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EDITORIAL

THE ARTFUL DODGER PINNED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE *New Yorker Worker* of last February 26 feels driven (or shall we say, lashed?) to answer the charge that it is a privately owned concern and, consequently, beyond the control of its party, the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party. It says the question is “one of interest to the readers”—decidedly so, and also to the whole Socialist Movement, which the owners of the *New Yorker Worker*, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* Corporation, seek to exploit. Of how deep an interest the question is becoming may be judged by the way in which the *New Yorker Worker* “answers” (read, dodges) the question.

It says: “The publishing associations are composed of party members only.”—This is dodge No. 1. In the first place, it will be noticed that the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* Corporation carefully keeps the names of its stockholders a secret. If there is any strength in the claim that they are all members of the party, why not publish their names, and state of what Assembly District they are members? In the second place, the statement, even if true as far as it goes, belongs to the category of that worst sort of lies which consist in being half truths, in suppressing the other half, and thereby in insinuating a falsehood. The portion of the truth suppressed in this case is that, the very law under which the paper claims it is forced to work, prevents an incorporated association from expelling a stockholder if he changes his political convictions. The corporation may refuse to admit any but party members, but once admitted they can not be put out for having become Democrats or what not. During the debates in the Corporation that preceded the Kangaroo revolt, it was non-party members—Schwab, Filly, Hoffman, Grunzig, etc., etc.—who led in the assault of the Party. They had all been once in the Party, but had since become rabid anti-Socialists. Under the law, the paper is owned and controlled from top to

bottom by a set of men who may all be expelled from the party, but whom the corporation can not expel. Thus these privately owned papers may acquire a great power, given to them by the membership at large, and at any time the corporations can turn that power against the party, without the party's being able to say boo; thus these self-appointed corporations arrogate to themselves the power of picking out from the party the few whom they consider good enough to run things; thus these self-appointed corporations hold towards the party membership the insulting attitude of saying: "You are good enough to be in the party, but not good enough to be in our self-appointed circle of masters".—All of which has been charged before, and is now dodged again.

It says: "Any profits which may be made (which practically never happens) must be devoted to propaganda".—This is dodge No. 2. Capitalist concerns are often limited by their charter to a certain amount of profit. How do they get around that? They lavish their excess of profits on their employees (stockholders or their relatives) and thus the excess, in the approved language of these capitalist concerns echoed by the *New Yorker Worker* in its answer, "practically never happens." And thus a Corporation that claims to be Socialist, accordingly, the controller of the organ of a truly democratic body, audits its own books and autocratically declares that it has made "practically no profits" and expects MEN to accept the dictum.—All of which has been charged before, and is now dodged, again.

It says: "The editor must be a party member and is directly responsible to the party".—This is dodge No. 3. The party may repudiate the Editor, but the corporation can keep him, as it will surely do and has done before, just as soon as its business, or "practically no profits" demand the move, and the party has no power to stop him. It has created a weapon which it has left in private hands, and that weapon can any time turn against it.—All of which has been charged before, and is now dodged, again.

It says: "Its (the paper's) deficits are covered by donations from the party or its members".—This is dodge No. 4. In its issue of last January 15, the *New Yorker Worker* had a full page advertisement of a capitalist fly-paper concern headed by the flaming and lying head-line "The Protection of One Million Families." And in that same issue the paper editorially observes in attempting to justify the peculation of

that fly-paper advertisement: “Conditions prevailing under capitalism make it almost impossible for a paper to exist without depending on the income from advertisements.” A paper that is essentially run for the private benefit of its owners needs advertisements; a bona fide Socialist paper is above that. It lives upon the membership of the party. Such a bona fide paper never needs to shelter itself behind the pretence of “conditions prevailing under capitalism.” Its membership, being its owners, will keep it free from depending upon capitalist swindle advertisements, and thus put its head under the capitalist yoke. A bona fide paper of Socialism does not preach “material interests” out of one corner of its mouth and forget all about it at the other corner. It, consequently, will never place the material interests of its own existence dependent upon capitalist advertisements, and thereby be forced to trim its language in such way as not to give offence to its capitalist patrons (bribers?).—All of which has been charged before, and is now dodged, again.

It says: “The membership of the party has power to control and discipline the editor”.—This is dodge No. 5. The only instance we know of when an editor of the *New Yorker Worker’s* party was disciplined was the instance seen two years ago in this city. Several members of that party set up an independent English paper—the *Socialist and Trades Union Review*—in which they declared expressly that the reason for so doing was that “the *Worker* suppressed and mutilated party news.” The New Yorker Volkszeitung Corporation promptly disciplined the concern by stamping it out of existence.—All of which has been charged before, and is now dodged, again.

Finally, it says: “This form of ownership (private incorporation) is necessary, because we have to work under capitalist laws, an incorporated body is needed to prevent the possibility of control by the individuals engaged in the office, and it is not advisable for the party as such to incorporate”.—This is a whole cluster of dodges:

Dodge No. 6 is the claim that “an incorporated body is needed to prevent the possibility of control by individuals engaged in the office.” It is the same dodge that has been advanced before by the runaway Berlin embezzler in the Corporation. It carefully avoids to explain how the individuals employed in an office of a concern

owned by an unincorporated association can “control” it. The insinuation that that is possible is false.

Dodge No. 7 is an elegant one. It pretends that, in order to “prevent the possibility of control by individuals engaged in the office”—in order to prevent such a “possibility”—the whole concern must be put from the start into the private ownership of a self-elected clique! In order to prevent an imaginary, fictitious possibility of control a concern must be put forthwith under—what? under private control and ownership! And these are the people who make light of the “possibility” of the members of a corporation that own a paper changing their political views and turning the paper against the party!

Dodge No. 8 is the insinuation that either the paper must be incorporated or the party must be incorporated. Not true. The Socialist Labor Party is not incorporated, nor is its press. The un-incorporated S.L.P. owns *The People* and can and does with it what it pleases, and when “individuals engaged in the office” tried their monkey shines a few years ago the Party gave them short shrift.

Dodge No. 9 is that the *New Yorker Worker* is silent upon the fact that the party press of Germany, also a country under “capitalist conditions”, is the party’s property.

But this is not all. The most “convincing” of the arguments the *New Yorker Worker* is silent upon. It dares not put it in English, or, rather, the *Volkszeitung* Corporation orders it not to publish it. That argument is left for German consumption; that argument only appears in the columns of the *Volkszeitung*. We have before now translated the argument in these columns literally from the *Volkszeitung*’s columns. It is this: The press of the American Socialist Movement can not be trusted in American hands. As, on a later occasion the *Volkszeitung* said: “The Irish (meaning, of course, the English speaking element) are corrupt to their marrow”, the Corporation wishes to keep the press in its own hands. It can thus boss things to its heart’s content—and absorb the swag alone.

All of which is of deep interest to the Socialist Movement of America. It deserves all the space given it above. There is not a dodge or an “argument” trituated above but it will be well for the rank and file of the Socialist Movement to keep in mind, and guard against. It goes to their freedom.

The man who is charged with a crime, but believes himself guiltless, tells a straightforward story; the man who knows himself guilty doubles, winds, prevaricates, dodges—lies.

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