

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 186.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

MR. AVERILL ONCE MORE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LAST week *The People* exposed the fatalism involved in Mr. Albert E. Averill's false conception of sociology,¹ and thus turned his erring article in the *International Socialist Review* to the only useful purpose such productions can be turned to—the foil of error wherewith to contrast, and thereby prove verily. The gentleman's identical article may be put to the same profitable use by exposing its tanglefoot reasoning, and the place such sort of reasoning occupies in the discussion at present going on with regard to the tactics of the Socialist or labor movement.

Mr. Averill says: "The capitalist, because of his possession of the means of production, control the social labor power of the working class."

With this principle Socialist science can find no fault. It is a principle fundamental with Socialism—the possession of the means of production is the source of capitalist rule. So far, so good.

Immediately, however, after the above passage, without a paragraph, or even a sentence behind which to shelter one's surprise, Mr. Averill proceeds to say:

"The control of the social labor power of the working class, or proletariat, is the source of all economic or political power."

This passage is at fisticuffs with the first. If indeed the control of the social labor power of the workers is the source of all economic or political power, then the possession of the means of production by the capitalist cannot be what gives him control of the social labor power of the proletariat. On the contrary, if the consequence of the ownership of the means of production by the capitalist class is, as first, and correctly stated, the capitalist's control of the labor power of the

¹ [See "[Sociologic Fatalism](#)," *Daily People*, December 25, 1908—R.B.]

workers, then it follows that, not the control of the worker's labor power, but the possession of the means of production is "the source of all economic and political power," in existence.

The second passage amounts to a shifting of the "source of economic or political power." It amounts to attributing "source" or cause importance, to what is itself not a "source" or cause, but admittedly by Mr. Averill himself, a consequence of the cause or "source."

From this suddenly shifted "cause" Mr. Averill proceeds to deduct two principles—both of them legitimate off-spring of their vague parentage or premises:

1. "If the capitalist should lose his control of the social labor power of the proletariat, he would lose his control of all government and every social power"—an assumption which can only contemplate the absurd possibility of the capitalist's preserving control of the means of production and yet losing control of the social labor power of the proletariat; and

2. "If the proletariat, on the other hand, should acquire conscious control of its social labor power, it would control all government and every social power"—a supposition which, in turn, can only contemplate the equally absurd possibility of the proletariat's acquiring control of its own social labor power, and yet remain without possession of the means of production.

The useful purpose that the Averill tanglefoot reason serves is to throw light upon its kinship and bring into relief the place it occupies among its kindred—the seemingly unrelated pure and simple Socialist politician and the pure and simple physical fordist.

While the pure and simple Socialist politician on the one side of the fence, tanglefoots himself into the theory that the economic organization is impotent for ever and aye; on the other side of the fence, the pure and simple physical fordist tanglefoots himself into the theory that political action is impotent for aye and ever; while, in other words, these two elements are incapable of the synthetical reasoning which explains the failure attendant upon segments of separately operating movements, which should operate jointly—while this performance proceeds on the two sides of the fence, one side insisting "no politics!" the other "no force!"—the Averill elements link the two tanglefooters together with a third tanglefoot

reasoning as the foundation for the ultimate conclusion that the solution lies in doing nothing at all, but fatalistically to wait for the capitalist to “vanish.”

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

Uploaded May 2010

slpns@slp.org