

The People.

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SPEECH

THE CLASS STRUGGLE WITHIN THE PARTY.

The People of the 2d instant published the speech delivered by Comrade H. Simpson at one of the debating meetings, held by party members in this city, to discuss the issues that are now before the Party. That valuable speech concerned itself with the economic question of taxation only. To-day publication is given to the speech of Comrade D. De Leon, delivered on the same occasion—June 2—and taking up the issue from another side. The comrade said:

The Editor of the *Volkszeitung* and his agents have counted without their host. In this debate they have taken up their full-time with vilifications and slanders of the Party and myself. Their plan was to lure me away from the real issue, and have me take up my time refuting personalities. I shall not spend a minute on that.

Ehrenpreis said well: “The issue is the hostile principles of two hostile elements within the party.” These two elements have developed strongest in New York, the Movement being here oldest. There is no such thing as “patching up” between them; one or the other must surrender unconditionally. What is the dividing line? To designate that, to characterize the two, and point out all that the division implies, I can do no better than quote the members of the editorial management of the *Volkszeitung* themselves. Grunzig, Jonas, Schlueter, each of them has at several times said to me, in answer to my enthusiasm for the Party: “Oh, it will never be the S.L.P.; some other party will rise and do the work!” Do you realize what that means? In a party such as this, the development of two elements, the one having abiding faith, the other having no faith in the future and effectiveness of the organization, is bound sooner or later to array the two in hostile camps against each other. At first, the difference is not felt; but in the measure that the element that HAS faith in the Party pushes on and becomes aggressive, the element that HAS NO SUCH FAITH is incommoded; and the time comes when the latter element, finding unbearable the demands put upon it by the aggressive element, beat around for pretexts to justify their inactivity and finally rise in rebellion. That time has come.

That this is no mere theory I shall prove to you out of Schlueter's own mouth, and with unquestionable facts of recent occurrence. In trying to explain away, at the last meeting, the charge of having suppressed matters favorable to the Party, Schlueter made three defences:

FIRST DEFENCE—"I am not bound to take all such matter into the *Volkszeitung*."—A Party Editor, who HAS faith in the Party's future, a loyal Editor, DOES feel so bound; he is greedy after matter favorable to the Party. One, on the contrary, who HAS NO SUCH FAITH, a disloyal Party Editor, he, of course, DOES NOT feel himself under, has no sense of, any such obligation.

SECOND DEFENCE.—"The matter was frequently treated by the *Vorwaerts* in such a style that I could not use the article."—Quite possible; every one has his own style of presenting a thing; one man's style is often distasteful to another; that sentiment must be respected. But a Party Editor, with faith in the Party's future, a loyal Editor, feels in such a case BOUND to use the facts, presented in a style that he disapproves of, and take the trouble of himself writing an article upon them in the style that suits him. An Editor, on the contrary, who has no such faith, a DISLOYAL Party Editor, HE feels himself under no such obligation; TO HIM, that would be "too much bother;" HE takes it easy.

THIRD DEFENCE.—"I could not vouch for the facts mentioned in THE PEOPLE."—Again, this is a consideration that deserves respect; the Editor of a paper must feel sure of the facts he publishes; false facts would rather injure. But a Party Editor, with faith in the Party's future, a LOYAL, conscientious Editor, feels BOUND to verify such facts. An Editor, on the contrary, with no such faith, a DISLOYAL Party Editor, runs away from work; HE does not fill the office for the Party's sake; HE ducks his head, lets the facts slide—and draws his salary.

But all this is only the "little end" of the horn, symptomatic enough of such element, but yet only the "little end" of the horn in the development. From not "feeling bound" to take in everything, from "not feeling bound" to exert themselves in behalf of the Party, the element that has no faith in the Party develops disloyalward. The next step is a readiness to give the enemy "the benefit of the doubt." You all know the defence of the Carey-Debs Democracy in the matter of their Armory record, to wit, that if Carey had not voted for the \$15,000 armory appropriation a heavy fine would have followed. How did Schlueter treat the matter? He gave the defence in full and then, editorially, added that he was not qualified to judge upon its correctness,—and his supporters support him in this!

Think of it, a Party Editor, within six hours' ride of Haverhill, "unqualified" to pass judgment upon so stupidly infamous and infamously stupid a defence! The element that HAS faith in the Party, feels its pulse beat with indignation at such a "defence," and no effort is too much for it to make in order to confute the rascal Armoryites. The element, on the contrary, that HAS NO FAITH in the Party, the element and Editor that are not on the lookout for a "new party" to rise, they, of course, find it in keeping with their sentiments to "be gentle" with such miscreants, possibly the expected "new party?"—and thus the irritation is increased while the lines are drawing sharper between them.

