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EDITORIAL

PRINCIPLE VS. FLY-PAPER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Eugene V. Debs did not draw as well as we expected. Sure it is, however, that he drew more votes than any other candidate whom our party could have set up.

—Milwaukee, Wis., *Warheit* (Social Democrat).

Correct! The admission herein contained, tho' tardy, loses none of its weight. Which is why we say, and our language is plain, that, whatever the poll of the Social Democracy, that vote was not given to a principle, least of all to Socialism; and, what is more, that, in setting up Mr. Debs, his "party" looked not to principle; it looked to votes; and, in order to catch these, it was guided in its choice of candidate by his fly-paper qualities exclusively.

No one, approximately posted on current events, is for a moment deceived upon the Social Democracy. Its organization is known to be made up of the flotsam and jetsam of "reform" and kindred movements that have periodically sprung up in the land for the last twenty years or more, together with a goodly sprinkling of vicious schemers who found the Socialist Labor Party too "narrow" and too "intolerant" to be practiced upon, and were fired out. The organization of this concern—split up from its inception under two hostile headquarters—clearly patented the material it was made of. The circumstance that, despite this glaring evidence of absence of principle and of freaking ambition, it claimed to be the "United Socialists," added light to this leading feature of the concern.

The individuals who compose such a body have but one common point of contact. That is, the Scheme; the more or less unhallowed Scheme. To encompass their Schemes they must have a big vote. Accordingly they "pool their issues," and, as a result of all this, the standard bearers they set up must partake of fly-paper qualities.

Mr. Debs was expected to fill the bill admirably. He was "lovely,"—the sentimentalists were expected to vote for him. He was a "martyr,"—the gullible were expected to votefully worship him. He was recitatively poetic,—the dreamers

were expected to plump their votes for him. He was “all things to all men,”—the unwary were expected to be corralled wholesale at the hustings. Socialism was the last thing considered. With all these fly-paper qualities, Mr. Debs distanced all competitors in the race, and got the nomination. He was expected to “run” like a racer. “At least one million votes!” exclaimed his train carriers, now his pall-bearers, and they meant “at least two millions!” Indeed, they needed them. Small votes no longer suffice for schemers. No wonder the actual vote—considerably below 100,000—has chilled the schemers’ ardor (read expectations).

With the wrangle now going on among the schemers, as betrayed by the quotation that heads this article, we have no concern. Let one set claim they had a better fly-paper candidate, and another set give the fly-paper palm to Debs. What interests the country is the proof, gleaned at this election, that fly-paper candidates have lost their drawing power. The country is growing wise. The flies are growing appallingly few.

To PRINCIPLE, not FLY-PAPER, is the future reserved. Like Truth, PRINCIPLE may gain ground slowly, but it gains ground, and ultimately wields sway; FLY-PAPER, on the contrary, wears out speedily, and is cast into the ash barrel of Time.

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