

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Tactics

The document issued by our San Francisco Comrades, and reproduced on the first page, refusing to place themselves upon a platform that denies the class struggle, marks an epoch in our American movement that merits contemplation.

He whose mind has once been fired by the ennobling thought of Socialism, may well be pardoned for impatience to see his grand ideal realized. It has been well said there is no vice proper but only virtues carried to excess. So may the virtue of restiveness to see mankind free be carried to the excess of a vice by degenerating into a nervous hurry to get there—a hurry that may, and in all likelihood would, lead to injurious delays.

Many there are, born in this country and otherwise, who, tho' true Socialists at heart, are so woefully ignorant of the conditions of the country and the fact{s} necessary to direct their judgment, that, starting from the correct premises that nothing can be done without the united, harmonious, efforts of the majority of the working people and exploited classes, lose their balance, and, reaching out with undue haste for that harmonious majority, first lose sight of, and then throw overboard the very aims and principles for which they would in fact sacrifice their all.

Against such tactical errors, to which the virtue of Socialist enthusiasm is exposed, there is no preventive short of a positive knowledge of facts, and a clear insight into the condition of things.

In the first place, harmony is not possible in the Labor Movement except the elements to be harmonized stand

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squarely upon the class struggle; they must be clear upon one point, to wit, that there is no salvation possible, but only steady decline, so long as the capitalist system of production with its wage slavery accompaniment is in power. The test of the class struggle in a political platform is the demand, clear and sharp, that the nation's instruments of production be owned collectively by the people; without that, there is no political class struggle, consequently the elements thus gathered would be loosely joined; the larger their numbers only the more disastrous, wide-spread and certain their disruption.

In the second place, education, agitation, valuable tho' they be, are as nothing unless accompanied by object lessons. These object lessons can be furnished only by the capitalist class; as it develops, it creates the economic conditions that diet the mind to the acceptance of the Socialist gospel. As a leading comrade of Section New York put it, the capitalist class itself will ram Socialism down the throats of its present opponents among the workers.

By taking this stand, our San Francisco comrades have proved that their firmness and soundness are no less than their enthusiasm. Their conduct is one of the most cheering signs of the times. Standing in the extreme west, a veritable oasis amid a political desert, they have proven themselves the peers of the most approved veterans, and thrown a cheering light upon the consistency the movement has reached in the United States.

An unfaltering attitude is the only becoming one to men in the ranks of the Labor Movement. Molasses may do well enough to catch flies with; the pretty show window may do well enough to pull in the incautious wayfarer; but a great historic movement can not be carried on the shoulders of molasses-caught flies nor guided by the heads of "pulled-in" customers—it needs clear intellects and hearts of oak.

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