

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 3, NO. 278.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 1903.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE ZEALOT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ONCE before, a year or two ago, we took occasion to chronicle with pleasure evidences of both the penetration and higher aspirations of the Milwaukee organ of the Social Democratic party. Such an occasion is offered us again, and it is again seized with pleasure. It is seized with all the greater pleasure because, being unmistakably a homage to the Socialist Labor Party, it is a symptom of good. Who will deny that he who can appreciate virtue in others is capable of practising it, and cleansing himself of the vice he discovers around, if not in, himself?

In its issue of March 21 the *Social Democratic Herald* has a double-columned editorial bearing the superscription “Eternal Vigilance Now and Forever.” The gist of the article is the danger that besets a Socialist Movement from the improper elements that naturally gravitate towards it—elements that are “weak,” elements of “shifty eye,” elements of “doubtful record.” Dropping negatives, the article reaches climax and clinching point with the positive demand for the “ZEALOT.” Needless to say, the cry proceeds from introspection. It is no banale, abstract declaration. It is the utterance of a conviction born of the experience of what is going on in the camp of that organ’s own party, coupled with the knowledge of the “zealot” composition of the S.L.P., and due admiration therefor.

It is a point, a great point, gained, this recognition, however tardy, of the need of the zealot in a Socialist body. This S.L.P. principle was one of the “unfitnesses” once imputed to the party. The “unfitness” is now recognized a virtue. That’s progress. It now remains, the zealot having become popular, to popularize also the methods whereby he is to be recruited and drilled.

Can zeal be kindled into life by petty, shabby, sneaky tactics? Can it flare up for the Socialist Republic—an unquestionably revolutionary aim—by means of bucketfuls of

“evolutionary” water, poured down upon it? By Edward-Bernsteinism?

Can zeal rise in ignoble company, or out of actions at fisticuffs with words? Is he, who justly pronounces a Carey a “ward politician,” a man “more intent upon policy than principle,” and yet sits, without protest, in council with that armory-building bundle of duplicity, with that man of “shifty eye” and “doubtful record”—can he who does that arouse zeal?

Can zeal gather the needed warmth from a New Orleans convention spectacle, where the “champions of Socialism” allow a Gompers to be re-elected unanimously?

Can zeal gain fibre from a posture that renders it the dupe of capitalist class deception; or from a policy that, in search of votes, shrinks before the hardship of bearding the popular delusions bred of such capitalist class deception, accommodates itself to the base role of a barker for a Mitchell, and is finally left to snarl like a sore, complaisant husband?

Can zeal acquire force and direction from a deportment that justly lashes an E.E. Clark, of the Order of Railroad Conductors, but leaves unlashd, even tolerates E-E-Clarkism, by coquetting with the rest of the labor lieutenants of capitalism, each as guilty as E.E. Clark—though they may not happen to have sinned against one particular man?

To ask these, and many more questions that these suggest, is another way of asking, Can a man on a tight-rope walk steady?

The Socialist Republic implies a revolutionary movement. Revolutionary movements call for men with zeal—for zealots. The zealot—the infantry, cavalry and artillery of the Social Revolution—is an element animated with the loftiest (because soundest) and the soundest (because loftiest) aspirations of the race; and he is schooled in consistency, trained in firmness, disciplined in patience, and drilled in uncompromising aggressiveness.

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

Uploaded November 2006