

EDITORIAL

## WELL FOR ROOSEVELT!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE answer given in Bridgeport, Conn., by the Bull Moose Presidential candidate to the question put to him by the Kangaroo, alias Socialist party, of that State, on the subject of the unemployed was a bull's-eye hit.

Said Roosevelt: "The Socialist party in this letter ask me what we intend to do with the problem of unemployment. In the first place, I know of no practical plan that the Socialist party itself has for dealing with the problems."

A bull's-eye, said we? Nay, it is a double bull's-eye. It is a solar plexus, administered at once to both Bullmoosia and Kangaroosia.

That Kangaroosia has no practical, indeed, no plan whatever on unemployment, Socialist party literature amply attests, and anyone familiar with the same surely knows.

Socialist party propaganda teaches the droll economics that "the workers pay the taxes." The practical results that such nonsense leads the S.P. to are illustrated in Schenectady. Elsewhere in this issue will be found in full the article "Schenectady the Unripe" by Walter Lippmann, ex-Executive Secretary of the S.P. Mayor of that city, the Rev. Dr. Lunn, and which we reproduce from the *Call* of last June 9.<sup>1</sup> The article is a matchless picture of S.P. star-gazing in general. Among the points it covers is the incapacity of the S.P. municipal administration of Schenectady to keep its promises owing to its poverty, which is due to its all-absorbing effort "to keep down taxes."

Roosevelt's answer reveals intimate acquaintance with the taxation theory of the S.P., and the theory's workings in Schenectady and Milwaukee. Of course the S.P. can have declamation only on unemployment. A party, that teaches that the

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<sup>1</sup> [See page 3 for reprint from *Weekly People* of September 21, 1912]

working class pays the taxes, can surely not be expected to pile upon its dearly beloved and already overburdened proletariat the additional load of extra taxes—the only practical means wherewith to tackle the problem of unemployment as an “immediate demand.” Roosevelt’s answer is a knock-out blow to the S.P. questioner.

But Roosevelt simultaneously dealt his own Progressive party a knock-out blow with the identical blow that he knocked out the S.P. on the vital subject of unemployment.

Whatever it may say here, there, or yonder—Bullmoosia knows that the taxes are paid by the property-holding, by the labor-exploiting class—Bullmoosia knows that taxes come from that portion of the wealth produced by, but never pocketed by labor—Bullmoosia knows that taxes come out of profits—Bullmoosia is well aware that, in America, any increase of taxation spells a decrease of the profits reserved for use by the class whom to save Bullmoosia has flung its hat in the ring. Accordingly, apart from the circumstance that unemployment is necessary for the existence of capitalism, the Progressive party need not be expected to drain the profit-coffers of its class with the taxation that the immediate tackling of unemployment would demand.

Roosevelt’s answer makes it clear to the unemployed—and also to the employed to whom unemployment is a scourge—that there is no balm for them in the Gilead of either Bullmoosia, or Kangarooosia. Both have their faces set for low, and still lower taxes—the former, because it knows that the Capitalist Class pays the taxes; the latter, because it is either ignorant enough to believe, or demagogic enough to pretend to believe, that the Working Class pays the taxes.

# SCHENECTADY THE UNRIPE

By Walter Lippman in N. Y. "Call" of June 9, 1912.

A word of personal explanation is necessary: A few days before the Socialists took office in Schenectady, Mayor Lunn asked me to be his executive secretary. I accepted and went to Schenectady for the inauguration on New Year's Day. On the 1st of May, I resigned. In those four months an unusually good chance was mine to watch things shaping themselves. For the position of secretary to the Mayor is a stage box from which to watch any administration. Being a stranger to the town, moreover, I was innocent of that personal bias and clique loyalty which form so important a part of life in a small city. I had no history and no future in Schenectady. It was a job to do and an experiment to watch.

Certain observations seem worth stating; certain conclusions worth considering. If they seem the criticism of a fool, particularly to some of the people in Schenectady, may they follow the usage of all good Socialist locals by at least calling me "Comrade Fool." For the men and women in Schenectady, no one who has lived with them can escape a great deal of affection. In fact, when the feeling forced itself upon me that the victory in Schenectady came too soon, that the administration labeled Socialist was really impotent, that it might cause disappointment which was dangerous, I resigned believing that there were more important things to do than to take part in "good government" politics, the personal kindness and tolerance of the people was so great that the writing of this article is no pleasant task.

