging only. On the occasion of his recent address on Immigration he even went further than to shuffle and indulge in duplicity. Cornered with the question: “Is it not true that the Bund agrees with the S.L.P. that your anti-immigration propaganda also hits the Jew?” Hillquit’s answer was: “God forbid! In Stuttgart I worked fraternally with the delegate of the Bund on immigration.” One may imagine how “fraternal” were the workings with Hillquit of a delegate whom Hillquit’s posture “cut as if with a knife!”

The charges against Hillquit’s treasonable conduct towards Socialism are proved—they are more than proved. His conduct denotes knowing guilt.

As to my posture, it is likewise undeniable. It has been the unflinching posture of the S.L.P.—the posture that has drawn upon the Party and myself the wrath and denunciation of the Gompers reactionary Unions, whose viciously un-Socialistic anti-immigration principles the Party has unflinchingly refused to echo—the posture, that, the S.L.P. is proud to realize, renders it distasteful to the millionaires who do not join the Movement to elevate their own morale, but who join the

Movement to debauch and lower it to the small measure of their own nativistic superstitions, and vanity.

What, in sight of this array of undeniable facts and unshakable reasoning, is the course that circumstances dictate to the Socialist, who earnestly aspires to see the walls of Congress broken through by a Socialist, and who realizes that Hillquit and myself block each others' way toward that wished-for consummation?

The course dictated to such an earnest Socialist is to summon not me, but Hillquit to withdraw immediately from the contest, his continued presence in the ring being but a continued public scandal to Socialism.

The other course, my dear Sir, I urge upon your sobriety, convicts individual who pursues it of setting Partisanism above Principle—a policy that can only lead Socialism under ground.

Yours, etc.,

DANIEL DE LEON.

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

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slpns@slp.org