

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 28.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, JULY 28, 1907.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

VANDERVELDE'S PREFACE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

OBEDIENT to a new and excellent departure on the part of the International Socialist Bureau, this year's reports to the International Congress, to be held at Stuttgart, have been furnished to the Bureau in advance of the meeting of the Congress. These have been published in German and French; the French volume of the reports is out; this "frees" the report of the Socialist Labor Party; the same will be found elsewhere in this issue. The volume is interesting from cover to cover. The interest is started by a preface by Vandervelde, from which is extracted the following passage correctly summing up the present situation, which, will-ye nil-ye, the reports reflect:

"Obviously, the fact is indisputable that the development of the economic organization is, for the working class, a matter of deeper importance than the conquest of a few political seats.

"A time there was in certain countries when political Socialism was the be-all and end-all, and when the economic organization was of no or little moment.

To-day, on the contrary, the economic organization rises as one of the essential factors in the struggle of the proletariat against capitalism. Everywhere—it suffices to read the reports to the Stuttgart Congress in order to gather the conviction—our generation witnesses a formidable economic flood.

"In this fact, doubtlessly, lies the most important phenomenon that manifests itself in the Socialist world since the Amsterdam Congress. The International is not merely a federation of parties; ever more strongly the International takes shape as the gathering of all the Labor forces wielding both the political and economic weapons for the emancipation of Labor and the expropriation of capitalism."

The report of the Socialist Labor Party to Stuttgart attests the fact that the "Fighting S.L.P." has not been dragged forward at the heels of the European

movement. The report attests the fact that the S.L.P. has, rather, been a pathfinder. Two passages from the S.L.P. report, culled from a large number of others, illumine the perspective in which the Party has held the political and the economic wings of the movement: they illumine the beacon posture of the S.L.P. in the matter.

One passage is as follows:

“If proper weight is given to the social conditions sketched above, another circumstance of much weight will transpire—the circumstance that in America, the small vote of a bona fide Socialist organization is no criterion of its strength, of the work it does, or of the Socialist sentiment in the land, in short, it is no criterion of the proximity or distance of the crowning event, of the dethronement of the capitalist class.”

The other runs thus:

“Such facts and figures would seem to furnish ocular proof of the belief that the existing political conflict is but a wasteful, if not a barren, consumer of Socialist energy. For all that the belief is erroneous. Out of this very conflict the foundation is rising for a mighty Socialist movement—economic as well as political. While personal animosities may be developed and seem to play a leading role, they are not a cause. The cause is a conflict of two opposing principles. For the ascertaining of the correct one all sacrifice of vote and of effort we hold is well spent.

“The two great principles that lie at the bottom of the struggle within the Socialist and Labor Movement in America are these:

“One is that the political movement of Socialism cannot if it would, and should not, if it could, ignore the economic; and that no healthy or successful political movement of Socialism is possible in this utterly capitalist nation unless it is founded, banked and based upon a healthy economic or union movement. This principle, in short, holds that in America a bona fide political movement of Socialism can only be the reflex of an equally bona fide, that is revolutionary economic movement.

“The other principle is that the political movement of Socialism should not, if it could, and could not if it would, have anything to do with the economic movement. It preaches ‘Neutrality’ towards the Unions, and considers Unionism a transitory manifestation.

“All the dissensions, occasionally even bloody, in the Socialist and Labor Movement in America, are traceable to the clash of these two conflicting principles. The Socialist Labor Party—fathoming the profundity of the Marxian thought that ‘only the Trades Union can give birth to a true political party of Labor,’ and recognizing, as a consequence, the economic organization as the embryo of future society, therefore, the Might behind

the Right proclaimed by the ballot—holds to the former principle. As a consequence the endeavor of this Party has been unflagging for the foundation of bona fide Unionism in the land.”

The note that Vandervelde caught in his preface rings, of all the reports, clearest in the report of the S.L.P. which, in keeping with its triumphantly sound position, closes with the inspiring words of the American poet:

The dreamers who gaze while we battle the waves
May see us in sunshine or shade;
Yet true to our course, though our shadow grow dark
We'll trim our broad sail as before,
And stand by the rudder that governs the bark,
Nor ask how we look from the shore!¹

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded October 2009

slpns@slp.org

¹ [Oliver Wendell Holmes, “Sun and Shadow,” 1857.—*R.B.*]