

EDITORIAL

TO KARL LEGIEN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

FELLOW Socialist—

First of all, a hearty welcome from the Socialist Labor Party upon your landing on the shores of America—a hearty welcome to you as a member of the Social Democratic delegation in the Reichstag, and as the International Secretary of the economic organizations of Europe.

It is to be regretted that the burden now resting upon the shoulders of the militant comrades in Europe is such that they have not the time to post themselves accurately upon things in distant America, and that, when any pays a visit to these shores, the shortness of the visit is rendered still shorter by the agitational tour that the visitor is put, aye, rushed through. The opportunity for making observations in a foreign country are of limited nature to lecturers.

With the necessary leisure at his disposal; free to select the area of his inquiries, untrammelled by the requirements of “filling dates”; his mind and body enjoying the restfulness that critical observation demands and that the necessity of addressing frequent audiences strips him of; unmolested by the tug-of-war on the part of warring elements, each seeking to make capital out of the visitor;—in short, with nothing to preoccupy him but the acquisition of reliable information, the militant visitor from Europe would find American conditions a book every page of which thrills with interest.

The European visitor would find that the general opinion in Europe, regarding American being the most capitalistically developed country on earth, is correct. Here concentration has reached highest pitch and exploitation deepest depths.

There is a notion, unfortunately too prevalent, that, given a quantity of Capitalism there is bound to be a proportionate quantity of Socialism. The European visi-



KARL LEGIEN
(1861–1920)

tor, if he at all shared the illusion, would find it quickly smashed by the facts.

He will find here a Socialist and Labor Movement that fall far short of the formula: A certain quantity of Capitalism, a proportionate quantity of Socialism. He will find here a Labor or Union Movement that embraces but a small percentage of the land's proletariat. The bulk of that Union Movement he will find is dominated by the master class through the Civic Federation, and worse yet, still more incredible from the European quarter, fraternally accepting to its national conventions delegates from church organizations. He will find only a small body of Unionism, as Unionism is properly understood in Europe, especially the continent, the I.W.W. He will find two political parties of Socialism—one, a rope of sand; the other, well knit, but with too much "sea" beating against its bows at present, to make much headway. He will find on all sides "raw material" in plenty for a Labor and Socialist Movement such as capitalist development in America would cause him to expect to find, yet the "raw material" lying fallow.

No effect without cause.

Such "flowers" on the surface would cause our European visitor to look below the surface for their roots. What he would find would be a revelation to him.

Our militant visitor from Europe would find a Capitalist Class whose genius lies in psychology. It has studied one thing—"Human Weaknesses." It has played upon that, to the extent of having brought about a degree of demoralization in Labor's ranks not seen elsewhere, and conceivable nowhere else.

Our militant visitor from Europe will discover that, in the doing of this nefarious work, the Capitalist Class of the land availed itself of national and racial prejudices transplanted from Europe. He will find that these prejudices were played upon in such manner as to set the workers of the land at war with one another—race against race, creed against creed, nationality against nationality, even counties of one nationality against other counties of the same nationality, as was notedly done by the Irish capitalist mine owner in Butte, Mont., towards his employes of his own nationality and race, whom he picked out, assorted, and set up in economic feud against one another.

In the course of his inquiry along this line our militant visitor from Europe will make discoveries that will positively startle him. He will discover that even one of the two parties of Socialism has become the dupe of this capitalist manoeuvre, and has itself struck Jingoic postures that rupture proletarian solidarity. And our Euro-

pean visitor, if a German as Karl Legien happens to be, will drop his head with shame when, probing these manifestations, he will discover that, the Socialist party's German press leading, and the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* foremost, led and continue to lead in the stupid infamy and infamous stupidity.

It is quite possible that, having carried his investigation so far, our militant traveler from Europe may throw up his hands in despair over the Movement in America. He would err in that.

Further investigation—always supposing time allowed—would bring our inquirer to facts that, unobtrusive to-day, are destined to grow to controlling factors.

He will discover that, parallel with the Labor-disrupting and Socialist-Movement-debauching forces, there, are other forces that make in the exact opposite direction. He will discover a literature, not issued “for sale,” but for instruction; he would discover two organizations, one political, the other, economic, not run for newspaper notoriety; he will discover a mass of agitators, kept by the two organizations in the field, not to “gather funds,” and string out a “rope of sand,” but to educate and twist into consistency the revolutionary rope; he would discover two bodies of men in the two organizations spending their substance instead of parasiting upon the Socialist and Labor Movement. Our European visitor would then run up against not the gem of purest ray serene that lies buried at the bottom of the sea, nor a flower wasting its sweetness on the desert air; he would run up against the acorn of the oak tree to be—to be, aided by the very conditions that call upon America to give to the world the signal for emancipation from economic servitude.

Were you not on a tour of limited time, and still more limited opportunity, you, fellow Socialist Legien, might return to Europe with a fund of information badly needed there. Perhaps these few remarks may afford you some “tips,” to obtain, at least, some glimpse of the special facts that are now holding back the Socialist and Labor Movements in America, and the facts that are the guarantee that the Movement in America will overcome the obstacles in its way, and leap to the front rank of the International Movement.

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