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EDITORIAL

IT HAS STARTED!!!

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE *Appeal to Reason*—“the leading ‘Socialist’ weekly in this country”—contains an instructive object lesson. It consists of a three-page advertisement. The advertisement is headed by a three-inch cut, which runs across the entire width of one of the pages, and depicts a hand writing on a wall the word

“CO-OPERATION”.

The above is followed by the following sentences, which also trail clean across the page, in proportionately smaller type:

“Heed the Handwriting on the wall.

“Co-operation spells the doom of all capitalistic monopolies.

“Co-operation is the principle which will deliver the producing classes of the country from the bondage of the competitive profit system.

“Co-operation, wherever applied for the distribution of merchandise, has meant to the consumer savings in expense and profit on the savings.

“Co-operation doubles your purchasing power and doubles the money saved on your purchase if invested in a co-operative system.”

Underneath these flaring headlines appears

“An Open Letter to the 600,000 Socialist Voters of 1904.”

The character of the open letter is partly revealed in these sentences:

“As yet Socialism is a theory only, and must remain a theory until its value can be **DEMONSTRATED BY PRACTICAL APPLICATION**. (Caps are ours.) This practical application must come first in a small way; and, if successfully executed, will command respect and attention for greater things”—and partly in the fact that it states the application has already been made by a **PRIVATE CO-OPERATIVE**

MAIL-ORDER STOCK COMPANY, which, on that, and the other pages, offers its shares to the readers of the *Appeal to Reason*, in a manner that recalls the advertisements of the get-rich-quick bogus stock schemes.

The object lesson furnished by the *Appeal to Reason*, is plain. It means that “the 600,000 Socialist votes” are already being exploited by private interests, in the honored name of Socialism!

In the interests of a concern that, because of its purely distributive character, appeals mainly to middle-class consumers—in the interests of a concern that is bound by the inexorable law of profit TO EXPLOIT ITS OWN WAGE-WORKERS, I.E., THE PRODUCERS, IN ORDER THAT IT MAY PAY THE DIVIDENDS ON ITS INVESTMENTS, AS PER PROSPECTUS—in the interests of a concern, in brief, that means the perpetuation of the middle-class and the wage system, the great doctrine of INTEGRAL co-operation, i.e., Socialism—already practically demonstrated and foreshadowed in the workings of the great trusts beside which this concern is not merely a veriest pigmy, but a positive caricature—is misrepresented, abused and perverted to ignoble ends.

The object lesson furnished by the *Appeal to Reason* is a repetition of the colonization spirit of the early Debs party, which even that party abandoned. It is a keeping alive of the sordid spirit of the schemers, who, like carrion crows, ever seek to turn to private profit the movement of the workers, and who are “practical” only in the sense that they demonstrate their own graft spirit.

Ho there, ye stalwarts of the Socialist Labor Party! Get busy! There is a big educational task before us, if our class is to survive the many frauds that are sure to arise intent upon exploiting latent Utopianism.

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

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