

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 3, NO. 228.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE OSTRICH PARTY.

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THE latest news, drawn from “documents,” “prospectuses,” “rally calls,” letters, etc., that have fallen into the hands of Socialist Labor Party men in various parts of the country, and been forwarded to this office, is that a “new Socialist party” is about to be formed. The event is booked to take initial shape in a “conference,” to be held in Philadelphia on the 22d instant. The conferees are reputed to represent elements that have been shed by the Socialist Labor Party, and that recent developments in the “Socialist,” alias Social Democratic party, are shedding from the latter. A further number on the program is “simultaneous parades in Pittsburg and Chicago” ’round Commune Day, when the “new political body” is to be “launched.” The engineers of the “new departure” claim to have with them 600 former S.L.P. men, and at least 2000 S.P., alias S.D.P., folks.

It is a pity that, without exception, movements started in opposition to the Socialist Labor Party fall into the hands of spokesmen, whose “petty interests, mean ambitions and vile intrigues” render them so vicious as to cause their personal malevolence to obscure the socio-political principle that their movement, themselves included, is an expression of. This is a pity because it hampers the Socialist Movement in general in comprehending, and thus in profiting, by the experience of such oppositions. The instance of the projected “new party” is no exception. Nevertheless, as the dispassionate anatomist quietly removes the hair, skin, fat and other excrescences covering the vein, which his anatomical knowledge tells him must be there, and which he is in search of, so do we now cut and scrape off all the foreign matters that conceal the socio-political principle, which we know must be at bottom of the projected “new party,” and which, whatever the principle may turn out to be, must present an interesting subject of study, bound to help clarify the Socialist Movement in general. Pursuing this course, a

painstaking study of the letters, “documents,” etc., above referred to, reveals an indeed most interesting theory as the one that has drawn, and is expected to hold the “new party” together, and lead it on to victory.

The Socialist Labor Party holds that, in America, the Trades Union is a sociologic fact in the Labor Movement. In framing its course, a Socialist political movement, conscious of the preponderating political aspect of the social question, must, accordingly, seek to dominate the Trades Union,—physically, as well as intellectually; and, if through the development of capitalism, such physical domination becomes impossible, then, intellectually;—but dominate it must the Trades Union, or the same will inevitably slide under capitalist domination, through the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class.

In opposition to this stands the principle, which, broadly speaking, is represented by the Socialist, alias Social Democratic party. It also recognizes the Trades Union as a sociologic fact, but “joins hands” with and “seeks not to dominate it.”

The theory of the projected “new party,” put into condensed form, runs this wise:

“The Trades Union policy of both the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist, alias Social Democratic party, is wrong. The former, by wrestling with the Unions, arouses violent opposition; the latter, by coddling the Unions, is submerged by them. In either case, Socialism is fatally injured. The correct policy is to ignore the Unions altogether. Three chairs for Ainternale Socialeesm!”

In other words:

“To at all ‘join hands’ with the Unions a la S.P., alias S.D.P., means (as a three years’ experience proves, and as the S.L.P. press has triumphantly demonstrated) to run Socialism into the ground, to make it a foot-ball for fakirs, and a bye-word to the public. On the other hand to wrestle with the Unions a la S.L.P. means to engage in a fight, in which, tho’ hard blows can be given, yet blows are received in return. Why expose ourselves, our heads and shins? Let’s duck!”

Or again, and reducing the theory back to its simplest form:

“The most practical, the cleanest, neatest and least troublesome way to solve a problem is to ignore it.”

It is to be hoped that the brick-without-straws nature of the elements in charge of

the projected “new party” may not prevent the phenomenon from taking sufficient shape so as to be able to well illustrate by its fate what the theory that underlies it amounts to. In the meantime, should the phenomenon take shape, its name is ready for it—The Ostrich Party.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded November 2006