

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 3, NO. 225.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE REPTILE'S RATTLE AND COILING.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE national committee of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic party has just met, resolutely and adjourned in St. Louis. Most of its time was taken up with what? With meeting new issues? Not at all. Most of its time was taken up with passing two resolutions,—one against fusion, the other in favor of “supporting all the economic struggles of Labor.”

To the innocent, to the unsophisticated, these two acts will savor of “moves in the right direction”; they will be pleasing; indeed, that’s just what they are intended for. To the tutored ear and eye, however, such sounds and motions have the effect of the sound and wriggle of the rattle-snake upon the expert woodsman.

A party, that claims to be Socialist, resolving against FUSION? Has not that all the earmarks of a woman, that claims to be pure, yet resolving that she is, and of right ought to be, CHASTE? Does not the word Socialism in and of itself exclude the idea of FUSION, as purity excludes the idea of UNCHASTITY? Why, then, go on record that fusion shall not be?

Again, a party that claims to be the bright particular prop of the economic struggles of the workingman, resolving “to support all economic struggles of Labor”? Is not that surplusage? Does not the thing go without saying? Then, why say it?

The proverbial traveler from Mars, gifted with intuitive knowledge in the abstract, but devoid of knowledge in the concrete, would certainly prick his ears at such performance. But not long. Soon the mystery would be clear. Immediately upon the rattle that caught his ear in St. Louis, his eyes would have detected two simultaneous coilings of the reptile,—one in the State of Washington, the other at the other extremity of the land, the State of Massachusetts.

In Spokane, Wash., a “Socialist” party convention meets; fuses with populists, pure

and simple labor skates and any old thing; adopts a platform with “as little Socialism as possible,” with “all mention of the working class and of the working class character” of a bona fide Socialist party “omitted, purposely”; and fills its ticket with several candidates not even members of the party. [Seattle, Wash., *Socialist*, Feb. 1, 1903.]—That much for the reptile’s coiling in Washington State.

In Lynn, Mass., a shoeworkers’ strike is on. The manufacturers are aided by Tobin, President of the Boot and Shoeworkers’ Union. The two—manufacturers and Tobin—are seeking to fill the places of the workingmen on strike. Jointly, the two instituted injunction proceedings against the strikers. At the hearing of the injunction it developed that one of the strike breakers, imported by Tobin from Kentucky, had just finished a two years’ sentence for stealing horses. Surely this is an instance of the “economic struggle of Labor.” What’s the attitude of the press on the subject? The Socialist Labor Party press stands by the strikers with might and main; all the rest of the press does the other thing: the capitalist press booming the manufacturers, the “Socialist” or Social Democratic press lying low, uttering not a word, hushing up the crimes of Tobin; in short, giving by their silence consent to the wrong, and thus doing just the reverse of “supporting all the economic struggles of Labor.”—That much for the reptile’s coiling in Massachusetts.

His eyes partially opened by these facts, the traveler from Mars presently has his eyes fully opened. He will discover among that resolving “National Committee” a preponderating number of members with credentials by the grace of fusionists and by the grace of strike breakers in their respective States. He will discover that the strike breakers are leading lights in the so-called Socialist or Social Democratic party; he will discover that fusion, even with out-and-out capitalist parties, is the commonest of occurrences in that “Socialist” party. He will discover a good deal more.

And then it will become clear to him what the resolutions mean—the actual rattle of the rattle-snake.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded November 2006