

DAILY PEOPLE

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NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A SUGGESTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON Sunday, June 18, the New Yorker Volkszeitung Corporation caused to be spread at the session of the Central Federated Union a number of dodgers and in this and other ways sought to enlist the support of the Fakiration to help it raise \$35,000 which sum, added to the \$15,000 already collected and of which the aforesaid corporation unblushingly says “which we now have on hand”, is to be used to publish, sooner or later, and rather later than sooner, a daily newspaper that is to be known as *The New York Call*. Effort in that direction is wasted. We suggest to the Corporation that it copy and forward the following draft of a letter to the addressee. That will fetch it:

NEW YORKER VOLKSZEITUNG

and

NEW YORKER WORKER,

184 William street, Tel. 302 John.

New York, June 19, 1905.

August Belmont, Esq.

President National Civic Federation,

President Interborough Railway Company.

Esteemed Sir:—

We beg of you that you set aside such portion of your valuable time as will be required for a careful perusal of this communication, plus an equally careful weighing of the facts presented and of the claims based on these facts. To begin with the climax (the reasons we shall give later) we need not less than \$50,000 and we expect to convince you that you will be serving your own interests, as well as the

interests of us, your associates, in letting us have the amount. In fact you will be serving your interests and doing it cheaply at that, if you were to make it \$100,000. Not to get at least the \$50,000 will create a situation most embarrassing for ourselves—meaning you and us.

Permit us to explain. As is well known to you, Mr. Belmont, we were instrumental, in 1899, in splitting the Socialist Labor Party. That party had, for some years past, developed a pernicious activity against the conservative spirit in which your friend, Mr. Samuel Gompers, conducted the American Labor Movement under the guidance of the American Federation of Labor. The S.L.P. sought to discredit the A.F. of L. leadership, set up a rival organization under the name of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance and tried hard to infuse into the working class a spirit of unreasoning antagonism against the employing class. We tried hard and faithfully to stem the tide and to counteract this malignant tendency, but without avail and, finally, when all other means failed, we endeavored to capture the Socialist Labor Party in order to free it from the vicious and tyrannical influences that then held sway, or, failing in this, to disrupt it and thus put an end to the insane policy it pursued.

In this we were but partly successful. It is true we did split that party, reduced its membership and its vote, but we could not break down its influence, the fanaticism of its remaining membership being strong enough to overcome obstacles that looked to us insurmountable. We tried to deprive them of their weekly organ, but the courts, at that time, were shortsighted enough to refuse their aid and decide what cases we brought before them in pursuance of our purpose not with an eye single to general public interests, but purely upon points of law and fact. The S.L.P. answered our attempt to appropriate their weekly paper, by starting a daily paper, the *Daily People*, small and puny at the beginning but gradually striking roots and growing apace. We did what we could to discredit them. We gave it out that that paper was maintained with Republican and Democratic money and repeated the charge over and over again, hoping it would stick, but there is no denying the fact that to-day even our own followers, the most simple of them, do not give it credence albeit they occasionally use it at times just as a means to ward off the attacks made upon them by fanatical S.L.P. men.

That paper, however, is a thorn in our side and, let it be said and remembered, Mr. Belmont, it is a growing danger to yourself and your associates. We conceived the idea of starting an English daily paper in opposition and thus take the wind out of the sails of the *Daily People* as well as provide a rallying point for all the sanely conservative forces of the Labor Movement. Accordingly, we began to collect funds and have now been at it for a number of years. The results have been discouragingly meager. We had organized another political party which grew with astonishing rapidity and which, as you know, polled nearly 400,000 votes at the last national election. But for all that we could not raise the funds for the much-needed daily paper, \$15,000 being all we were able to get in all these years and that has been consumed in collection expenses so that we are forced to appeal to you for the full amount of the original estimate of \$50,000.

