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EDITORIAL

A TIGER, NOT TO BE AWAKENED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NOT a few correspondents, who admit that the Socialist Labor Party's position on immigration is correct, inquire whether the position is also "practical." Almost all spend a good deal of space with arguments to explain that a theory may be correct enough, yet, for a moment, it may be best subserved by its violation.

The S.L.P. position on immigration is pre-eminently practical. The opposite position is pre-eminently unpractical—if held by Socialists.

Whatever the country in which the Immigration Question may be treated from the purely theoretic view point, that country is not the United States. If there is a country in which the Immigration Question demands practical handling, above everything else, that country is the United States.

In England, in Germany, in France, in whatever country, outside of the United States, an issue that directly or indirectly suggests a differentiation of races will fail to fracture the country. In those countries immigrants are few: the bulk of the nation may be said to be homogeneous, substantially so. Otherwise in the United States. Here all nations, almost all races, are represented, and in numbers not a few. Let any issue be raised suggestive of degrees in desirability, and the immediate consequence is that, with each of the nationalities now in the land, the latent, long cultivated and interested superstitions of superiority above all other races will forthwith begin to pulsate. The Immigration Question is such an issue.

Immigration can not be curtailed except upon the principle that the present population of the land is superior to the element excluded. The myth of being the elect of God; a myth that has rocked the cradle of every race; a poison that is in the system of all nationalities;—that myth will start buzzing in the ears, that poison will forthwith become active in the veins of all the nationalities now here. At first

the myth will buzz in the collective American ear; the poison will assert itself in the collective American veins; by an inevitable law of cause and effect, myth and poison will presently be buzzing and pulsating in the individual ears and the individual veins of each separate nationality. The final effect is to fracture the land into its component and not yet merged population.

What that means to the Socialist or Labor Movement need not be enlarged upon. The Labor or Socialist Movement can find no ground upon which to plant itself except the ground of Labor's solidarity. Where nationalities mutually look down upon one another the Labor or Socialist Movement sinks kneedeep into quick sands, and must flounder about distracted.

Are there any considerations more practical? Some think there are. They argue that all the above notwithstanding to hold such language flies in the face of preconceived popular ideas and that to do so would be to isolate the propagandist. Practical experience disproves the theory.

Behold the so-called Socialist party. It wishes not to "isolate" itself from the workers by preaching to them the sound principles of immigration. It echoes their superstitions—and where is it? In the steam-roller that he ran over the S.P. Mamie Hayes, who had written to him that "if the 400,000 who vote the Socialist party ticket were in the unions we would control them absolutely," the tailor F. Broman of San Francisco says with admirable precision: "As to the 400,000 Socialist party voters getting in and capturing the A.F. of L., a great many of them would have to either give up the pulpit, law office, or green groceries and go to work for a living before they would be eligible." The late election returns supplement the statement. Beginning with the chief industrial centers of New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, etc., in almost all the industrial centers the S.P. vote has gone down markedly. Isolation is feared by a correct stand? The S.P. stands chillingly isolated.

From whichever side the Immigration Question is sighted, from the practical side in particular, it must be handled soundly. It is utterly unpractical to teach people by echoing their superstitions; it is still more unpractical to awaken such a tiger in the human breast as the latent tiger of racial hatreds, and then imagine the job is easier than if the tiger were first slain.

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