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EDITORIAL

THE ST. LOUIS SITUATION.

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THERE lies before the Socialist party a national referendum designated as “Referendum D,” the purpose whereof is to empower the party’s National Executive Committee to adjudicate the party’s internal troubles in Missouri. These internal troubles are centered in St. Louis, and create a “situation” worthy of close scrutiny.

The essential facts are:

In the St. Louis spring election of 1909 there appeared on the Socialist party ballot a Democratic candidate, Owen Miller by name, and on the Republican ballot a Socialist party candidate, Emil Simon by name, the latter of whom addressed “the public” over his own signature stating that he “appreciated” the nomination of the Republican party as an “honor bestowed” upon him.

Many members of Local St. Louis, S.P., protested against these performances. They placed their finger upon the articles and sections of their national, State and local constitutions, which expressly forbade fusing in any form with any other political party; and they demanded that the flagrant constitutional violation be repudiated. The protest was ignored. The local party officers, who had engineered the deal, being in possession of the party machinery, including the two local papers, used their power and the papers’ columns to silence opposition and defend the acts complained of—a defence which was conducted to the tune of the regulation S.P. officialdom’s Leit-motif in all such instances, to wit, the anathematizing of all who stand for Socialist integrity as “De Leonites and S.L.P. impossibilists.”

Undeterred by the outcry, the clean members of Local St. Louis, S.P., persisted. Their own numbers not being large enough to overcome the corruptionists in the city, they carried their case before their party’s State authorities and their party’s membership in the State at large. The upshot was that, after a long-drawn struggle,

the Missouri S.P. State Committee revoked last year the charter of Local St. Louis, and reorganized a Local in that city with the corruptionists left out.

At this stage of the affair, both law and principle, besides broad statesmanship, combined, one should think, to cause the S.P. national officers to insist the “controversy” was ended.

In point of principle, the St. Louis majority that was dropped were obviously guilty.

In point of law, the S.P. constitution expressly establishes State autonomy, expressly forbidding interference with the affairs of any State.

In point of broad statesmanship, the Missouri affair afforded an opportunity to cleanse the theory of “State autonomy” of the smudge that would otherwise cling to it. The American theory of the autonomy of the States is rational. That the theory is not an absolute and sweeping one, hence, irrational, was exemplified by a four years bloody civil war. Rational autonomy ends, irrational autonomy begins, when “autonomy” is interpreted as the right of one locality to endanger the safety of the whole nation. The violation of party principles by the St. Louis majority was a menace to the national party. Had the menace been State-wide, national intervention would have been justified. Seeing the menace was local, within the State and the State organization had remained true to its party’s declarations and had stamped out treason, the State of Missouri was entitled to handle and settle its own controversies.

The S.P. national officialdom took the opposite view. It fraternized with the St. Louis corruptionists, who raised a variety of technical objections to their suspension by their own State organization. It gave a glad ear to these complaints. Itself even proposed to arbitrate the “differences.”

The St. Louis corruptionists, being under the election laws of Missouri in possession of the party’s electoral machinery, used this as a club against their whole party in the State, and by the aid of the said machinery virtually set up a party of their own in St. Louis. Instead of frowning down such conduct; instead of using their legitimate influence to cause the corruptionists to surrender the weapon that capitalist laws had placed into their hands against the party to which they avowed loyalty;—instead of doing that, the national officialdom of the S.P. gave the corrup-

tionists aid and comfort. That officialdom went so far as to deceive Karl Liebknecht, on the occasion of his last year's tour in this country, upon the situation in St. Louis and to mislead him into speaking in that city under the auspices of the suspended body and, worst of all, under the presidency of G.A. Hoehn, the corruptionists' fuggleman—a thing that Liebknecht, if posted, never would have been guilty of. And that officialdom has gone further, it has now countenanced "Referendum D" to empower it to invade the State of Missouri, and it has opened the columns of its privately-owned press (for instance, Berger's *Social Democratic Herald*) for Hoehn to deceive the S.P. membership at large by charging his Missouri opponents with having "violated the National Party Constitution" and with having "robbed" his set of its charter, and further confuse and trip them with flippant allusions to the "manufactured Missouri controversy." In short, the demeanor of the S.P. national officialdom is at all points as if the party of Lincoln had opened its columns to the slaveholding arguments of Jefferson Davis, and had made ready to invade the South in order to enforce slavery.

The S.P. situation is a page worth noting in the history that S.P. officialdom is making. It is a history luminous of what comes from pure and simple Socialist politics, that is, the scramble for political pelf and place under the colors of Socialism.

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