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EDITORIAL

THE DIFFERENCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found an article headed: “Our Activity Among the Working Masses.”¹ The article is a translation from the original Yiddish, written by a Socialist party man and published in the Socialist party organ the *Vorwaerts*, and was called forth by the recent slump in the S.P. vote together with that party’s noted decline during the last years. The article is recommended to the thoughtful perusal of the thoughtful.

During these eleven years of the split in the Socialist Movement, to the oft-repeated question, What is the difference between the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist party? *The People* made answer by specifying three leading points:

First—the S.L.P. considers the economic movement of prime importance in the Revolution. Hence the economic movement must be revolutionary. As a consequence of this, the economic movement must be wrenched from the clutches of Gompersism. To this end, bore from within and bore from without, but BORE, and boring cannot be done by echoing the errors, immigrational and others, of Gompersism—the S.P., on the contrary, looks upon the economic movement as “a passing phase.” Hence it is “neutral” on that field. As a consequence, anxious for votes, the S.P. endeavors not to “isolate” itself; hopeful of votes, its organs—*Call*, *Vorwaerts*, *Volkszeitung*—and all its spokesmen lie low in sight of pure and simple Gomperistic iniquities.

Second: The S.L.P. stands upon THE INTERESTS OF THE PROLETARIAT. Hence the S.L.P. insists that all who join it, whether they be proletarian or non-proletarian elements, leave behind them all bourgeois habits of thought—“taxation” issues,” “cheap gas” issues, “reforms,” in short,—and concentrate upon the revolutionary issue, presented by the exploitation in the shop. The S.P., on the

¹ [To be appended.—R.B.]

contrary, plumes itself upon its “broadness”; hence its doors are open promiscuously to “discontent.”

Third—the S.L.P. insists upon the ownership by itself, without subterfuge, of its press and other weapons of propaganda. Hence, individual ambitions to make money, or gratify vanity cannot assert themselves in the S.L.P.—The S.P., on the contrary, holds the S.L.P. policy “autocratic.” It allows its press to be private property, hence uncontrollable by but controlling the party, with the further consequence that its agitators, like its press, are virtually free fishermen, each with his hook and line doing business on its own hook.

Read the article of the S.P. man, reproduced in this issue. He makes each of these three points—he condemns his party for “abandoning the economic field to the pure and simple policy” and “to the lickspittlers of capitalism, the Gomperses and the Mitchells”; he condemns his party for allowing its bourgeois and professional elements to “play first fiddle”; and he frankly declares his party has “no competent agitators,” during the campaign or otherwise;—and then, after admitting all that, he has no word of censure for the *Call*, the *Vorwaerts*, the *Volkszeitung*. On the contrary. These very centers from which radiate the wrongful economic posture of the S.P., and which are notoriously dominated by pure and simple views and private ambitions are extolled by the writer!

The issue between the S.L.P. and the S.P., as presented by the distinguished S.P. writer quoted in this issue, may be summed up in these words—

The S.L.P. demands consistency; the S.P. does not. The S.L.P. will sacrifice votes, funds, and individual notoriety to principle, conscious that the votes, the necessary funds, and the praiseworthy ambition of the individual for distinction, will all come in due time, provided the agitation is consistently carried on, with no inconsistencies to confuse. The S.P., on the contrary, will sacrifice consistency to votes, to notoriety, and to whatever else can be had now, hence is bound to find itself, after a very short season of “success,” in the wintry predicament it is not admittedly in.

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