The element that has no faith in the Party presently begins to tamper with the Party's principles and policy, while still pretending fealty to it. This is happening on the subject of the Party's trade union policy. From Schlueter down, you have seen them take up and hug to their hearts the closing words of the declaration, adopted at the last National Convention, which endorses the Alliance and urges the Party membership to carry the revolutionary spirit into the unions; and, turning their eyes heavenward, they meekly asked: In what way have we violated the Party declaration? A partial truth is the worst lie. They know they are garbling the Party's utterances. The passage they quote is only the conclusion of an argument, the premises of which declare the A.F. of L. and K. of L. to be hopelessly corrupt and the buffers for Capital against the endeavors of the Working Class. The Party stands squarely upon these principles; the element that has faith in it upholds them with enthusiasm, despite troubles and inconveniences; the element, on the contrary, that has no faith in the Party, tries to ignore them and, despite their re-indorsement throughout the land, struggles against them as inconvenient, even to the extent of misquoting the Party, and demands that we "bore from within."

And yet this is not all. The element that has no faith in the Party, that, accordingly, is extremely punctilious about first "being able to vouch" for the facts furnished by other Party papers, that element is seen taking the "facts," furnished by bourgeois Democratic party papers, without verification, and liking them so well as even to multiply them by three, and thus try to make the workers believe that they pay \$100 taxes a year, in violation of all fact and all science, and playing directly into the enemy's hands. And finally we find that element reaching, logically enough, the point of trampling the Party platform under foot, as they do in this matter of taxation, and going even so far as attempting to make the Party in this country subordinate to the Party in Germany. That is their contention when the Party platform is rubbed under their noses upholding the unquestionable

principle that the taxes come from that part of the products of Labor that Labor is fleeced of anyhow by the Capitalist Class? You have heard Stahl on that subject. He no longer pretends to have respect for the platform; he asked, Was that platform ever submitted to a general vote? And his confrères, the *Volkszeitung* Germans, answered “Nein!” (No), and, accordingly, care not to uphold that platform. I ask, Was any of the German platforms, from which are taken the local pro-taxation planks that they quote, ever submitted to a general vote of the party in Germany? No! There is no referendum in the German party. There the party conventions DECIDE. Their decision is final. Think of the degrading position to which they want to lower the Party of America! The platform, adopted here, is to be treated as null because, forsooth, it was not submitted to a referendum, but the platform declarations of Germany, never adopted here and never submitted to a referendum even there, they are to be binding here!—altogether a position in keeping with total disrespect for, and no faith in, our Party. The other element, however, that HAS faith in our Party, respects the Party, holds high its platform and banner, and moves on convinced that the S.L.P. IS the Party of emancipation in America. (Hisses from the *Volkszeitung* element.) Did you hear those hisses? They prove my case. THESE PEOPLE hiss the Party; we applaud it.

What is at the bottom of this marked difference? We cannot afford to be Socialists in one corner of our mouths, and fools in the other. We recognize the fact that material interests determine man’s views. When we apply this scientific principle, every capitalist numskull politician charges us with being “personal.” The charge of “personality” should never deter us. In this case, we need not look far for the material interests that determine the views and shape of the element within the Party that arrays itself against us, the element that HAS faith in the Party. Hergat, in the Association, the Board of Directors, before our National Executive Committee, were both outspoken. “The *Volkszeitung*,” they declared, “cannot live without the support of the ‘conservative’ (read pure and simple) German unions.” That is tip enough for anyone. Every pure and simpler with a job or expecting a job on a label committee or strike committee; every pure and simpler who fears for his sick and death benefit; all such are incommoded by the Alliance; like veritable caricatures of the middle class, they clutch their “illusion of property;” scared to death about losing it, they are willing to let the fakir ride them and to stand by him, and they stand in dread of the Alliance, hence “feel quite sure that the S.L.P. can not be the Party of the future.” Again every one of them who has a little lager beer saloon, or a small store, or who, being a small trader, does, as the middle class generally, suffer from the effects of taxation,—all such think it execrable that the Party should not share the declarations of the Democratic party on taxation to the

effect that the Working Class is crushed by taxes, and hence their views that not the S.L.P., but some other party must come to do the work;—hence also their hisses for the Party.