Naturally it would be easier to keep quiet and run no risk of having motives misinterpreted. No matter. The Socialist movement is nourished on criticism; we are not old-party politicians putting loyalty "to the organization" at the head of the virtues; Schenectady is not the balance in which Socialism is to be weighed; it is nothing but a laboratory in which we are experimenting and the personal testimony of those who have had a chance to observe it is the only way people can learn how the experiment is going.

Putting aside kid gloves then, Schenectady is a disappointment. Nothing is being done there that twenty reform cities can't duplicate, and the Socialist rule must be described as pretty "good government." Timidity of action, the lack of a bold plan, a kind of aimlessness is the reality behind revolutionary speeches. I am not writing out of despair. True, if Schenectady Socialism is a sharp object lesson in what always results when we turn from education to politics, when we seek to win votes rather than to make converts, when we look for an immediate concrete return in political victory rather than the more distant intangible return in greater understanding.

The old political parties in this country to-day are shot to pieces—Roosevelt assures us that Taft is a crook and Taft says Roosevelt is one. Each of them has inside knowledge. The Democratic party with its windy Clark, Tammany and the unspeakable Hearst is here when the "independent" voter cannot out of self-respect vote for either party. He is looking for a party to represent him. Under certain conditions he will vote the Socialist ticket. But he will not become a Socialist. Instead he puts himself into some such attitude as this: "We are all more or less Socialists these days. A lot of the things you fellows want to do are fine. Playgrounds and dental clinics and Sunday concerts, efficiency and, above all, no graft. What I like about you is your idealism—of course there are a lot of fanatics among you, but go ahead anyway. A little responsibility will make you sober—and you can clean out the grafters." This sort of progressive will often put the Socialists in power while the old parties are split up. But he asks a price for his support. That price is nothing else than that the Socialist party should represent his timid benevolence. Socialists who get his support, as in Schenectady, seem to pay the price he asks.

The vote is illuminating. In Schenectady County, of which the City of Schenectady is 83 per cent—the growth from 1900 to 1910 was what we have come to think of as the normal Socialist increase:

|           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1900..... | 32 votes    |
| 1902..... | 136 votes   |
| 1904..... | 434 votes   |
| 1906..... | 547 votes   |
| 1908..... | 853 votes   |
| 1909..... | 1,063 votes |
| 1910..... | 2,628 votes |

In January, 1909, Dr. George R. Lunn, the pastor of the First Reformed Church had become so radical in his preaching that he was practically forced out of

his pulpit. With a group of followers he founded the United People's Church and a weekly paper called the Citizen. He was not then a member of the party, but his preaching and writing had a Socialist background. His personal following was large; men liked him and were attracted by his eloquence. They had seen him give up a comfortable living, a high position in a beautiful church in order to preach what he felt. The Socialists in his congregation went out to get him, and after a while they succeeded. A year and a half or so back he joined the party and his paper became an organ of Socialist propaganda.

When it was time to nominate a man for Mayor in the campaign of 1911, Lunn was easily the strongest candidate. There was, I have been told, some objection made at the time by Socialists who nevertheless liked and admired Lunn very much. What they said was strangely prophetic. With Lunn as candidate, they maintained, the vote will grow very fast. He can attract a big non-Socialist following. If he is not nominated, the vote will simply increase at a normal rate. This brought out an extremely important question of party policy: Shall the Socialists play for a non-Socialist vote? They said yes in Schenectady and nominated Lunn. He polled 6,536 votes in the city and elected with him the city and county tickets.

Note the increase of the vote. At the previous mayoralty election, two years before, the Socialist candidate received 926 votes. Lunn received 6,536, a gain of more than 700 per cent. That this was a Lunn victory is made still plainer by the fact that the county ticket received just three votes than Lunn did in the city alone. The Socialists elected an Assemblyman for the county on the strength of Lunn's vote in the city. Now, of course, the entire increase in the vote is not due to Lunn; some of it is the regular Socialist gain. But that about a quarter of it was a Lunn vote, I do not believe anyone will dispute. These were the votes that made the plurality that carried the victory. But it is hardly necessary to prove the point with figures. It has been made again and again, and no one has questioned it. In Schenectady, it is taken for granted. What is perhaps not so clearly recognized is the effect of it.

