

# The People.

VOL. VIII, NO. 21

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 1898

PRICE 2 CENTS

SECOND EDITORIAL

## The How.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**O**n the 27th of last month there was issued from Austin, Tex., the prospectus of a new organization—The Co-operative Commonwealth of America, that is to establish peace on earth and good will toward men.

Before one has read very far, the question begins to gather shape in one's mind, HOW? As one proceeds reading, the question grows in size, in definiteness and in numbers; until one reaches the end, then one huge, clear, distinct "HOW?" sticks out over the whole thing. The prospectus, or platform, and form of organization, give no cue to the answer, while the Socialistic character of its specific demands only serves to incite curiosity all the more on that pregnant question—HOW?

It may be safely set down as an undeniable fact that the impossibility of the continuance of the Capitalist System is generally recognized, and that likewise is recognized the logical sequence of the Socialist System. But a like stage being arrived at on any issue, there is encountered a still more critical stage, the stage embodying in the question of "How?" A stage so critical that, unless safely weathered, all previous progress goes for naught.

History's pages are full of illustrations on the point that the "How?" is the determining factor in all issues:

"Freedom" was the issue that incarnated itself in our Civil War. No sober-minded man will to-day deny that "Freedom" was as much the ideal of Jefferson Davis as it was of Lincoln. The goal seemed one,—"Freedom"—, and yet how different did it turn out in fact, how differently was it not molded by the "How?" of each! Again,

"Farmer," the Tory pamphleteer, who, during our Revolutionary days tackled Hamilton, had "Freedom" for his motto, and so had Hamilton. The goal seemed one,—"Freedom"—, and yet how differently was it not molded by the "How?" of each! Again,

The Cavaliers of Charles I and the Roundheads of Cromwell both quoted from the identical Scripture; "Religion" was on the lips of both, and in many a bloody encounter the same Biblical passage happened to be the battle slogan of the one and of the other. And yet, how differently did not the "How?" of each set mold its "Religious" goal!

These examples will suffice. To-day a man tells us nothing even if he tells us he wants the "Co-operative Commonwealth." Unless he tells us "How" he wants it, he leaves us wholly in the dark.

The identical mineral and other elements, go up into; the identical climate surrounds; the identical air, water, sunshine is absorbed by the crab apple tree and the contiguous Bartlett pear tree; yet, owing to the different structure of the cells of each of these trees, the identical sap that courses and is filtered through their veins, in the end reappears transmuted into a crab apple, on the one, into a Bartlett pear on the other. The cells of each answer the question "How?"

As with fruits and animals in the domain of biology, so with revolutions or social products in the domain of sociology. Methods, tactics are all-important. They alone answer the question "How?";—and as the various fruit on trees, the various cubs of animals, tell of the cellular structure through which each is strained and thus give an insight into the biologic "How?", so, and only thus, can the sociologic "How?" give a foretaste of what the goal will be in fact.

The "Co-operative Commonwealth of America" leaves the public in the dark. We shall be glad to give it space to satisfy the just curiosity on its "How?"

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded December 2003