

EDITORIAL

THE 'FRISCO PERFORMANCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE benign purpose of this article is to hold to the grind-stone of the recent San Francisco municipal election the noses of those Innocents, who, despite all proof to the contrary, persist in believing that the Kangaroo Social Democracy is beneficial in that it is a “half-way measure.” These Innocents admit all that the Socialist Labor Party says about capitalism and the lackeys of capitalism, the labor fakirs of high and low degree. But, they argue, the Socialist Labor Party stands, by the very reason of its excellency, upon ground too high for the masses of the workers to suddenly leap up to. The Social Democracy, they argue, by reason of its very defects, shortcomings and even impurities, holds a half-way position that is more easily reached by the masses, and from which half-way position they will be enabled to step up to the elevation of the Socialist Labor Party. Such, ornamented with a good deal of palavering about “evolution” and “revolution,” is the summary of the argument of the Innocents. Theories must be grounded on facts. The San Francisco election furnishes a robustious fact on the subject.

What happened there? The “half-way party,” despite all its “attractive” defects, shortcomings and impurities, was not merely snowed under; it was smashed. Its last year’s poll of over 2,000 falls this year below one-fourth the figure; and, what is most to the point in this connection, the half-way stepping-stone is smashed by the very masses it was thought to be a stepping-stone to, and who swung to the extreme of outspoken reaction. The victorious party is a new party, suddenly formed: a “Union” Labor Party, that proclaims “Brotherly Relations” as the corner-stone of the relations between Capital and Labor!

There is no such thing as a “half-way measure” in revolutionary issues or revolutionary times. Revolutions are either ripe, or they are not. If they are, the revolution wrecks the “half-way measure,” like a torrent wrecks some silly obstacle in its way; if they are not ripe, reaction takes charge of wrecking the “half-way measure.” In either case the “half-way measure” is at best a waste of energy.

The issue to-day is Capitalism or Socialism. The principle of the former is to uphold the over-lordship of the Capitalist Class; the principle of the latter is to overthrow the Capitalist Class and emancipate the Working Class. The workings of the economic laws tend to render ever more intolerable the position of the Working Class. This class, accordingly, despite all capitalist narcotics, is bound to shake itself in unrest. Socialism then steps up. Understanding the issue, it promulgates it in all its fullness, and thereby seeks to give intelligent direction to the otherwise blind giant Labor. Such intelligent direction is predicated upon an unqualified preaching and practicing of the principle of the Class Struggle. Only by the light of such teaching, illustrated by every possible issue that comes up, can the giant Labor pick its way to its redemption. Such is the stand taken by the S.L.P. everywhere.

“Not so,” shout the “half-way measurites.” That is too much to gulp up at one gulp. And they set up their Social Democratic, alias “Socialist” concern: took political jobs from the capitalist class; defended the building of armories by some of their fellows, and political log-rolling by others, and above all, and most significant of all, bowed obsequiously to the labor lieutenants of the Capitalist Class in the Unions. Such conduct could have but one effect: by hiding the light of the Socialist Labor Party, to confirm the masses of Labor in all their economic and sociologic superstitions. Socialism, like all revolutions, has no justification unless by reason of its fearlessness and completeness. Presented in the poltroon and corrupt style of the “half-way measurites” it is rendered ridiculous, if not disreputable. The net result is as in San Francisco, that the Working Class accepts from the “half-way measure” only its wrongfulness, discards its Socialism, takes the bit in its own mouth, smashes the “half-way measure” with its own arguments—and indulges in a blind uprising, impotent at all points because of its absurd economic and sociologic tenets.

So long as a Revolution is not ready to take the revolutionary step it can take none. All effort is wasted, if not positively harmful, that does not agitate, educate and organize for the revolutionary step.

Not for naught does there go up to-day, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a full throated cheer for the unterrified, unconquerable, Fighting S.L.P.

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

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