

The People.

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EDITORIAL

TACTICS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

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.

*[See "Bravo!!! Our San Francisco Comrades Hold Firm the Banner of Social Emancipation," below.]

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

Our San Francisco Comrades Hold Firm the Banner of Social Emancipation.

Open Letter Addressed by Them to the Executive Committee of the State Labor Congress That Met in San Francisco—They Refuse to Affiliate With Elements That Deny the Class Struggle and That Would Perpetuate Slavery for Their Special Benefit.

Last week's PEOPLE gave an account of a Congress of delegates from the Farmers' Alliances, some trade unions and the Socialists of California to bring about "harmony," and explained how the Socialist contingent withdrew. The abolition of the system of wage slavery being the program of Socialism, a platform that denies the public ownership of the land, the factories, the mines, etc., does not contemplate the overthrow of that perverse system, does not stand upon the principle of the class struggle and is accordingly a masked protector of capitalism. Such a platform being the only one the majority of Congress would adopt the Socialist Sections refused to support it and issued the following statement of their position:

"To the Executive Committee of the State Labor Congress recently held in this city:

"Dear Sir: We, the San Francisco Socialists, while recognizing that harmony in the ranks of Labor is a matter of great importance, and while regretting that your Congress failed to adopt a platform with which we could fully agree, avail ourselves of this opportunity to lay before you the reasons that guided our actions.

You are, or should be, acquainted with the fact that the fundamental principle of Socialism is the collective ownership of the whole machinery of production and distribution. We hold that the unjust and tyrannical

conditions that typify our present competitive system have their roots in the privilege enjoyed by certain classes that have sprung up from the private ownership of the nation's soil and capital.

"In the platform which you adopted you recognized this fact by demanding the national and municipal ownership of the steam and street railroads, of the telegraph lines, of the steamship lines, etc.

"But we desire respectfully to call the attention of the rural delegates to the fact that most of these reforms apply to matters that do not affect them directly; and that just as soon as it was sought to apply these principles to their private property, as for instance by demanding the nationalization of the land, their special class interests immediately asserted themselves and they withheld their consent.

"Surely, it can not be imagined that the industries which the rural delegates are willing to nationalize are more necessary to the public welfare than the land and those other instruments of production which they do not wish to nationalize. The private ownership of the land, which this class strives to preserve, would clothe it in future society with the same powers of exploitation which the monopolists of to-day enjoy in present society.

"Although we view with pleasure that you have adopted many planks of our platform literally, nevertheless we are of the opinion that that would profit little so long as private property continues in the land and the factories. Furthermore we can not, for similar reasons, support the proposition of free coinage of silver, in whatever ratio with gold; silver would be raised to the same value as gold is to-day, and thereby it would give birth to a new class interest. Furthermore, silver is unnecessary as a means of exchange, and the sum that would be needed to support those engaged in that industry would become a new burden for the community. Nor is this all. By the free coinage of silver immense profits would accrue to the mine owners and a new class interest would be the result. The silver question, like the bond and gold question, is only a political trick.

"By reason of all this, being, as our Socialist comrades the world over, the apostles of universal Socialism, and uncompromisingly demanding the abolition of the class privileges and equal rights for all, we are constrained to refuse our support to your platform.

"We hold that it is the economic necessities of mankind that compel the majority of men to alter their economic views, and we shall await the day, which lies in the near future, when circumstances will have made clear to you that our position is the only correct one.

"Assuring you that we shall ever be ready to receive you in our ranks, we shall in the meanwhile proceed on our course as the educators of the people."