But the effect of it is being felt, nevertheless. For it made this kind of situation: the Socialists in full control of the city government and entirely responsible for it; these Socialists elected by a slim plurality; their vote made of perhaps 1,200 party members, several hundred of whom joined after the victory, a possible 3,000 workingmen, more or less Socialistic, about 2,000 disgusted independents and Lunn followers; the victory obtained after a dashing campaign in which the Socialists had not really expected to win; power and responsibility coming to them, therefore, before they had formulated any comprehensive plan of action.

I wish I could speak with better knowledge of the campaign which led up to the victory. What I know of it is simply gathered from the stories told by Socialists who were in it, by newspaper men who reported it and by the back files of the Citizen with which it was fought. There is no doubt that Lunn brought the issue back to the dishonesty and general disreputableness of the old political ring. He is a great spellbinder—resourceful, he knows that attack is the only defense. Lunn played horse with the old machines; the politicians were bewildered and divided by the freshness of an attack, which, as an old newspaper put it, went through that town like a gale.

It swept the Socialists into power; they suddenly had a city of 80,000 to govern. There wasn't a lawyer, doctor, engineer, accountant, educator or business executive in the party whom they could appoint to office. The seriousness of that doesn't lie in the old political wish to put only good "regular" men in political jobs. If, for example, the Socialists were in the field simply as a more efficient and more honest group of reformers, the fact that their organization contained no so-called professional men might be an advantage. They would make nonpartisan appointments. But what is a virtue in a mere reformer becomes a vice in a Socialist; the nonpartisan expert is a narrow expert. For the work that Socialists have before them they need not merely good doctors and lawyers, but doctors and lawyers who are Socialists. There's a world of difference between a good lawyer and a good Socialist lawyer.

In Schenectady, the party was definitely hampered by the lack of men who combined professional training with Socialist vision. In a few cases non-Socialists were appointed; the health officer was a Republican personally friendly to the Socialists; the Corporation Counsel is a Democrat. For other posi-

tions they follow the lead of Milwaukee, Rochester and a few other American cities in what people speak of as the German municipal method; they went out of town and imported the men they needed. From Boston they got their Commissioner of Charities, from New York City the Deputy Controller, from an up-State town a City Engineer, from Milwaukee a Commissioner of Public Works.

When the administration took office on January 1, it must be confessed, I think, that its policy and its program was an exceedingly vague and undefined thing. Now, in making a statement of this kind, I realize fully the difficulty of proving it. It is easier to draw the outlines of a mountain than a cloud; it is hard to be definite about the undefined. I sat in conference, caucuses and committee meetings for four months and yet I find it difficult to convey fairly the atmosphere of baffled good intentions in which we moved. How often did we say, vehemently: "We ought to do something; we ought to start something?" And then, perhaps, somebody would have a good idea, and it would be put into effect. That Germany and France, not to say America, had a vast amount of municipal Socialist experience that could be used we knew in a vague sort of way. But somehow or other it is hard to learn and to govern at the same time. The actual administrative work, the constant attacks of preachers and newspapers are absorbing, not to say distracting and consecutive study was in Schenectady out of the question. It was hard to learn in the rush of office what had not been learned out of it.

To make the situation as concrete as possible, let me illustrate with three important matters, education, the police, and public expenditure.

For the first time in any considerable city in America the Socialists control the School Board. In the first three months they had the appointment of four out of five members of the board. It was a wonderful opportunity. In all the conferences and caucuses at which names of men were discussed I never once heard anyone suggest that education was a thing on which Socialists could be supposed to have opinions. Two attitudes prevailed towards the appointments. The first was that the school commissioners should all be Socialist party members, whether or not they knew anything about education; the second was that they should be honored citizens of the city whether or not they were Socialists. A compromise was reached in which all four appointees were Socialists at heart, although two of them were enrolled as Republicans.

