The Socialist Movement:
Brief Outline of its Development and Differences in This Country.

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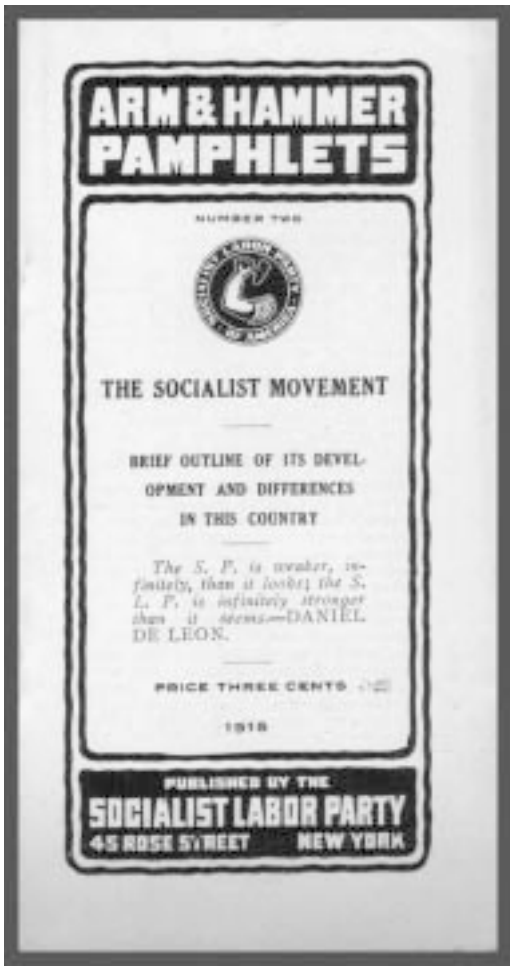
"The S.P. is weaker, infinitely, than it looks;
the S.L.P. is infinitely stronger than it seems."
—Daniel DeLeon

Up to the year 1897, the only Socialist political organization of standing in the United States was the Socialist Labor Party. Then arose, as a result of the lost Pullman strike, so-called, an organization known as the Debs Social Democracy which, at first, set up colonization as its aim and purpose. Composed of elements utterly unfamiliar with the fundamental teachings of scientific Socialism, it could only remotely be regarded as a rival of the Socialist Labor Party, and, had not other events transpired, it would, in all likelihood, soon have become submerged.



The Socialist Labor Party of that day was an organization as consistent as the collective understanding of the membership permitted. Disdaining to bow to popular fallacies or to sacrifice present or ultimate working class interests for the sake of temporary and futile advantage, it had just weathered the Populist storm of the national campaign of 1896, had come out unscathed and was gaining in strength. Above all did it, at all times, clearly enunciate the need of the revolutionary union, the organization of the forces of the working class on the economic field for the purpose of overthrowing the capitalist system of production and ushering in the Socialist Republic. The Party held, correctly, that, without such organization of the ***might*** of the working class, its ***right***, as voiced by the political class organization, would ever remain purely an inspiration. And the Party pointed out that what forms of economic organizations existed, as exemplified by the American Federation of Labor, tended to buttress rather than threaten the capitalist class. In point of form the A.F. of L. dislocated the working class and lamed its power for action by a system of craft unionism that might have suited medieval conditions, but was utterly unsuited to modern capitalist development. In point of spirit, craft unionism sinned even more grievously. Instead of pointing out the natural antagonism of interests between the working class and the capitalist system, and thereby clarifying working class vision as to its real position in modern civilization, and antagonism that is, indeed, the only hope of that civilization, it set up the false — false, because contrary to all the facts —

principle of the brotherhood of Capital and Labor, of a community of interest disturbed, only occasionally, by disagreements such as will happen among brothers. This vicious doctrine poisoned the Labor Movement at its well springs, made it the stamping ground of the Labor crook, the demagogue, and raised ignorance on a pedestal.

Against this capitalist-bred and capitalist-nurtured doctrine the Socialist Labor Party had to take its stand, and it did so manfully, realizing that one cannot honestly pursue Socialist ideals and yet temporize with such a demoralizing conception of the Labor Movement. At its national convention of 1896, the Party endorsed the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, an economic organization of Labor which, in harmony with the Socialist Labor Party, declared that the emancipation of the working class can only follow the downfall of the capitalist system of production, and that the organization of the working class in a revolutionary union is indispensable to bring about that downfall, place the means of production into the hands of society, reorganized without class distinction, and thus usher in the Socialist Republic, preserve the civilization the human race has attained, and make possible, by a complete and unretarded unfolding of human capabilities, its logical development.

