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EDITORIAL

TRIMMING THE POODLE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE growing tendency to confuse Socialism with reform of one sort or another—an attitude assumed, on the part of its unwise friends, in order to make it “respectable” and palatable to capitalistically trained minds, and by its enemies, on the other hand, in order to sap it of its essence and run it into the ground—compels the Socialist Labor Party again to draw clear and true the old line of cleavage between Socialism and social quackery, between reform and Revolution.

On the 26th ult. the N.Y. *Times* contained a letter which said: “The assumption by Socialists of credit for championship of many valuable principles which belong properly to democracy is a usurpation. . . . But any educated thinker knows that these best parts of the good ideals—not the anti-rent, anti-capital parts, but the humanitarian parts—are all essentially democratic and old.” So Mr. Shailer Mathews, speaking of the attempt of Paris in 1790 to feed its poor, declares: “In fact, the socialistic tendency was marked, and the masses were being supported in large part by the municipality.”

As for the conception of Socialism implied in the above two excerpts, it is laughable. To use the words of the *Times* letter, Socialism without “the anti-rent, anti-capital parts,” and retaining only “the humanitarian parts,” would be like Astronomy with the law of gravitation left out, or Zoology with evolution left out. It would be an egg with no nutriment, a watch without works, a locomotive minus driving wheels. It would be inconceivable, a mere inextricable contradiction in terms. It would not be Socialism at all, any more than a house, without foundation, side-walls, floors or roof, would be a house.

For it cannot be too strongly insisted that Socialism means but one thing, and that is the abolition of capital in private hands, and the turning over of the industries into the direct control of the workmen employed in them. Anything else is

not Socialism, and has no right to sail under that name. Socialism is not the establishment of an eight-hour day, not the abolition of child labor, not the enforcement of pure food laws, not the putting down of the Night Riders, or the enforcement of the 80-cent gas law. None of these, nor all of them together, are Socialism. They might all be done by the government to-morrow, and still we would not have Socialism. They are merely reforms on the present system, mere patches on the worn-out garment of industrial servitude, and are no more Socialism than the steam from a locomotive is the locomotive. Socialism is the collective ownership of the mechanical equipment of production, which would bring in its wake all the other improvements in conditions above mentioned. But they are only the wake—Socialism is the vessel which must cast that wake, Socialism is the locomotive, from which these betterments are the trail of steam.

Therefore, while not opposing any reforms or improvements which may be secured under capitalism, the Socialist Labor Party steadfastly sets its face against taking time away from its main battle, for Revolution, in order to carry on the struggle for Reform. It refuses to be manoeuvred into abandoning its main demand—the tools of production for the producers—in order to fritter away its energies chasing butterflies in the field of Immediate Demands. It turns a blind eye and an unresponsive lip to the tempting baits so deftly twitched before the noses of the working class to lead them astray into side issues and blind alleys. The one demand of the Socialist Labor Party is Socialism, unadulterated and undiluted—the unconditional surrender by the capitalist class of the machinery of industry.

And while rejecting the interpretation of Socialism which would remove its “anti-rent and anti-capital parts” and leave it only its “humanitarian parts,” the Socialist Labor Party insists that it is the most humanitarian movement on earth. More so than philanthropic ventures, reform societies and charity associations, it, and it alone, carries within its program the highest humanitarian hopes and possibilities of the race. All the other movements are based on aspiration alone. The Socialist Labor Party stands out unique as the only one based on the material program which will make the realization of those aspirations an accomplished fact. Socialism alone will supply the basis for any permanent improvement in the condition of mankind.

As a poodle may have his hair cut long or his hair cut short, as he may be trimmed with pink ribbons or with blue ribbons, yet he remains the same old poodle, so capitalism may be trimmed with factory laws, tenement laws, divorce laws and gambling laws, still it remains the same old capitalism. These “humanitarian parts” are only trimming the poodle. Socialism, one and inseparable with its “anti-rent and anti-capital parts,” means to get rid of the poodle.

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

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slpns@slp.org