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EDITORIAL

“SURPRISES.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

“When certain of the Omaha comrades were accused of being De Leonistic, to my surprise, instead of denying the charge, they frankly confessed it.”—Carl D. Thompson in *Seattle Socialist*, Aug. 9, 1903.

SEVERAL months ago in answer to some correspondents, together with some silly articles in the privately owned press of the so-called Socialist, alias Social-Democratic party, we had occasion to place that Movement upon the dissecting table. The facts, thrown up by the dissecting knife and revealed by the lens, showed that the leaders of that Movement—some of them visionary men, others the chums of the labor fakirs—while bent upon mischief, were accomplishing good. Giddy-headedly venturing where angels dared not tread, and supplied with infinitely more cash to keep agitators on the field, they had facilities infinitely greater than the Socialist Labor Party to reach infinitely larger crowds. This notwithstanding, they were but digging the grave of their own visionariness or their own malign purpose of smashing the S.L.P. Obedient to a law they could not escape, try as they might, their work consisted mainly in introducing the S.L.P. to the thoughtful and alone valuable portion of their audiences. These thoughtful elements were bound to do their own thinking, and the result would inevitably be that they would cast off the “broad” and “tolerant” counterfeit Socialist concern as a fraud or an insanity and develop into the thorough paced “narrowness,” “intolerance,” etc., for which the S.L.P. is known and which virtues have been summed up in the term “De Leonism.” In short, they would graduate into the S.L.P.

The analysis then made was even then amply justified from the facts in existence, and the theory that flowed from them. But not all categories of facts have the same weight with all sorts of persons. A hint, to a gentleman, is enough; a man of coarser fibre needs a box on the ear to understand. The fact of the earth being

round was enough for a Columbus to conclude that land lay westward; logs of wood and other grosser evidence were needed to enlist the support of a Ferdinand. In economics, the law of exchange value was ample to reveal to a Marx the downfall of capitalism; to the less sagacious masses, nothing short of the physical breakdown of their illusions could clarify their mind's eye. In the matter of the so-called Socialist, alias Social-Democratic movement, Mr. Thompson above quoted stands in the shoes of the man whose economic illusions must first tumble down upon his skull before he knows better; of the man who had first to see and touch the logs of foreign timbre before he could accept the conclusion of the premises which he himself did not question touching the roundness of the earth; finally he stands also in the shoes of the man with whom gentle hints won't do, but whose ears must first be soundly cuffed.

One may well imagine Mr. Thompson's surprise—he need not assure the public of it—at the frank pride with which “certain of his Omaha comrades” are now admitting their S.L.P.ism. There is for his poor opinion of human nature, that it can long remain duped by lies and slanders or captivated by tomfoolery, still ruder surprises in store.

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