

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 160.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

“PROLETARIANS” AND “INTELLECTUALS.”

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IN their frantic effort to save themselves from the wreck that their party has suffered upon the rock of Fact and Science, the leading spokesmen of the Socialist party are betraying what may be termed the psychic defect of their movement—superstitious reverence for external forms.

Already from Texas S.P. men there came a proposition commented on in these columns several weeks ago and looking to a change of form in the construction of their party as necessary to save it. That silly proposition might have denoted only local superstition. Since election the superstition has assumed national character. Safety is now looked for from a method of balloting for National Executive Members; and it is expected that a new era will be opened by the prospect of “proletarians” being elected, instead of “intellectuals.” The superstitious reverence for external form, or appearance, in this instance is of national dimensions.

In the first place, the Socialist party membership has just voted, by a majority of 3,371 out of a total of 8,501 votes cast, in favor of two reactionary land planks, and thus exposed the strong navelstring that holds the party fettered to bourgeois interests. It is from the loins of this identical membership that the “proletarian” members of the N.E.C. are to be strained. The worshipers of external appearance or form expect to see the miracle performed of a lot of officers with the “proletarian” badge doing better than officers bearing the “intellectual” badge, although the ones and the others are the choice of a huge majority the worthlessness of whose timber may be judged from their recent deliberate performance concerning the two land planks.

Nor is this all. Within this manifestation of the superstition regarding appearances, is another—the superstition regarding the word “proletarian.”

There is nothing sacred in the “proletarian.” The sacredness lies in “proletarian

interests.” It was proletarians who shot Ferrer; and, a thousand to one, they conscientiously believed they were performing a patriotic and religious act. If the mere fact of a person being a proletarian were enough to raise him to fitness in the counsels of the Socialist Movement, then the A.F. of L. would not be the bulwark of capitalism that it is.

To expect from a body which, like the S.P., is so essentially bourgeois that it instills race hatreds; that it ignores the necessity of the revolutionary Union to the extent of one wing acting as candle-bearers for the Civic Federationized A.F. of L. and another wing becoming shouters for I-am-a-bum Anarchy; that it clings to the antiquated States Right notion of “autonomy”; that it bends the neck to the exploitation of a privately owned-press; and that it has just manifested its true spirit by the overwhelming adoption of the bourgeois land planks;—to expect from such a body that the N.E.C. whom it may elect will, if labeled “proletarian,” be essentially different from the “intellectuals” who have hitherto run it—to expect that is a monumental exhibition of an infatuation for the Form that gives the measure of the S.P., and may well serve as warning to the judicious.

The substance that can give birth to such a series of caricatures of Socialism, culminating with the recently and “triumphantly” carried-through land planks will not, if it could, nor could it, if it would, give birth to an N.E.C. of “proletarian interests.” The appearance may be changed; the essence will remain. No coyote ever yet foaled a Kentucky stallion.

Reverence for the Form is fetishism. The fetish worshiper can not, in this Age of grace, be a revolutionist. Change the form, the appearance, as they may, the S.P. remains what it is—a bourgeois concern, animated by bourgeois instincts which manifest themselves at every turn in a bourgeois view of things.

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Uploaded January 2011

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