

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 157.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

S.L.P. PRINCIPLES AND TACTICS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A PATERSON, N.J., correspondent who seems to have the popular mania for projecting Presidential tickets, sends to this office a copy of William D. Haywood's last March address on "The General Strike," marking an answer made by Haywood on that occasion, and asking: "Is not that sound to the core? Is not that exactly what the S.L.P. has been preaching these many years and now stands for? Is not that S.L.P. principles and tactics? Why not William D. Haywood for President of all the Socialist revolutionists in the land?"

As this office has no authority to make, or even to suggest Presidential or any other nominations, that portion of our correspondent's question relating to Presidential nominations for next year will be left aside, and the first part only of his letter considered.

A questioner having asked how could an Industrial Unionist propagate Industrial Unionism in the A.F. of L., seeing he would be fired out and lose his job, Haywood answered:

"Well, the time is coming when he will have to quit the A.F. of L., anyway. And, remember, that there are 35,000,000 workers in the United States who can't get in the A.F. of L. And when you quit you are quitting a caste, you are getting back into your class. The Socialists have been going along maintaining the Civic Federation long enough. The time has almost arrived when you will have to quit and become free men and women. I believe that the A.F. of L. won't take in the working class. It isn't a working class organization. It is a craft organization. They realize that by improving the labor-power of a few individuals and keeping them on the inside of a corral, keeping others out with initiation fees, and closing the books, and so on, that the favored few are made valuable to the capitalist. They form a little job trust. 'Tis a system of slavery from which free people ought to break away. And they will soon."

Of course, by “Socialist” in this answer Haywood means the Socialist party. He can not mean the Socialist Labor Party. The S.L.P. never carried the train for the Civic Federation; never shielded it. On the contrary, and signally otherwise; whereas the S.P. in national convention assembled more than once officially voted down direct and indirect condemnations of the Civic Federation. Throughout his speech, Haywood refers to the S.P. as the “Socialists,” when he meant other Socialists he expressly stated “S.L.P.”

With this explanation it may be safely said that every word in the answer is S.L.P., and, being such, is sound. It is the line, close to which and unterrified, the S.L.P. has hewn and concentrated its agitation; and what is more, it is the line of agitation, education and organization that the S.L.P. first blazed the way for. For all that, there is a marked difference between Haywood’s language and the S.L.P.’s.

If our correspondent will turn only three pages forward in the pamphlet he sent us he will find that just before giving the above excellent answer, and in the course of his answer to the very first question put to him with regard to the relations of the S.P. with the A.F. of L., Haywood said “The constitution or platform of the Socialist party stands neutral on the question of unionism. . . . No, the Socialist party does not advise that you join the A.F. of L.”

This is an instance of “the letter killing the spirit.”

It is true that, were a green traveler from Mars to land in the United States and to be given a copy of the S.P. constitution or platform, he would find in neither any evidence of the S.P.’s advising the workers to join the A.F. of L.; nor would he find therein evidence of aught at war with neutrality on the question of unionism. He would, however, have to be a traveler recently arrived. Had he arrived some time before the said constitution or platform was placed into his hands, and had opportunity to “take his bearings” by reading up on S.P. conventions, and familiarizing himself with their press, our Martian traveler would know better.

A constitution or platform that is strained through the loins of a convention which tables a resolution censuring the Civic Federation and quite pointedly the A.F. of L., along with the Civic Federation, as happened at the 1904 and 1910 national conventions of the S.P.; a constitution or platform that dares denounce as “scabs” unions which are actually scabbed against by the A.F. of L.;—such a consti-

tution our Martian traveler would know is not neutral upon unionism. It does more than advise the workers to join the A.F. of L.: it sandbags them with slander if they don't.

A distinctive feature of S.L.P. language is that no enunciation of principle is at fisticuffs with any other. The S.L.P. holds this to be a necessity in order to prevent confusion, and to promote education. It is to be hoped that Haywood may speedily grow out of the stage in which, in order to do the good work of worshipping St. Michael, so to speak, he finds it necessary first to burn a candle to the dragon, so to say.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded November 2012

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