It may be asked, Have the orators of that element also middle class, small property or pure and simple interests to guard? No. But on the same principle that the bourgeoisie attracts to itself as its orators a stripe of men of certain kindred intellectual interests, so, likewise, does the element, that, for the reasons just given, “has no faith in the S.L.P.,” attract to itself men whose interests run in somewhat similar grooves. For instance. It is no accident that among these spokesmen is a Schlueter—only a temporary sojourner in this land, awaiting the expiration of the sentence against him to return to his home in Germany; it is no accident that among these spokesmen is a Dr. Halpern (who acted at the last meeting as the claue for the traducers of the Party and its officers)—a gentleman, whose jovial countenance we may at any time miss from our midst, his heart being in Russia, whither he pants to return as soon as it may be safe to do so; it is no accident that among these spokesmen is a Feigenbaum—a member who only the other day was seeking to perfect arrangements whereby he could fall on his feet back in Europe; it is no accident that among these spokesmen is a Nathan T. Stone—a young man who is pulling the wires for a job in McKinley’s Agricultural Department, etc., etc. These are no accidents. A Movement such as ours can be truly at the heart of those only to whom, whether born here or not, America is their home; it can be truly at the heart of those only who look for no favors from the foe. To all others the Movement can only be a sport or pastime, to such the aggressive, uncompromising spirit of the Party is either a “nuisance,” or a hindrance to their schemes;—none such can have any faith in the S.L.P.; all such are bound eventually to run up against those who DO have faith in the S.L.P., and an “unpatchable-up” conflict is inevitable. When such a conflict does finally break out, it breaks out with force, and must be fought out to a definite settlement. The element that HAS faith in the Party is not of a temper to allow itself to be hamstrung, nor is it in the Movement for the fun of the thing.

In this connection, the “violence of THE PEOPLE’S attack” has been complained about. How silly! THE PEOPLE is not a monthly magazine for abstract philosophy; it is a weapon for concrete warfare. Whatever interferes with the sweep of the sword only adds to its vehemence. Let me initiate you into a bit of my experience:

It was in '94; the People’s Party of this city was trying to harmonize the “reform forces,” and Section New York was invited to a conference; at the conference were,

besides the Pops, free-traders, single taxers, prohibitionists, and D.A. 49, of the then K. of L. I don't know how it came, but Section N.Y. elected a delegation, Jonas and myself among them. As soon as the conference met, the discussion broke out upon the platform to be adopted; harmony was evidently impossible among such incongruous elements. Then rose Jonas and, to my surprise, proposed that the Pops and we agree upon a common ticket for the approaching campaign. I felt a chill run down my back. Had Jonas' proposition prevailed it would have been the death of the S.L.P.; the Party could not have survived the spectacle of its candidates standing on the Populist ballot, and Populist candidates on ours; with the inevitable downfall of Populism the S.L.P. would have been dragged down too, it would have been the pitiable thing that it was after a similar experience by the Jonas element with the Greenback party; the work would have had to be started all over anew. Jonas' proposition failed, and the conference finally broke up for good. But the injury done to the Party by Jonas' proposition, THAT did not pass off so quickly. We Socialists were at the time struggling in D.A. 49 for the supremacy that we finally won, and Jonas' proposition acted there like a stick thrown between our legs. It matters not how violently a non-Socialist adversary may oppose a Socialist, provided he knows that he is opposing Socialism; if, however, he imagines that what the Socialist speaks for is not Socialism, then our work of agitation becomes infinitely harder. Jonas' proposition did that. In D.A. 49 workingmen stood up—our new esteemed Comrade Kinneally, here present, among them—who pointed the finger at me declaring: "Socialism is not against fusion; Jonas is for fusion, and he is a Socialist of old standing; your opposition to fusion is not Socialism;" and there were those who went about saying that I had prevented fusion out of personal interest, not out of Socialist principle, seeing that Jonas, about whom clung the superstition that he was a pillar of uncompromising Socialism, was quite willing to fuse. Unnecessary to say that the Party's work in the hands of its English agitators was not thereby aided; an intensification of work became necessary.

So now when the *Volkszeitung's* campaign of bourgeois economics on taxation was started. Confronted by its declarations, as those of a "Socialist paper of old standing," our agitators would have been swept off the stump, and the burden of resistance would necessarily have been focused upon THE PEOPLE. The sword did what was natural and its bounden duty to do: it struck with redoubled force,—all the stronger as it had become evident that a conspiracy was coming to a head through which the element "that has no faith in the Party" meant to save itself, i.e., its pure and simple or its bourgeois interests, by a coup de main and bagging the Party.

The vigilance of the Party's administration has made certain that the conspiracy will suffer shipwreck. How earthy, vulgar and treasonable this conspiracy was may be judged from the claim of the element which "has no {faith in the Party}" that the Party's press is the private {property of the *Volkszeitung* Publishing Association.}

The beast of Private Property is blinding them; God help them!—and, as if that were not enough to sink them, they have fallen into the hands of shysters that will hasten their downfall.

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