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EDITORIAL

NO COMPROMISE!

By DANIEL DE LEON

WILLIAM Lloyd Garrison, in a recent statement on the cause of the failure of tariff reform in this country, makes this fine historical comparison:

“The explanation is not far to seek. So long as vested wrongs are treated in the manner of opera bouffe, the courteous assurance given that the attack will be extremely mild, the missiles gentle, the surrender of the fort a generation or two ahead perfectly satisfactory, nobody except the assaulters can be expected to tremble. The robber defenders go on comfortably with their stealing. Compact, defiant, determined, what danger can come to them from such restrained and scrupulous besiegers?”

“The fortress of American slavery once had a like expression. Its tender-hearted opponents protested their purpose to effect a very gradual abolition. Due regard to the rights of legal property and the slave owners’ situation was to be observed. Consequently, an era of good feeling existed between the combatants, and anti-slavery talk of distant emancipation created no flutter in an oppressor’s bosom. Benjamin Lundy was unmolested while preaching his indefinite abolition in the slave States. It was a different matter when the cry of ‘immediate and unconditional emancipation’ was raised, for a dangerous enemy had appeared.

“History records that the one effective movement ending in negro emancipation began with the advent of the uncompromising Abolitionists.”

To the Socialist this quotation is fraught with deep significance. Its historical insistence on uncompromising action as a necessary prerequisite to success, so admirably illustrated by the failure of tariff reform, is a bugle blast proclaiming the ultimate rout of any movement not based on a demand for the unconditional surrender of capitalism.

It points out plainly that the Socialism which advocates palliative measures, “immediate demands” and opportunistic movements, is doomed to failure. Based on a desire for “gradual evolution,” or a belief in the possibility of friendly cooperation

between the classes, or a “due regard to the rights of private property,” as shown in the proposed measures to buy out capitalists, this Socialism corrupts and vitiates the instinct for working-class liberation, and promotes all sorts of opera bouffe performances, with the result that the power and existence of Capitalism are strengthened and prolonged, while true Socialism is weakened and retarded. To paraphrase the closing sentence of Garrison: Only with the advent of uncompromising Socialists will history be able to record the beginning of an effective movement for working-class emancipation. Happily, the uncompromising Socialists are here. They are enrolled in the Socialist Labor Party. History has already begun her record.

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

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