

EDITORIAL

## A HOARY-HEADED—WHAT?

By DANIEL DE LEON

**W**HAT purports to be a résumé of the tactical position on Trades Unionism, taken by the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic party, in contrast with the policy of the Socialist Labor Party, appears in the January 24 issue of the *Seattle Socialist*. The gist of the argument and presentation is that by going along with the A.F. of L. Unions, the Socialist finds there “the best educational field” in that, again quoting literally, “these great Unions cover the country from one end to the other,” including at least two million wage workers, whereas, by not joining these pure and simple Unions, the Socialist workingman can not reach the workingmen.

The only premises that this argument can possibly proceed from is that, if not absolutely all, at least a majority, a large majority, at that, if the workingmen are in the pure and simple Unions, so that by refusing to join their organization, one is on the outside of the working class; and

These premises and all the sub-premises that they imply are without foundation in fact.

For the industrial and mechanical trades alone the Census gives 5,314,539 wage earners. So as to avoid possible objections, the large number of wage earners, not included under the head of “industrial and mechanical,” will be here left out of consideration. It shall be assumed—and the assumption is in favor of the *Seattle Socialist*—that we have to deal only with 5,314,539 wage earners. The *Seattle Socialist*, taking the most swollen figures, does not credit the Gompers’ Unions with more than about 2,000,000 members. There remain 3,000,000, or a robust majority of wage earners who are not and do not want to join these Unions.

The opinion is old that wage earners can not be found outside of Unions. It has been often asserted, and it recurs ever and again as an argument to “join the pure

and simple Union.” The above figures knock down the underpinning of the “opinion” and “argument.”

Nor should the Census be needed to do the knocking down with. It is obvious that if the pure and simple Unions did indeed “cover” the land, there could be no issue on whether to join them or not. The workingman who means to live, and who, under the capitalist system, can not live without he submits to be plucked by the capitalist, would correctly argue that if, in order to reach the living point where he is plucked by the capitalist, he must first pay toll or blackmail to a labor fakir, he has no choice but to do so, and he would incontinently join. That an overwhelming majority of them do not join is proof enough of the falsity that these Unions “cover” the land. In some trades and in some localities they do, but they decidedly do not in all trades, or in all localities.

Now, then, in view of these facts, what is the *Seattle Socialist's* argument hoary-headed of? A delusion? Hardly! When it is considered that the *Seattle Socialist's* New York congeners of the *Volkszeitung* receive as hushmoney the advertisement of the Cigarmaker's label in this city altho', every man on that paper, several of whom are cigarmakers themselves, have again and again said in conversation that the said label in this city is a swindle for which the workingmen are bled by the fakirs; when it is considered that the *Seattle Socialist's* *Cleveland Citizen* congener, Max Hayes, voted in New Orleans for Gompers, after Gompers had traduced Socialism, and then (in exchange?) got a junketing commission to England, and continued, justly so, to be admired by the *Seattle Socialist*; when it is considered that the *Seattle Socialist*, in the very article under criticism, boasts of “10 per cent. of the very officers, delegates to the Boston convention” having “voted for the Socialist revolution,” and suppresses the fact that about 50 per cent. of that “10 per cent.” thereupon illustrated what they mean under the *Seattle Socialist's* plan of exclusive “boring from within” by voting for Gompers, who at that convention had out-Gompersed himself in his advocacy of capitalist intellectual poison;—when these few, not to mention thousands of other kindred facts, are taken into consideration, then the answer is found to the question. The *Seattle Socialist's* argument or résumé is, not a hoary-headed delusion, but a hoary-headed cheat. It is a policy that from the start brands its pursuer a cheat in the eyes of the intelligent,

and that in the end brands him a hypocrite in the eyes of the innocent and at first misinformed anti-Socialist pure and simple rank and file—which is just what’s happening.

And that’s the difference between the S.L.P. and the S.P. Trades Union policy.

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

Uploaded April 2007

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)