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EDITORIAL

KRETLOW'S REPORT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

COMING, as it does, at a time when the Socialist party has struck the snag that it inevitably had to strike, and, as a consequence, is rupturing into the component parts whom only fair weather could hold together, the report to the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party by Paul Kretlow, published elsewhere in this issue,¹ arrives as a timely commentary.

The principle is cardinal with Socialism that the proletariat of each country has to settle scores with its own bourgeoisie. Planted upon that principle, the S.L.P. has maintained that the battles of the American Socialist Movement will have to be fought out on American soil, and not in the columns of the Socialist press of Europe. As a consequence of this sound policy, the S.L.P. left the field of European journalism undisputed to the Socialist party, which rushed thither to "do" the S.L.P. with a vast amount of more or less mendacious, more or less ridiculous articles, followed up by a still larger volume of private correspondence and whispers to match. While the S.P. was thus dapperly busy abroad, and sought to lure the S.L.P. into such an unbecoming clapperclaw, the Party minded its business at home, never bit at the bait, and "let the children enjoy themselves." This lasted nearly ten years. An hour finally struck when the very law of the S.P. policy brought punishment upon its head.

The yellow tactics pursued by the S.P. at home, especially since the presidential campaign of 1904, and culminating with the Red Special (Yellow Special would be more appropriate a name), had so completely blinded the party to the facts which plainly foreboded the approaching crash, that, when the crash of 1908 did come the S.P. leadership lost their wits altogether. The election figures spelt "death." Finding the party dead at home, the S.P. leaders then took an insanely headlong step. Led

¹ [To be appended,—R.B.]

by the illustrious N.E.C. member Work from the State of Iowa{,} whose own S.P. vote was halved, the S.P. called upon the International Socialist Bureau to oust the S.L.P.

A certain incident of the Napoleonic wars was the conduct of the French fleet in pursuing the British fleet up to the Sea of Marmora, where the Britishers then turned, and sank their pursuers. A wit of the time observed that the French fleet had traveled far in pursuit of a licking. For ten years the S.P. travelled far in pursuit of a licking from the S.L.P.—and got it at last at the International Bureau.

No wonder Berger had little to say on the subject and avoided it on his return to America. Kretlow's report—calm, cool, to the point, and marked with that conscious ascendency that marks the S.L.P.—makes clear that the wonder would have been had Berger shown any sprightliness on the subject in his interviews en route back to Milwaukee, and in his speeches there on what he saw in Europe. He had traveled far after a licking—and got it—and, along with him, his whole party.

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