
What the SLP Is

(Answers to Three Questions)

by Daniel DeLeon

[book to press in Nov. 1891]

Published in Charles Sotheran, *Horace Greeley and Other Pioneers of American Socialism*.
New York: Humboldt Publishing Co., 1892; pp. 8-10.

I. What is the Socialistic Labor Party?

DeLeon: The Socialist Labor Party is the practical side of scientific political economy and the philosophy of history. Fourier, St. Simon, and Owen, and before them Harrington, Sir Thomas More, and Plato were all Utopian Socialists. The development of industry and the laws of sociology could not in the early days be known. In our own days, sufficient facts are in court to justify conclusions. Socialism, accordingly, has gone through its stage of Utopia and reached the present one where, grounded on facts, not on aspirations, the agitation can be carried on. This is the economic law: Competition destroys profits through the planlessness and wastefulness of competitive production. As soon as this is ascertained by the capitalists they set about removing the evil, and with a correct instinct begin to combine and concentrate their capital. Concentration of capital is equivalent to the perfection of machinery. This has for its effect to reduce quantities of labor-power necessary to production, and in general to reduce the cost of production. Two important things result therefrom. On the one hand, competition becomes harder and harder, and ultimately expires in the trust. On the other hand, wages steadily decline and are furthermore pushed below the point of the exchange value of labor-power, owing to the large army of the unemployed which its produced by the dis-

placement of machinery. The statistics of labor in this country, false as they are to a great extent, bear a sad proof of this statement. As a further result of it all, the productiveness of labor is held far below its powers, and want for the many, abundance for the few become inevitable. These being inseparable causes and effects, the land and all other instruments of production must be owned by the people, if involuntary poverty is to be abolished. Already we have Socialism for the few at the expense of the many in the shape of the trusts. We aim to Socialize the trust and establish Socialism for all at the expense of none. There is no valid reason why all the industries of the nation should not be owned by the nation as it owns the Office.

II. How does the SLP differ in principles from the Communists?

DeLeon: Communism differs from Socialism as Federalism differed from Anti-Federalism in this country. To each according to his deed, say the Socialists. The Communists say, from each according to his power, to each according to his needs. The latter principle implies a greater concentration of collective functions than Socialists are ready to accept. But for the same reason that the question of Federalism or Anti-Federalism could not come up until the political Republic was established, there is no occasion to discuss today the relative merits of Socialism or Communism until the Industrial Republic is on foot.

III. In what way do the members of the SLP vary in doctrine from the Anarchists?

DeLeon: You should not mention the word Anarchist without first defining it. There is quite a variety of them.

In the first place you have the *bona fide* Anarchists. They are impatient Socialists. They do not believe, as we do, in the efficacy of the ballot but would rush to arms. They are to the main body of Socialists what the John Brown wing was to the main body of the Abolitionists or Republicans. They entertain for us

an inveterate hatred, imputing our deliberation and peaceful methods to cowardice. On the other hand, we feel greatly outraged at their ravings, which, we consider, delay the movement.

Secondly, you have the *mala fide* Anarchists, of whom Benjamin R. Tucker, of Boston, is the patron saint. Their motto is no *Arch* or Head or Government. Yet their parliamentary practice gives the lie to their preachings. A people's parliamentary practice is the microcosmos of its social institutions. The chairman of these Anarchists has the power to make rulings from which there is no appeal, to the members only the cold comfort is left that they can secede. One-man power, i.e., popular slavery, is the outcome of such principles. We believe in liberty, therefore, in Democracy.

Then also you have among the Anarchists a set which might be styled the "Innocents"; They are a tepid crew. They do not want force as do the *bona fide* ones, and they actually do not want any law, government, or arch. They ignore the teaching of history, that where the pen does not write, the sword carves out the law; that where no arch is provided for by statute it is superimposed by the fist or the bayonet, as the case may be. In other words, these, while they mean well, would bring us to where the human race started from, in the inexperience of its infancy.

These are the three main types. In between them are numerous shades. But with neither shades nor types have we any contact.a

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · April 2014 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.