

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 163.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

“BOSSISM,” “AUTOCRACY,” ETC.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT were both undignified and tactless for the Socialist Labor Party to defend itself against the charge of its being a boss-ridden organization. No intelligent man will be taken in by assertions. Finding the assertions all along wholly unsupported by even the remotest allegations of fact, the intelligent man will readily scent the slanderer behind the charge, and he will not be long in detecting in the slanderer the baffled would-be boss himself, baffled by the sturdy democracy of the S.L.P. That matter may, accordingly, be left to take care of itself. For all that, it is of no little interest to occasionally stoop and pick up along the beach of the Movement the instances, periodically washed ashore by the tide of events, of the autocracy or bossism that, providentially, is gnawing at the vitals of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic Party. The bossism in question is the private-ownership power that this alleged public-ownership party “allows” its “press” to exercise over it. Here are two fresh instances; both documentary; both taken from that “press” itself.

The first is furnished by the joint efforts of the *Chicago Socialist* and the *Appeal to Reason*,—the latter producing the facts, the former publishing them. From the narration—the story is furnished by an employee of the *Appeal to Reason*, and is published in the *Chicago Socialist*—it turns out that, on Oct. 23, all the employees of the *Appeal to Reason* went on strike, indignant at the treatment they were receiving, and at “the deception practiced by which a great many of workers were giving financial support to the paper.” The narrator does not hide behind generalities. He goes into details. He tells how “the great majority of employees received but \$3 per week, and in many cases had been fined if they dared to ask for more.” He condemns the treatment received as “sweatshop practices.” He speaks of “espionage” practiced upon the men, of their being made “to walk the plank,” and all in obedience to the “Czarism” and “at the whim” of whom?—he states the name, of “J.A. Wayland,” the actual owner of the *Appeal to Reason*, a limb of the “press” of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic party.

The second instance is of still more recent date. It is furnished by the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* of the 8th instant. A general vote is being taken by the Social Democratic party of this State on a motion to remove the seat of the State Committee from this city, where the *Volkszeitung* Corporation dominates and owns it, to Rochester, where, it is expected, to be free from such private corporation rule. While a general vote is to be taken, the organ of a party has no opinion, no more than the party itself. Such opinion is yet to be ascertained. And yet, at such a season, the paper comes out brazenly with the editorial order: “Vote against the removal of the State Committee!”

These incidents are new; the principle from which they proceed, and that they should be horrible examples of, is old. Yet tho’ old, the principle merits repetition. It ever instructively peeps through the varying incidents that it blossoms into.

Both the *Appeal to Reason* and the *Volkszeitung* are recognized organs of the Socialist, alias Social Democratic party. What can a party of Socialism expect from a privately owned paper that, like the *Appeal to Reason*, habitually exploits the Movement, resorts to one sharp practice after another to rake in pennies, and, obedient to the interests of the one-man power that actually owns it, is capable of such dishonorable imposition as that which has just been disclosed! What can a party of Socialism expect from a privately owned paper that, like the *Volkszeitung*, which, conducted for the private interests of a private corporation—a corporation, moreover, which consists of such a repulsively and viciously ignorant alien element that, as recently shown, declared the Irish working men, meaning the English-speaking proletariat of America, “corrupt to the marrow”—is so intent upon using the Socialist Movement as a tender for its own business that, having recently succeeded in stamping out the attempt of some of its own party members to set up an independent English paper in this city, it now dares to issue its decrees to the party how to vote upon a referendum that endangers its domination of the party’s State Committee!

The days of trial for the Socialist Movement of America are not yet. Those days will come. When those days shall have arrived it is no riddle what the conduct will be of these privately owned papers. Then will the dupes, who deliberately put their necks into these nooses, and thoughtlessly contributed to strengthen the halter with financial and other support, discover what the wages are of the sin of a PUBLIC-ownership Movement tolerating PRIVATE-ownership in their press—in their most potent weapon of attack and defence—in the one thing that it was in their power to

make their public property, as the Socialist Labor Party had the wisdom to do and the fortitude to maintain; then will they discover what the wages are of the sin of the truly “bossed” recklessly echoing against the free the slanders of the scheming real “bosses.”

A bona fide party of Socialism must own its own press—absolutely and unqualifiedly, or its press will own it, and run it and pluck it. Fortunately, however, the climatic conditions that breed the viper also breed the viper-killer.

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2007**