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EDITORIAL

THE PENDING ISSUE.

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AFTER a lengthy debate, in which the Brooklyn and Hudson County sections were invited to take part, the question as to whether the Socialist Labor party should withdraw its delegates from the New York Central Labor Federation was submitted to a referendum vote of the party in this city.

Extensive reports of the discussion have been published in *THE PEOPLE* and the *VOLKSZEITUNG*, and even those who could not attend the meetings have probably by this time come to a decided opinion. Stripped of all surplusage the arguments *pro* and *con* were substantially as follows;

On the side of those who favored withdrawal it was contended that recent developments had shown, by the testimony of facts and the logic of events, that the party should not place itself in a position where it would necessarily be dragged into trade union disputes, injurious to its high standing in the labor movement. Socialists, individually, were members of trade-unions and could now make in those bodies, as they had done in the past, all the propagandism possible under the prevailing conditions. This, of course, would be supplemented by public agitation, which the party, as a body, should persistently carry on in the political field.

On the other side, it was observed that the so-called trade union disputes which had caused the present question to be considered were merely a form of the inevitable conflict between antagonistic and irreconcilable forces now moving in opposite directions. The inveterate conservatism of that portion of Organized Labor which has long submitted to a corrupt leadership had become unendurable to the more advanced portion, and from the consequent split the Central Labor Federations emerged. Here, again, another conflict—originally fomented by the conservative forces under the lead of

Gompers, but which would have inevitably broken out sooner or later—took place between the Anarchistic and Socialistic elements, and a third central body was the result. Thus were three bodies, representing opposite ideas, now in the field. It was claimed for the Central Labor Federation, that in its present condition—*i.e.*, with a delegation of the Socialist Labor party admitted therein—it not only represented, more perfectly than any other body of Organized Labor had yet done, the socialist idea of economic and political union, but was in form identical with the International Labor Movement, in the great Congresses of which sat side by side the delegates of trade unions and those of the Socialist Labor parties of all nations. In view of the progress made by Socialism at the polls in the very midst of the conflicts that the taking of this position had induced the Conservatives and Anarchists to jointly enter into against the Central Labor Federation, it was claimed on this side, not only that those conflicts had done no injury to either the party or its cause, but had actually proved of considerable benefit to both. Nothing had been lost that was worth preserving, and much had been gained that could not have been obtained otherwise. No advance could be made without a struggle, and the present struggle, under one form or another, would inevitably continue. But Detroit and Brussels—in the opinion of the speakers on this side—had clearly marked out the lines on which the battle could be fought most successfully and the position taken there should, if possible, be maintained.

We have, as briefly and impartially as we could, stated the issues, disengaged from all irrelevant considerations and personalities. All Socialists are fully impressed with their importance, and those of New York may be trusted to decide them next week according to their best judgment. Whatever the verdict of the majority may be, no one will doubt that it was inspired by the highest regard for the good of the cause and with the kindest feeling for the not less earnest, not less devoted minority.

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