This coming together of the Socialist forces of the country, on both the political and economic fields, coupled with the steady growth of so clear-cut, uncompromising and, for that reason, menacing a movement, made the supporters, apologists, and beneficiaries of capitalism sit up and take notice. Almost at once began to be felt machinations within the Socialist Labor Party aiming at the undoing of the momentous step taken. The Party, although having, perhaps, grown more rapidly in numbers than was warranted by the growth of sound information, defeated these machinations again and again. But in 1899 the forces of reaction, under the leadership of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, an alleged Socialist daily published in the German language, bolted and, in the course of time, merged with the Debs Social Democracy already mentioned, the two forming what is today known as the Socialist Party.

Since then the Socialist Party has developed obedient to the causes which led to its appearance in the political arena. Being placed in opposition to the Socialist Labor Party — which never once acted contrary to the principles of International Socialism as laid down by Marx and Engels — it necessarily had to develop in opposition to the International Socialist Movement. While seemingly in accord with International Socialism, it attitude on the most important questions pertaining to the Labor Movement, has been, and is, a flagrant violation of true working class principles.

Broadly speaking, the differences of principle between the Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party may be said to be on:

1.— The Trade Unions.
2.— Party Press Ownership.
3.— State Autonomy.
4.— Taxation.
5.— Immigration.

The position of the two organizations on these questions is:

1.— The Socialist Party maintains that the American Federation of Labor is the true economic organization of the American working class. It claims now that whatever shortcomings the American Federation of Labor suffers from, they are not caused by its being structurally false, but because it is dominated by non-Socialist labor leaders, and that the thing to do is to keep on "friendly" terms with the A.F. of L., not expose its false principles and the wrong acts flowing from adhering to such principles, but keep quiet about this and "bore from within only." Furthermore, they look upon the economic organization of Labor as a purely transitory thing, a thing which may aid the workers in their present struggle, but which, beyond this, has no value for the revolutionary movement.

The Socialist Labor Party on the contrary, holds that the A.F. of L., as explained above, is not an organization of the workers of America, notwithstanding the fact that it is composed of members of the working class. We hold that the A.F. of L. corruption is not caused by its labor leaders, any more than the evils of capitalist society in general are caused by the officials in power today. We hold — and this is the Socialist view as contrasted with the bourgeois (capitalist) view — that just as the capitalist officials are the products of the society, structurally wrong, and based on false economics, so are the A.F. of L. leaders the products of

an organization, structurally false and based on false economics. Remove one set of leaders, and another crop will immediately shoot up from the same soil. We hold that the A.F. of L. is an obstacle to Socialism, and that to support such an organization is to commit an act of treason against the working class as well as against International Socialism.

The Socialist Labor Party holds further that the economic organization of labor, far from being a transitory thing, is the permanent thing, and the political, though absolutely necessary and indispensable, is a purely transitory, a means-to-an-end thing. The Socialist Labor Party holds that the correct form of the economic organization (industrial unionism) is the embryo, the undeveloped form of future society. To illustrate:

Society today is organized on political lines, i.e., the representative bodies are composed of delegates from the various political (geographical) divisions. Thus, the "people" of New York state elect representatives to the "House," these delegates representing (supposedly) the interests of the given territory. In capitalist society, rent as it is in twain by the struggle between the working class and the capitalist class, it is obvious that these delegates do not and cannot represent the interests of both classes; we know now that they represent the interests of capitalism. But even if we, for the sake of argument, would leave this point aside, it would still remain undisputed that no one man can truly represent the many and varied interest of the different industries which are found within a given territory. To represent any one of these industries in the interests of those actively engaged and producing therein, one must himself be engaged therein, understanding the needs and requirements of such industries.

It is not the function of political government to administer production. Its chief function is to maintain "order," which, in capitalist society, means to keep in subjection the modern slave class — the wage worker. Political government — the State — rose upon the ruins of primitive communal society, formed and directed obedient to the new basis of society, that of private property, which synchronously gave rise to class rule, and since then political government has been and is allied with the interests of the ruling class. And as further proof of the fact that the political government has outlived its usefulness and become, instead, an encumbrance upon the productive forces of modern industrial society, we point to the fact that since the theory of a true, representative democracy is based upon proportional representation, and since, with the rapid increase in the population the representative body would become so large as to make it anything but a deliberative body, it would put society to the alternative, either to abolish the idea of democratic government, by fixing the number of representatives arbitrarily, in short a government no longer having a true basis of representation; or on the other hand continue to increase the number of representatives in proportion to the increase in population, making this body, as already said, so large as to defeat the very idea of representative bodies — namely, to assemble in one place for the purpose of deliberating and discussing. Whichever horn of this dilemma the pure and simple politicalist choose, he will be running his head against the wall.

