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ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER TO LUTHER S. BEDFORD.

By DANIEL DE LEON

TO Luther S. Bedford, New York.

Sir:—The below letter was received in this office:

To the *Daily* and *Weekly People*:—I happened to attend a large open air meeting last Friday evening, July 30, which was being held by Luther S. Bedford at Twenty-fourth street and Madison avenue. Bedford was the speaker; his subject was the “Travis-Robinson Subway Steal.” The most of his talk, however, was devoted to explaining how he had unjustly and unlawfully been ejected from a mass meeting in Cooper Union, where resolutions were to be passed helping through the Travis-Robinson Subway bill. During the course of his remarks, Bedford showed that a \$200,000,000 subway scheme was slated to go through City Hall which would benefit the Traction Trust at the expense of the city. He then made the sweeping charge that “all of the newspapers in the city, without a single exception, were in on the deal.” At the close of his remarks, and in a general arraignment of everything in sight, he flamboyantly called out, “Why don’t the Socialists take up this steal and expose it?” The implication was that the Socialists were being hushed up by the Traction Trust.

There was a good sprinkling of Socialist party men in the crowd, but none of them took up Bedford’s challenge, although he had previously made an attack on the *Call*. I asked Bedford if he would let me answer his challenge to the Socialists. He told me to take the platform, and admonished me to “stick to the question.”

Sticking to the question, I pointed out that Mr. Bedford’s charge that not a single newspaper in New York City mentioned the police outrages committed upon him was false, as the *Daily People* contained three separate letters, using up about four and a half columns of space, the letters having been written by Mr. Bedford’s own friend, Joseph F. Darling. I also pointed out the fact that the *Daily People* published a letter by Bernard McKernan, a member of Bedford’s group of Minute Men, a letter which the *Call* had refused publication. I defied Bedford to contradict this.

Then, confining myself to why the Socialist Labor Party did not take up the fight against the Travis-Robinson bill, I stated that that bill was not a matter which affected the interests of the working class. I explained that if the “city were plundered” of \$200,000,000, the taxpayers would have to

put up for it. The robbery which the workingmen are subjected to takes place in the industrial establishments. I elaborated upon these points, stating that though the “steal” were stopped, the wage earner would still be a dependent; that the question of graft or no graft in the municipality did not enter into consideration when an employer hired a worker; and that unemployment, exploitation, uncertainty and want would still remain an affliction of the working class. The S.L.P. position on the tax question was then explained and Bedford and his followers were told that the working class does not pay the taxes. Because of these facts, and because, to take up specifically the fight against the Travis-Robinson bill would only divert attention from the real issue, the Socialist Labor Party, I stated, refused to go into any such fight against the “steal,” while ever ready to expose it as an instance of the inherent criminality of capitalism.

When Bedford took the stand to reply to me, he who had admonished me to “stick to the question,” wandered clean away from the question, and dodged every one of my statements. He made no attempt to answer anything I had said. On the matter of the *Daily People* publishing Mr. Darling’s and other such letters, he was silent. On the matter of the wage earner’s exploitation in the shop, he was quiet. The taxation argument, he did not touch. But he told funny stories, and said I had advocated dreams; that I pictured a lovely state about 4,000 years away, etc., etc., though I never once made the slightest reference to the Socialist Republic. And as for sticking to the question, which he had admonished me to do, Bedford, so far from attempting to answer me on the *Daily People* attitude in the Travis-Robinson matter, ran away back to 1905, four years ago, and promised a “terrible arraignment of the *Daily People*.” Bedford claimed, as near as I could follow him, that he in March, 1905, was on the track of the Traction Trust, and that the *Daily People* in its “The Circus” articles had been giving space to some reports against the company. Suddenly this was stopped, and stopped at about the time that a mass meeting, organized by the Traction Trust, was held in Murray Hill Lyceum at which C.F.U. delegates graced the platform. The insinuation was that Traction cash had silenced the paper.

I obtained the platform a second time, and pointed out how Bedford had run away from the question of the evening; that he was 4,000 miles or years away and not I; that I had said nothing about the Socialist future, and that touching four years ago, Bedford’s complaint was of the same nature as his complaint in the Travis-Robinson case, he wanted the *Daily People* to take up a fight which it plainly states it will not take up because of no concern to the wage workers. The general applause which was given our side of the case showed that the crowd had caught on to Bedford.

Edmund Seidel.

New York, August 2.

The statement you made, directly and by implication, that the *Daily People* is,

or has ever been silenced by the traction steal, is false.

We do not wish to think that you uttered the falsehood deliberately. Quite possibly, the persecution you have been subjected to by the traction thieves, coupled with your experience with the press generally, has so embittered you that you have become liable to rash outbursts of anger. However this may be, the fact is that you are guilty of a slander against this paper.

We might limit ourselves to the demand that you produce your proofs. In view of the above, however, we shall go the full length of the charity due to one who, as far as the traction steal is concerned, has, however visionarily, meant well by the community. Instead of calling upon you to furnish your proofs, or stand convicted as a deliberate calumniator, we hereby place at your disposal the files of *The People*. At any time during this month, at your own convenience, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., you will be allowed access in this office to the files of *The People*, in the company of our mutual friend Joseph F. Darling and of such other person of your own confidence whom you may elect.

We trust you will be honorable enough to avail yourself of the offer without delay. The very cause, however visionary a cause it may be, that you have at heart demands that you cleanse yourself of the stigma of slander, or of being irresponsible for your utterances. The columns of *The People* will be open to you to make good your charge against it, should you think you have found in its files any foundation for your statements; contrariwise we demand of you a categoric retraction.

ED. DAILY PEOPLE.

New York, August 3, 1909.

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

Uploaded by Donna Bills, September 2010

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