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EDITORIAL

A SHOT TO THE FOE IN THE REAR, AND ONE TO THE FOE IN FRONT.

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OF the five boroughs—New York, Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Richmond—that make up the present city of New York, official returns are in for the first and largest four. The ascertained vote for both the Socialist Labor Party and the Kangaroo Social Democracy in the fifth borough, Richmond, is so slight that it cannot materially affect results. It need not be waited for to consider the lesson that the figures teach. These figures are: for the S.L.P., 6,079 votes, a loss of 749 votes in the city; for the Kangaroos, 9,577 votes, a loss of 53 votes in the city.

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Not all the charges brought against the S.L.P. were “mala fide.” A charge honestly made and sincerely advanced was that the S.L.P. was wholly mistaken on its Trades Union policy. It was admitted by those who made the charge that the pure and simple Trades Union was structurally false, its economics wrong, its leadership perverse, where it was not outright corrupt; it was also admitted that the bulk of the Working Class was outside of the pure and simple Trades Unions, and disorganized, and could not be brought in. But, argued the adversaries, the masses of the workers are affected by the organized portion of them: the overwhelming majority, over a million strong, of the organized portion is in the “pure and simple camp;” in order to reach these masses, it is, therefore, necessary to “go in with them,” and not “stroke the fur the wrong way.” In vain it was shown to those who held these views that to “go in with them” and not “stroke the fur the wrong way” was another way of saying “to tolerate and, by silence, approve, all the false economic prejudices and habits of thought of ‘Organized Labor;’” that it was tantamount to render Socialism a “particeps criminis” with the labor fakir, whose special class interests Socialism threatened and were buttressed with the false economic notions of the rank and file. It was all in vain. The honest and more

intelligent upholders of a “different Trades Union policy,” granted all these counter arguments, but, as it always happens with superstitions, they expected the evil results of the policy they advocated would be escaped in some manner left unexplained, and that the good results they were striving for would be reached, to wit, the wheedling of the Labor masses into the political camp of Socialism. The conflict reached a head in this city on July 10, 1899. The two opposing views parted company. Since that day, the “different Trades Union policy men” have steered their course, untrammelled by the “wrongful S.L.P. policy.” And where are they now?

After three years of a free application of their theory, after three years during which they have served as a resounding-board for every anti-Socialist tenet that pure and simpledom advances; after three years that they have upheld the arm of every labor fakir in his nefarious practices; after three years, moreover, in which they accentuated their posture by a policy of reckless defamation of the S.L.P.; finally, after a campaign, in which their three city candidates—all three placemen or beneficiaries of the reaction and corruption that mark “pure and simpledom”—were picked with an eye to ingratiate themselves with all that is most repulsive in Old Unionism;—after all that, where are they now? They have succeeded in ingratiating THEMSELVES, but, being taken at their word for Socialists, they failed to ingratiate their PARTY. They come out this year with the grand progress of 53 votes less for Hanford than he polled last year!

Sun-beams cannot be extracted out of cucumbers; Socialist virility can never be drawn from the quarter of “pure and simpledom;” nor can anything but failure accompany that theory of agitational education that error, least of all in the class struggle, can be removed by dallying or ingratiating oneself with it.

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After thus disposing of the foe in the rear, we can see the foe in front—the Capitalist—rise and say:

“Correct! The Kangaroo has made a pitiable failure. But what about yourself, Oh, S.L.P.? Is not the proof of the pudding in the eating, with you as well as with them? How fared you? You lost 749 votes. You are a failure, too.”

Far from it! The parallel does not hold.

The utter failure of the Kangaroo does not imply the failure of the Socialist Movement. The utter failure of the S.L.P. would. To declare the S.L.P. a failure would be tantamount to giving up the emancipation of the Working Class, as an unfeasible act. To reach such a pregnant conclusion, more facts would have to be in

Court than there are now. The S.L.P. bathes its breast in the red of the morning dawn; it banks infalteringly on the capacity of the Working Class to emancipate itself and save civilization.

At any rate, allowing ample allowance for the narrowness of the horizon of man on such broad subjects, if, indeed, the emancipation of Labor is not possible, then the S.L.P. will go down. But when that day shall have come, the S.L.P. will go down, not as a deserter, Kangaroo-like, but as a true soldier standing unterrified to his gun,—the unflinching, clean, Socialist policy—in behalf of the only Cause worthy of the best that is in man.

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