

EDITORIAL

THE SOCIALIST OPPORTUNITY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE most casual reading of the *Congressional Record*, reporting the debate now going on in the Senate on the tariff, leads to the conclusion that there is going on a complete disintegration of parties. Republicans are ripped in twain: so are Democrats. There is bound to be a “re-alignment,” if not the starting of a new party with taxation, in the form of tariff duties, as the line of cleavage. Many a brand of “reformers” will giggle with joy at this, and rub their hands, and expect that Socialism will “reap the advantage.”

Socialism will, or will not reap the advantage, according as the agitation conducted in its behalf deports itself.

The issue at bottom is “Taxation.”

If the agitation for Socialism is conducted on the fly-paper system of the Socialist party, which imagines it can drill recruits for Socialism by echoing the sentimental errors upon which one wing of Capitalism thrives; if the agitation for Socialism is conducted upon the principle that Socialists will isolate themselves unless they echo the false but sympathetic economic views entertained by the proletariat generally; in short, if the agitation for Socialism is conducted upon lines that repeat the absurd tenet that “Labor pays the taxes”—if the agitation for Socialism is conducted along such lines, then, so far from Socialism being benefitted, it will be positively harmed; even the hunters after “Votes!” “Votes!” will get left; their agitation will redound to the benefit of the reform, “lower taxes” alignment; only the veriest freaks will vote such a Socialist ticket.

On the contrary, if the agitation for Socialism is of the kind that is too well grounded to expect success from popular error, and to seek victory in “Votes!” however scraped together; if the agitation for Socialism is of the kind that realizes that the battalions of the proletariat can not be drilled except upon sound working

class principle; in short, if the agitation for Socialism utilizes the present capitalist tax disturbance to elucidate the Socialist principle that taxes, while paid out of wealth produced by Labor only, are paid out of that portion of Labor's product that Labor never pockets, it being plundered from Labor in the shop by the capitalist system of wage slavery, and that, consequently, taxes are not "paid" by Labor but by the capitalist class;—if the agitation is conducted along these, the Socialist Labor Party lines, then the "Tax" issue will be stripped of its false pretence; it will stand exposed as a purely capitalist issue, and simultaneously the law that determines wages will firmly take possession of the workers' mind. Then they will see, and feel, and grasp the truth of the statement that capitalism does and can offer them no redress—a statement that otherwise sounds wild. Then Socialism will be benefitted. Then many a voter who might otherwise be duped would be rescued. Then the votes that are gathered for Socialism will be worth gathering.

The season alone, without the sower, brings no crop. Capitalism furnishes the season. The Socialist must sow the seed.

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

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slpns@slp.org