

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 139.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1904.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

“MODERN HERESY-HUNTERS.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

PREPARATORILY to the comments that will be due when the total votes will have been finally and officially reported, we reproduce elsewhere in these columns an article that appeared under the title “Modern Heresy-Hunters”¹ in the *Journal*, organ of the American Labor Union.

“Heresy-hunting!”—such was one of the slogans with which the A.F. of L. scabby interests, that cluster around the New Yorker Volkszeitung Corporation, initiated their campaign against the Socialist Labor Party. It is the slogan which more than any other in their repertoire they have never tired of repeating. The S.L.P. is a heresy-hunter, claimed they; it is tyrannous, they echoed far and wide; it suppresses the freedom of utterance, they yelled. And to the orchestration of these and similar howls they hitched on to the Debs Movement of the West and sought “freedom,” as they claimed, in fact, however, sought to fasten upon others the shackles that the S.L.P. had cast off.

But murder will out. The article from the *American Labor Union Journal* throws a timely light on what there was and is in the howl. The element that denounced as “heresy-hunting” the conduct of *The People* for thrashing the A.F. of L. guild and other scabby practices, that element now stretches out its hands half way across the country and seeks to exercise pressure upon a distant publication to suppress even the advertisement of Socialist Labor Party literature!

The “stop thief!” crier has been caught red-handed. He has been caught in the very house that he has sought to defile with his practices. He has been caught by the element he has tried to dupe. The presumptive dupe has pilloried the expectant duper.

¹ [See page 3, below.]

The article of the *A.L.U. Journal* deserves to be read carefully. It is an earnest that the discussion on the great issues, which the New Yorker Volkszeitung Corporation would throttle, will not be choked off. Although the *A.L.U. Journal* is in a camp opposed to the S.L.P., aye, for that very reason, it has earned well of the Movement for the stand it has taken against its New York City would-be muzzlers. None need fear the light but the criminal. The issues before the American people to-day are of the gravest. These issues must be intelligently discussed. For intelligent discussion two things are needed—first, full knowledge and freedom of expression; secondly, absence of bad-blood-producing calumny. The New Yorker Volkszeitung Corporation elements have systematically violated these two cardinal principles. And what is worst, they have violated them while falsely charging the S.L.P. with the very crimes that were peculiar to themselves alone:—the real heresy-hunters themselves, they sought to fasten the charge upon the S.L.P.; and, never making an argument without first supplying it with a calumnious basis against the S.L.P., they have materially hindered intelligent discussion. They have been caught before this at the second; and they are just caught at the first.

It was to be foreseen; it may now be confidently asserted—the scabby A.F. of L. elements that cluster around the New Yorker Volkszeitung Corporation—elements that are seeking to ply the prostitute’s trade in the sacred temple of Labor; elements that, as the *A.L.U. Journal* justly characterizes them, “are A.F. of L. men first, and Socialists afterwards”—will not, shall not succeed in blanketing the intellect of the American Working Class: they will not, they shall not be allowed “to play into the hands of Capitalism, to foster fanaticism and economic heresies and to rivet more stoutly the gyves of ignorance upon the working class.”

So say we all—devoutly.

MODERN HERESY-HUNTERS.

[From the November, 1904, *American Labor Union Journal*.]

The *A.L.U. Journal* is in receipt of two letters from New York City in which the writers take us to task for publishing an advertisement of literature from the Socialist Labor Party. One of the correspondents thinks that it is not good policy. The national convention of the Socialist party, we might reply, did not think it good policy to offend the pure and simplers and the many comrades, who are A.F. of L. men first and Socialists afterward, by taking an honest, straightforward stand on the pressing question of trades unionism. Indeed, the convention threw out the resolution which urged the working class to unite in industrial organization as a means necessary to fit them to take over the tools of industry in a collective ownership and administration. The rejection of that resolution amounted to a repudiation of one of the most vital principles of Socialism; for industrial solidarity is essential to, and must precede, political unity.

We do not understand why members of the Socialist party should consider an advertisement of the Socialist Labor Party an endorsement of that organization. The advertising columns of the *American Labor Union*

Journal are open to any reputable advertiser. It would be just as reasonable to say that the advertisement of the Union Pacific Railway is an endorsement of that corporation. Every one who is familiar with the newspaper business knows that it is the law of the post office department that a newspaper must accept any advertisement, not immoral in tone, at its regular rates, even the advertisement of a competitor.

It is an evidence of narrow-mindedness on the part of Socialists to object to any advertisement of literature bearing on the class struggle. It is equivalent to saying that we are afraid to allow our comrades to read for themselves any books other than those which we prescribe for them.

The doom of any party will not be far off when it not only arrogates to itself the power of excommunication, but also adopts to worn-out mediaeval institution of an Index Expurgatorius of forbidden literature. To throttle freedom of discussion and of investigation is to play into the hands of capitalism, to foster fanaticism and economic heresies and to rivet ore stoutly the gyves of ignorance upon the working class.

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

Uploaded August 2007

slpns@slp.org