Schenectady is missing an unparalleled opportunity. To say that the Socialists had no plans in regard to education is no over-statement. It is fair to say that when this opportunity came they did not even know that they ought to have plans. Why, the day before I left, the clerk of the board came to me and asked me whether I wouldn't write out for him my views on the purposes and methods of education. When I explained that I had never studied the subject and was as ignorant of it as Senator Smith is about navigation, he took it as a piece of praiseworthy but unnecessary modesty.

The fact is that the Socialist movement in Schenectady is too unripe to realize an opportunity like the one it has, too untrained to have devoted attention to the question of education, too immature to have developed within itself men who understand the problem and its possibilities. Power has come too soon.

Not only has it come too soon, it has come in such a way as to make the Socialists play politics. The feeling in the back of their minds, the feeling that subconsciously determines their actions is that they were elected by the grace of non-Socialists—that their constituency would not support a bold move. That explains the desire not to have the appointees all called Socialist; The "good government" people who elected them do not believe in "partisan" school boards. The Schenectady Socialists are democratic not only as a theory, but as a matter of practice. They are compelled to represent the sentiment of the community; their community does not agree with them; they know it, and although they are called Socialists, they cannot be Socialists. They did not go through the long and painful process of educating public opinion until it desired real changes. They are paying the penalty in impotence.

The same conditions have worked themselves out to like results in regard to the police. For when an administration is called upon to direct the police power it has to adopt some policy towards drink, gambling and prostitution. Nothing in politics is more puzzling than the question of what to do about "vice." The whole subject is so swaddled in the idea of sin, so charged with hy-

teria and what might be called morbidly social enthusiasm, above all so obscure to the mass, that it would be foolish to expect anything genuinely radical of the administration in Schenectady.

There seems to be no standard Socialist attitude toward these questions which an administration confronted with the problem can use as guide. My experience in Schenectady shows that Socialists in power simply follow their prejudices like most other administrations.

Mayor Lunn is a clergyman, and although, like every other sane man, he sees through the hypocrisy of the Sunday blue laws, yet by tradition and temperament he inclines toward a prohibition attitude. The German Branch of the party in Schenectady, on the other hand, leans by tradition and temperament and sociability toward beer on Sunday.

When it came time to act, the decision was for Lunn to make. As Mayor he is head of the police. I regret that he played straight into the hands of those who believe in strenuous Sunday closing, raids and forcible suppressions. Schenectady's lid is down tight; there is no denying that. The clergymen have commended the situation. Now, of course, if you want to be literal and unimaginative about these things, you say that the law is very definite and all the Socialists can do is to obey their oaths and enforce it. The fact remains that an executive has a great deal of discretion in the way he enforces the law. He can strain a point in order to be strict; he can bait traps, or he can try as Tom Johnson did in Cleveland to turn the heavy hand of the law into a helping hand. The police can be transformed into an organized band of social workers, instead of being used simply as the absurd instrument of suppression and agents of obnoxious anti-vice delusions.

It wasn't the Socialists who had these delusions—at least not very strongly. It was some kind of "purity" society with a very active head who had them. And although it is a pity to have to confess it, it was fear of what that man could do in the way of exposure which set up the spectacle of a Socialist administration jamming and hammering down the "lid."

In the first two months, the officials had to determine how much money they would appropriate for the year. This amounted to drawing up a program for the various departments of the city government—health, charities, police, fire, schools, public works—apart from public improvements which could be paid for out of bond issues. The amount of service to be gotten out of the government is practically determined when the budget for the year is drawn up.

It was plain that if the money which had formerly gone to waste in slipshod and perhaps corrupt ways were turned to enlarging public service, the Socialists could certainly make an advance over the old parties. So a good deal of valuable cutting in the interests of genuine economy was done. This money saved was turned to new activities which constitute the achievements of the administration: a maternity nurse, a social worker as tenement house inspector, a milk chemist, better milk inspection, an open air school for "subnormal" children, dental clinic, specific clinic, a municipal grocery store and ice plant for charitable relief, a lodging house, a farm for the able-bodied destitute, playgrounds, skating rinks, Sunday municipal concerts, an asphalt plant for street work, a labor bureau. Some experiments in "direct employment" eliminating the contractor will be attempted; wages of city laborers have been raised from \$1.75 to \$2 a day. Better garbage disposal is being planned; new schools are to be built; the water service is to be improved. To go with these things there has been an unquestioned advance in methods; purchasing for the city has been centralized in one bureau; charitable relief is more self-respecting; the budget and auditing forms are being brought up to the best standards of modern accounting.

