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EDITORIAL

LAST YEAR AND THIS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is now one year ago that this city witnessed a certain unwonted scene. Last Saturday and Sunday, a year later, the companion-piece, or supplement, or whatever you may want to call it, came off on schedule time. Either performance told a tale well calculated to spur the enthusiasm of the Fighting S.L.P., and to confirm its convictions on the soundness of its tactics. The two performances, put together and looked at jointly, must stimulate the Party immensely with conscious ascendancy.

The performances in question are the bogus May Day celebration of last year and of this year, conducted by the Organized Scabbery of this city and vicinity.

When the May Day of 1900 drew near, a heavy cloud of dust was hanging over the field of Labor. The Socialist camp, had, some months previous, been the subject of a regular "encamisada," a nocturnal assault in which the assailants had their preconceived rallying signs, while the assailed, taken by surprise, were inevitably staggered. The conspiracy back of the assault had its extended ramifications, and drew its nourishment from the slums, on the one side, and from the counterpart of the slums, the headquarters of the capitalist parties, together with their press, in this city, on the other. But the S.L.P. triumphantly resisted the assault. It took but a short time for it to recover its breath: its veterans pulled together: the foes, together with their allies, the traitors in the camp, were hurled off roughly and routed: the camp of Socialism in the land was soon cleared and cleansed of the attempted pollution: the flag of the S.L.P. remained untouched and unsullied, waving as proudly and defiant as ever.

This notwithstanding, and partly out of ignorance, partly out of fraud, partly also due to the wish being father to the thought, the capitalist interests in the city believed, or pretended to believe, that the S.L.P. was killed off. To properly profit thereby, the space formerly filled in the eyes of the Working Class by the S.L.P. had henceforth and forthwith to be filled by the Organized Scabbery, the Labor Lieutenants of the Capitalist Class. Accordingly, the word of command went forth,

and forthwith the Organized Scabbery appeared on the public stage in the trappings and the shows of Socialism. Expressions thitherto derided by them fell approvingly from their lips in torrents: the terms “class struggle,” “social revolution,” “working class,” etc., etc., filled the air in the Fakirs’ camps. The ass in the lion’s skin cut a figure no more ridiculous in hobbling and braying than did these gentry; but their pay-masters so willed it, and the lieutenants obeyed. Thus it happened that May Day—of all days the day that flies in the face of each and every {one of} the principles of the Organized Scabbery: a veritable red rag in the face of a bull—was seized upon by fakirdom, and its celebration decided on last year, for the first time since Hudson’s ship plowed the waters of New York Bay.

The antics of the Fakirs was meant but to furnish the occasion for the plutocratic press to do its work. Accordingly, for weeks in advance that press teemed with fantastic articles, whooping up the Fakirs’ affair as “the grand May Day demonstration of the Socialists.” The “demonstration” came and passed; it was a scrawny affair; neither in tone, character nor appearance was it comparable with the dignified and virile May Day demonstration, the genuine demonstration, held by the Socialist Labor Party. But that matters not. The capitalist press had a purpose to fill. It had in chorus jubilated, some months before, at the midnight assault that the S.L.P. had sustained; it had falsely represented the assault as successful; it had raised and thrown dust into the public eye; so now it went to the logical extreme. A parade, that even the least expert in the matter of crowds did not place above 6,000, was puffed into 75,000 strong; and Union Square, incapable of holding even 10,000 men, packed close as sardines, was reported the next day as having contained “60,000 enthusiastic Socialists under the banner of the Social Democracy,” etc., etc.

That was in 1900. How different in 1901! A vital political campaign was approaching in 1900. It was justly considered important by the Labor-fleecer class to annihilate the S.L.P. before the campaign was on, and for all future time. Hence the preposterous blowing by the capitalist press of the Fakirs’ silly “May Day demonstration.” This year the campaign of 1900 lies behind. The S.L.P., so far from being annihilated in this, the pivotal State, came out on top of the heap of the stool-pigeons. Accordingly, the Fakirs’ “May Day” parade of this year aroused no enthusiasm in the breasts of the capitalist editors. Neither was the thing whooped up in advance, nor was the wretched fiasco cracked up as “a monster demonstration of Labor” the following day. The reports were tame. The capitalist had found out

that his Labor Lieutenants could not kill the S.L.P., he had no printer's ink, nor other good things to spare for him this year.

As the chaff is scattered and the dust swept off by the gale, the Fighting S.L.P. clears the field of false pretences by the simple force of its firm, imperturbed tread.

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