

The People.

VOL. IX.—NO. 37.

HENRY KUHN, NAT'L SEC'Y, S.L.P.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1899

PRICE 2 CENTS.

FIRST EDITORIAL

AS THE FOE, SO THE METHODS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Deploying its ranks along the logical line of battle in this country, the Socialist Labor Party occupies, since last election day, among the positions that it took, one that is singularly essential, due to the capitalist lay of the land here: CLEAR-CUT DOCTRINE.

The electoral campaign is not educational merely. It has a concrete, immediate, practical end in view. In agitating for the election of its candidates, the Socialist Labor Party does not play a farce. It recognizes the possibility of electing these. It recognizes more: it recognizes the great boon to the country of the capture of the public powers by the Party at the ballot box. Such a consummation would mean the peaceful solution of the social problem, at least the reduction of violence to a minimum. But the S.L.P. is no visionary. The Party realizes that, to put it mildly, the chances are even against a peaceful revolution, seeing the enormous extent to which the S.L.P. vote is now, even at this early stage, either intimidated away from or counted out of the ballot box.

All the forces of Capital in the land are converging towards a “coup d'état.” When Capitalism starts, it starts as the most progressively-revolutionary affair known. Liberty—of thought, speech and action—, liberty—of political convictions and deed—, are then its shibboleth. With these cries, it unhorses the powers that be. Soon, however, as it feels itself well in the saddle, all its former protestations of “liberty” become hindrances, nay dangerous to itself. The cycle being rounded, Capitalism begins to strain every nerve to re-establish despotism. The Democratic-Republican institutions of the land have become a menace to Capitalism. There is to-day, in America, a race being run between the Socialist Labor Party and Capitalism: the former to seize the existing democratically organized public powers, the latter to overthrow them.

Which will first reach the spot where the roads fork: the spot whence one road

leads to the utilization of the present democratic forms for the enlargement of freedom by rearing the SOCIALIST REPUBLIC; the spot whence the other road leads towards the checking of freedom by rearing up MILITARISM?

If the S.L.P. is winner, then progress beyond that point will be peaceful, systematic, calm,

But if the S.L.P. is distanced in the race, what then?

Here is the rub.

Shall the course of civilization be switched off and compelled to take a long, circuitous loop, as it has been forced to in Europe generally, in France particularly, since the Commune?

Time will answer the question with “YES” or “NO” according to the education imparted in this interim to the proletariat and people generally by the Socialist Labor Party. If the education is clean-cut, the answer will be “NO”; in proportion as the education is “broad,” the answer will be “YES.”

The national government—its executive, legislative and judicial powers—are, true enough, the objective point of the S.L.P. But that national government is only the sum total of the units of “executives,” “legislatures” and “judiciaries” that every man carries in his own head. Prevented by fraud from capturing the SUM TOTAL at the ballot box, the UNITS, carried by the citizens in their individual heads, must be so completely captured by Socialism that the electoral fraud will not stead the Capitalist class. The first shot fired by Capitalism, the first overt act it commits in the execution of its contemplated “coup d’état,” rends to shreds the constitutional bands that to-day hold our people. That shot or that act will be an emphatic order to the people to fall back upon their NATURAL RIGHTS. At that moment, the “executive,” “legislative” and “judicial” units will be able to block the path to Militarism and dispose of Capitalism only if they are able to act unitedly;—and that they will be able to only if they have been captured by Socialism.

An assured Parliamentary victory may tolerate “broadness.” The leisure with which the Parliamentary wheels move, leave time to abrade in debate the errors of “broad doctrine,” and thus, possibly, escape the evils thereof. On the other hand, the bare possibility, let alone the probability of “extra Parliamentary” action, ruthlessly disposes of “broadness.” The swiftness with which “extra Parliamentary” wheels move, and are bound to move, leave no time for debates and such consequent abrasions. Errors of doctrine bring on desultoriness, and open the doors to Commune disasters; only correct principles insure unity of action. In order to secure unity of action the cleanest-cut doctrine must have been taught and must be in

absolute possession of the individual, the portable governments that the citizens carry, each in his own head.

On last election night the Socialist Labor Party occupied, triumphant, the strategic position that commands for America that clip and clean-cut political, economic and tactical education (to the ruthless exclusion of all others), that shall drill our people for the possible emergency of EXTRA PARLIAMENTARY ACTION.

Other countries may dally with danger, play with fire, and feel themselves safe even though they neglect the teachings of recent history. Not so here. THERE SHALL BE NO COMMUNE DISASTER IN AMERICA.

The day Capitalism shall sound the signal for civil war in America it will be promptly confronted with the solid ranks of the proletariat, moving as one body, held by the only bonds that can hold men together under such circumstances—a clean-cut purpose, born of clean-cut training.

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

Uploaded May 2005