

EDITORIAL

THE SPHERES OF POLITICAL AND OF ECONOMIC ACTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A CORRESPONDENT, whose sincerity is vouched for to this office, writes:
Lansing, Mich., January 1, 1912.

To the Editor, *Daily and Weekly People*:

There has been a considerable amount of discussion of late between members of the Socialist Labor Party and Industrial Unionists in this city as to whether the S.L.P. is an unworthy competitor of the I.W.W.

The unionists take the stand that as the I.W.W. advocates political action coupled with economic action that there is absolutely no necessity for having two parties in the field working for the same end, as it tends to keep the workers divided.

When the S.L.P. men are approached on this subject they seem to have a reverence for the Party and a disinclination to drop out of the same.

They say that when the I.W.W. gets strong enough that they will then join forces with it, and that the S.L.P. will drop out of the field.

If every one of us said the same, there would be no I.W.W.

It seems to me also that as the S.L.P. endorses the I.W.W. and recognizes that the organization is founded on the principles of class solidarity, that the working class would be much nearer emancipation if the S.L.P. were to disband as a political party, and join forces with the I.W.W.

The objection offered by Section Lansing members is that we would be leaving the political field clear for the capitalist politicians, but they forget the I.W.W.'s preamble:

“Until all the toilers come together on the political as well as on the Industrial field.”

In view of this statement it seems that the I.W.W. is the only party which is needed, because the name Industrial Workers of the World would serve the purpose on the Official Ballot as well as the name Socialist Labor Party.

The S.L.P. always proclaims how consistent it is; now is the time to show its consistency.

I would like to see this letter published in the *Daily and Weekly People* with an answer to the same.

Speed the Social Revolution and the Industrial Republic.

Yours for the revolution,
S.G. Bargery.

The one fact from which our correspondent proceeds is that “the I.W.W. advocates political action coupled with economic action.” From that one fact alone he arrives at the conclusion that, in order to be consistent, the S.L.P. should “disband as a political party, and join forces with the I.W.W.,” there being “absolutely no necessity for having two parties in the field,” meaning, of course, the S.L.P. and the I.W.W. as the two “political parties.”

It is true that the I.W.W. advocates political action coupled with economic action. When, however, from that fact alone the conclusion is reached that, for the S.L.P. to remain in the field, besides the I.W.W., would be to have two parties working for the same end—when that conclusion is reached, then the original fact, which served as premises, is no longer the same; indeed, it has become unrecognizable.

The ADVOCACY of political action by the I.W.W. is not, does not, can not mean the OFFICIATING AS A POLITICAL PARTY by the I.W.W. itself; for the converse reason that the ADVOCACY of Industrial Unionism by the S.L.P. is not, does not, can not mean the OFFICIATING AS AN ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION by the S.L.P. itself.

First.—When the I.W.W. urges the unification of the workers “upon the political as well as upon the industrial field,” the principle set forth is that united and class-conscious political action by the working class is a necessary assistant for recruiting and organizing the economic body, and for clearing the path of the same for the revolutionary act of substituting the Industrial for the Political State. The principle set forth is not that the I.W.W. itself is a political party. Conversely, when the S.L.P. urges the unification of the workers upon the economic as well as upon the political field, the principle there set forth is that the integral and class-conscious economic organization of the workers is, in turn, a necessary accompaniment of Socialist political action, without which accompaniment success on the political field would be disastrous to the proletariat, at best ineffective. The principle there set forth is not that the S.L.P. itself is an economic organization.

Second.—Economic and political organizations operate upon different and distinct fields. The very nature of the field, upon which the economic organization op-

erates, incapacitates the organization from manoeuvring upon the political field. Conversely, the very nature of the field, upon which the political body manoeuvres, disqualifies it from operating upon the economic field. The two circumstances are ignorantly or dishonestly seized upon by pure and simple political Socialism as the excuse or pretext for “neutrality” towards Unionism; and they are seized by pure and simple physical forcism as the excuse or pretext for Anarchy. The I.W.W. being a denial of Anarchy, the S.L.P. being a denial of pure and simple politicianism; and recognizing that the economic and the political fields are both indispensable; and likewise recognizing that neither organization can operate upon both fields, each having its own sphere, and the two spheres being supplemental of each other, the I.W.W. and the S.L.P. operate harmoniously apart. The two operating upon lines that converge.

Third.—The I.W.W. has a revolutionary purpose. The amendment clause of the American Constitution legalizes Revolution. Where social institutions have matured to that point, legality is a feature that no Movement aiming at an institutional change can disregard but at its own peril. Political Action furnishes the legal status. By preaching on the political field the Revolution which the I.W.W. carries in its folds, the S.L.P. shields the I.W.W. with the shield of legality. Were the S.L.P. to disband now, then the I.W.W. would immediately have to set up a political substitute for the S.L.P.—bringing things back to just where they were before.

We are assured our Lansing correspondent is no Anarchist. This notwithstanding we recommend to him that he read carefully the S.L.P. pamphlet, *As to Politics*. Although addressed mainly to Anarchists, the pamphlet covers more extensively than does this article large areas of the subject in hand.

The S.L.P. man is affected by no pagan reverence for anything. He sees in the S.L.P. but just what it is—a means to an end—just now an indispensable means to an end—a means that he would readily cast off the instant it had outlived its usefulness and began to interfere with the end itself. A distinct political party, working harmoniously upon its own field with the I.W.W., will be needed and continue to be needed by the I.W.W. until the hour of the Revolution shall have struck. Before then the I.W.W. will have set up its own political party. On that day, not before, and in the language used in the pamphlet just referred to—“the S.L.P. will break up camp

with a shout of joy, if a body merging into its own ideal can be said to ‘break up camp.’”

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