And now a few words in support of our claim that it will be a case of serving your own interests if you let us have this sum, a paltry sum for a man circumstanced as are you, a mere bagatelle when compared with what can be accomplished with it. We need not tell you, Mr. Belmont, the able successor of the late Mr. Hanna in the presidency of the National Civic Federation, what a power for good lies in the American Federation of Labor, so long as that organization is conducted along the "safe and sane" lines hitherto pursued by your vice-president of the National Civic Federation, Mr. Samuel Gompers. Allow that sturdy bulwark against rampant impossibilism to be weakened, or torn down, and it will be you, Mr. Belmont, and your associates, who will have to pay the cost with many times \$50,000, nay many times \$100,000 and, possibly, you will not have money enough to meet the cost once the flood gates have been burst open by the S.L.P. fanatics.

Against such a contingency we have been working with might and main and we have been successful in no small measure. Against this contingency we want that daily paper and we must have it—you must have it. It is useless for us to try and make clear this our mission to the trade union members whom we seek to benefit. The exigencies of our situation are such that not only can we not speak freely, but we are often forced for the sake of propitiating our own following, to strike up a pose of opposition to Mr. Gompers himself, a pose which he knows to be a pose but which many of his followers are apt to misconceive and which, for that reason, stands in

the way of getting them to contribute funds. By this explanation we establish our claim to your support upon broad and general lines. We trust that you have followed our argument closely and that you will fully understand both premise and conclusion.

But we can also point out in detail that, whatever our protestations may have been, we have never failed to do the proper thing by you and yours when circumstances permitted, i.e., when it was possible to do so without danger of ourselves becoming “impossibilists” by rendering ourselves unable, through injudicious methods, to continue our present course. Yet there have been occasions where we could render service. Not long ago, you had a strike on your Interborough railroad system, a very inconvenient strike, which required much effort to overcome. Every day caused you much loss in treasure and no one could tell what it would lead to since those pestiferous S.L.P. men at once began to get busy in an effort to take charge of the strike. We helped you. We joined the chorus of the capitalist press that the strike was dead when it wasn’t and such a statement coming from us, a recognized labor paper, had more weight than a similar statement in a recognized capitalist paper. Again, when that committee from the Central Federated Union came to see you with the request that you be lenient with the strikers and take them back to work, which committee, by chiming in with your claim that the strikers had broken their agreement aided you in justifying yourself before the public, we had on that committee one of our men, Mr. Morris Brown, the very man whom we later honored with our nomination for Comptroller on the city ticket, proof conclusive that in all these matters we go as far as prudence permits. To do much more would be folly; it would mean to incapacitate ourselves for further service.

You will realize, Mr. Belmont, this general principle: Given the presence in the Labor Movement of so vicious and unreasoning a tendency as is represented by the Socialist Labor Party on the political field, and, what is more dangerous still, by the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance on the economic field, an irritant factor exists which can be met only by a counter irritant. And with your leave, Mr. Belmont, we are the counter irritant par excellence. Without us you are quite helpless against the rising tide of impossibilism, saturating the minds of the working class and

transforming it into a huge antagonistic power, a power that would ere long compel you to resort to such crude methods as repression by force, methods that no sane man will counsel knowing full well what will inevitably follow. You know, Mr. Belmont, that in modern America more subtle means must be employed; if you did not know you would never have been chosen the successor of the late Mr. Hanna. In the application of such subtle methods you will need us and we need you as we have made amply clear. We alone, wearing the outer garb of Socialism and professing a reasonable and sane brand thereof—a “possible” brand in fact—can do for you what no one else can do, curbing the unreasoning spirit of impossibilism, creating confusion in the Labor world by hurling against it charge after charge, “scab”, “union wrecker”, “paid by the capitalists”, “fanatics”, etc., etc., charges your own papers could not utter without creating more than a knowing shrug of the shoulders, but which, from our pens, have had and still do have their effect.

Believe us that you can do no better than to grant our request. We sincerely hope that you will see your way clear to do so and in doing so greatly assist us.

Obediently yours,

The New Yorker Volkszeitung Publishing Corporation.

Per J.

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