The showing is that of a good reform administration—a government far better certainly than anything Schenectady has ever known. Whether it could stand comparison with the best reform administration—say with those of Cleveland—I am not expert enough to know.

But this list of achievements must be taken with a grain of salt. These new services are more or less hampered for lack of sufficient money. This brings us to one fact in regard to the budget making which I know as a matter of actual knowledge, and which to my mind is more significant than any particular thing the Socialists do or fail to do. It is that the budget makers bent their efforts constantly toward keeping the amount of

money raised below that of their Democratic predecessors.

Now the state of mind in regard to public expenditure by Socialists is highly important. The dread of high taxes is the weakened soul of "good government" politics. But a Socialist administration is false to its doctrine if it skimps and becomes parsimonious for the sake of a tax showing. The only reason it does so is because it is thinking of a political campaign. When Socialists in power plead constitutional restrictions as the reason for impotence, there is great justice in what they say. But when they hamper the public services they have in order to keep down taxes, they are politicians instead of Socialists.

All the weaknesses of the situation came out into the light in this, the most disheartening lesson of Schenectady: The fear of a public opinion, not educated, and therefore fickle; the need for good campaign arguments to reach that uncertain public; the lack of a definite program; the absence of that vision which says that one of the tests of a community's civilization is the amount of money spent in common. I sincerely believe that if we could all understand the causes of that state of mind which accompanied the budget making in Schenectady, we should come close to knowing those weaknesses of political action which the world over are causing so much discouragement. It would teach the iron law of democracy that officials cannot move faster than public opinion; that power is a sham unless the mass of people from whom it comes will support it; that the demand for education rather than vote-getting is no impossibility fad, but the hardest kind of reality.

So there is only one indictment to be charged up against Schenectady: it is unripe because it was impatient. It taught neither itself nor the voters with the persistence that is needed. By playing politics it could win. Of course it could. If we want to go into the game, there is no reason why we can't do it as well as the average politician. If the Socialists want to do the thing as other parties do, they can probably win right and left. They have a fine organization and such disinterested enthusiasm in the rank and file that they can get the work of campaigning done for nothing. But to go into politics means playing for the vote—trying to catch the Italian vote with no prejudice, the church vote with another. It means talking about the personality of opponents, their records, their absurdities. It means high phrases and timid deeds. It means truckling to ignorance. It means that the Socialist press follow the example of the Milwaukee Leader, print pictures of countesses and actresses on the front page, and become so much like the thing we are supposed to be fighting, that you wonder why men have sacrificed so much to build the Socialist movement.

Men who admit the weaknesses in a victory like that in Schenectady answer that it shows the world that Socialism is a living issue, that it is worth "a million dollars in advertising." That is true enough, provided that the inference is not carried to a point where the Socialist party resembles those mining corporations whose only asset is a finely gotten-up advertisement. And more than that, while a few hollow victories will advertise victory, too many of them will advertise the hollowness. Still other people point to the things accomplished and ask whether a few things actually done aren't worth acres of argument. Whenever this point is made I can't help thinking of what a Fabian leader once said. It was during the Lloyd George budget campaign in England. The Fabian Society seemed to be paying very little attention to it. "You see," he explained, "we Fabians never spend time on anything we can get somebody else to do for us. There are plenty of people bothering about the budget."

There are plenty of people in this country bothering about playgrounds and dental clinics. These things are worth having, to be sure. But why not let the "progressives" do them? Why let the Socialists outside criticizing, hammering and insisting the "progressive" will do it, perhaps more, than we, in the line of "efficiency" and "uplift." He will be kept alive by the pins we stick into him.

But when the Socialists become reformers there ceases to be an organized party of genuine radicals to keep the reformers alive. I have often thought of the slashing articles the Socialists in Schenectady would write about the present administration if they weren't responsible for the administration. As it is, they have to pretend that what they are doing is wonderful, epoch-making and beyond criticism. Reform under fire of radicalism is an educative thing; reform pretending to be radicalism is deadening.

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