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EDITORIAL

S.D. AND S.T.

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IN the nation's procession of Political Failures the Social Democracy and the Single Tax occupy a unique place. Other movements have gone up and gone down before them, but the reason of the going down of these two is exceptional. The Free Silver Movement, for instance, went down, but it died, not because of anything that it did, but because the soil on which it planted its seed was "ungrateful." The Anti-Monopoly Movement, noisy at one time, has been hushed into silence, not, however, because it did not properly sing its tune, but because the public tympanum was "unappreciative." And so with all other now dead Movements: they were all killed off by lack of sympathy. With the S.T. and S.D., however, a different order of things is noticeable. With all other dead Movements, the law of their motion, one may say, was "Back Number," with the S.T. and S.D. the law of motion is "Self-Strangulation." Of no little interest to the student of sociology, particularly in America, is this distinctive feature of the S.T. and the S.D.

The Single Tax is an ideal capitalist scheme. It implies the doing away with the Capitalist's partner and sharer in the spoils of Labor. The S.T. abolishes the Landlord. None remains to share with the Capitalist the hide of the Working Class. With the removal of the Landlord, the Capitalist, as sole survivor, monopolizes the spoils. This correct instinct blew the breath of life into the Single Tax over a hundred years ago, and kept it agoing. How, then, comes it that a Movement, with that single plank for a platform, should now be seen stranded on the political banks of this country, the capitalist country par excellence? How comes it that the Capitalists did not rush to its support and railroad it into force? For the simple reason that the law of motion of the Single Tax movement was "Self Strangulation;" it frightened the capitalists away. The S.T. in this country forgot that one hundred years ago revolutionary utterances fitted its lips because the class, in whose interest it was, had still its own revolution to accomplish, whereas, by the time the S.T. started here, the Capitalist revolution was accomplished; the capitalist was in the

saddle; the S.T. could only be a “finishing touch” to capitalist rule; and, what is most important of all, there was the next revolution looming up above the horizon; the Socialist Revolution, the revolution of the Working Class, with, of course, the Capitalist himself as the prospective and doomed victim. Under such circumstances, the word “Revolution” grates disagreeably on certain ears. This fact the Single Tax Movement ignored. It rigged itself up in the panoply of “Revolution,” and, logically enough, frightened away the Capitalists, without, of course, being able to attract the Working Class, whose instincts guarded them from making a revolution in behalf of their oppressors. Abandoned by its frightened beneficiaries, the S.T. collapsed.

Such, essentially, is the case with the Social Democracy. The Middle Class is still an extensive class. It can not conquer the summit, but it could still secure much for itself. The S.D., goaded into life by bourgeois needs, fell into the same mistake as its predecessor, the S.T. It did not stop to consider the psychology of the class, whose instincts gave it birth, and whose support it needed. It also began to spout “Revolution,” and, still more tactless than the S.T. in this respect, it styled itself “Socialist.” That sealed its fate. Its bourgeois actions, and condonement of bourgeois actions, queered its Socialism, while its “Socialist” trappings frightened the proverbially timid, and disgusted the would-be-labor-fleecing bourgeois. Net result, failure, collapse, prompt and swift.

Not in vain do political apparitions, like the S.T. and the S.D. flit through the political spheres of the land. They preach a lesson that to the Socialist is as valuable as the lesson that the shifting appearance of skies preaches to the farmer.

“There is no Social or Political Movement that is not the product of distinct economic class interests. Accordingly, the Movement that is to survive, or at least accomplish some tangible result, must have clearness of head to perceive the class interests on which it must bank, and honesty to fish for none other. The Movement that lacks in this, will, like the jack-daw in the fable, be denied by its own, without gaining acceptance by those whose feathers it borrows.”

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

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