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EDITORIAL

SIX YEARS AGO.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT was towards the end of 1904—after elections—when the Socialist party had jumped from votes 100,000 to 400,000, while the Socialist Labor Party poll declined from 36,000 to 34,000—that from the S.P. camp the jubilant cry went up: “The Union policy of the S.L.P. is proven wrong: the A.F. of L. Union policy of the S.P. is proven right”—it was in the midst of the events of those days that a manifesto proceeded from leading representatives of leading Unions summoning a convention to set up a new economic organization, national in scope, to take the place of A.F. of L. Unionism, a style of Unionism scourged by the manifesto, with arguments S.L.P., as the scourge of working class solidarity in the land. That manifesto followed the election returns so closely upon the heels that it sounded as their after-clap. It was the answer that the logic of events gave to moonshine in the Labor Movement.

The speedy consequence was the launching of the Industrial Workers of the World, a body that—just as the S.L.P. had for full ten years contended—proclaimed in bold language, backed by facts irrefutable, that A.F. of L.-ism stood between the American proletariat and its emancipation; and it called upon the workers of the land to gather under its banner for the purpose of their unification upon both the fields on which their struggle with the Ruling Class was and had to be conducted—the political as well as the economic. Prominent among the figures that figured in that move was Eugene V. Debs, then the most prominent figure in the S.P. However promiseful, the Movement was instantly met by a belching fire of opposition—A.F. of L., S.P. press, and capitalist organs furnishing the cannonade in chorus. And down went the I.W.W.

Once more the field looked smooth for S.P. pure and simple politicianism, the additional wrecks that thereupon strewed the field but seeming to emphasize the

“whimsicality” of {the} S.L.P. Unionist posture. The elections of 1910 turn up a still bigger S.P. vote, accentuated by a Congressional victory in Milwaukee—and again, hardly have the S.P. shouts subsided anent the “wisdom of the S.P. Trades Union policy” when, as in 1904, the after-clap is heard, the 1910 answer of sense to moonshine: To-day the most prominent figure in the S.P., William D. Haywood, starts a tour of the land to the S.L.P. tune that no Socialist can be a willing member, let alone an advocate of A.F. of Hellism.

The cluster of facts will not down, nor will ever cease to assert itself:—

Pure and simple political Socialism can solve only one question—the private financial question of its advocates;

Gompersism is the hand-maid of the capitalist class—a source of demoralization only for the proletariat;

Socialism demands the organization of class-conscious Unionism—the only Unionism that is the workers’.

The S.L.P. “Union Whims” is the Peter’s rock on which the structure of a bona fide Socialist Movement is planted.

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