Instead the Socialist Labor Party proposes to organize the useful producers of the land in industrial unions. Thus, for instance, the workers of the textile industry would organize into one industrial union, with the local union as a basis. These local unions will be composed of all the actual wage workers in a given industry in a given locality, welded together in trade or shop branches, or as the particular requirements of said industry may render necessary.

Delegates from these local industrial unions from the various localities in America in a given industry will form a national industrial union, and the delegates of National Industrial Unions of closely kindred industries will form an Industrial Department, these industrial departments, represented in a General Executive Board, constituting the industrial government, answering in a sense to the present government and House of Representatives. All that is outlined here may be modified or elaborated as special conditions require.

The Socialist Party adheres to the bourgeois theory that the aim of Socialism is to capture the political State and to run the industries by the State. We have shown how utterly impossible it is for the State to do this, and this being the conception of the revolution held by the Socialist Party, it, logically enough, does not see the necessity of organizing the workers into industrial class unions.

We cannot here go into this at great length, but enough has been said to show why the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party differ on the trade union question. It might be added, however, that the "success" of the S.P. theory of "boring from within" only, is testified to by the fact that the A.F. of L. is getting more and more reactionary. The fact of the matter is that the S.P. borers do not "bore" for Socialism; that, on the contrary they permit themselves to be voted in as cattle at the A.F. of L. conventions whenever questions of importance are being acted upon. Thus, for instance, at the Rochester A.F. of L. convention in 1912, the seating of delegates from the Catholic and Protestant churches came before the convention, and not only did the 72 S.P. "borers" acquiesce in the seating of these two delegates (who were the notorious reactionary Socialist haters MacFarland, Protestant, and Peter E. Dietz, Roman Catholic, but a Socialist Party member, Duncan McDonald, moved that they be seated. This is but one of many instances, and illustrates the S.P. method of "boring from within." Needless to say, the A.F. of L. machine (Gompers et al.) looks on them as harmless scarecrows.

2.— As to the question of Party owned press, the Socialist Labor Party holds that if the Party does not own its press, the press will own the Party, which again means, as is so well illustrated in the Socialist Party, that as many different individuals as are found in the S.P. owning papers, each one of them with a different conception of Socialism and tactics, as many different factions are created within the organization, rendering it largely ineffective. Unity of thought must precede unity of action. We need here but to point to the recent heated controversies anent the industrial union question. We refer you to the National Convention of the Socialist Party where 30 percent voted against the clause prohibiting a member of that Party from advocating sabotage or other forms of Anarchist tactics. Dovetailing into this is the:

3.— Theory of state autonomy which guarantees each state sovereign powers over its membership, leaving it to each state to conduct its agitation as it sees fit, with practically no control from headquarters. Thus, for instance, a member expelled from the state of Washington may apply to be admitted to membership in the state of Wisconsin. The Socialist Party of California freely indulges in reactionary anti-immigration policies catering to the pro-capitalist A.F. of L., while in the South they echo the sentiments of the race-hating elements by refusing to organize the negroes in other than separate branches; while in the East and Middle West (as well as elsewhere) they cater to the reactionary middle class (small taxpayers) notions of "clean government," the lowering of taxes, and anti-graft issues, etc., all of them issues which are of no concern to the workers; and this brings us to:

4.— The question of taxation. The Socialist Party has always held that the workers pay the taxes, a theory which is as false as it is pernicious. Taxes are paid by the property holding classes out of that portion of wealth, produced, true enough, by labor, but which labor never pocketed. In other words, taxes are paid out of those values, produced over and above the wage which the worker receives and which are generally known as surplus value.

By advancing such a theory the Socialist Party attracts to itself the small capitalists and corner-grocers, while at the same time by the same act it betrays the interests of the workers by using them as pawns (voters) in their game. The policy of its theories on taxation has been well illustrated with the recent S.P. administration of Schenectady, as testified to by the then Mayor Lunn's secretary, Mr. Walter Lippmann.

Finally —

5.— As to immigration, the Socialist Labor Party holds that the working class the world over is indivisibly one; that as victims of the capitalist class their interests are common, regardless of race, creed, or color. The Socialist Party maintains (uttering a fractional truth) that the influx of immigrants causes a keener struggle and lower wage for the workers already here. The fact remains that while immigration does add to the number of workers, and to that extent increases a competition among the workers, it is as a drop in the ocean compared to the real cause — the introduction of labor-saving machinery and concentration of capitalism. Even if every foreigner from now on were excluded, the misery of the workers would increase. Since this is so, and realizing that injecting the question of race superiority or inferiority foments race-hatred, and to that extent prevents the organizing of the workers, the S.L.P. condemns the stand of the S.P. as reactionary and unsocialistic.

There are other questions of equal importance,

though of a less permanent nature, such as the attitude of the Socialist Party toward the high cost of living, blaming the rise in prices on the rapacity of the trusts and monopolies, and maintaining that the workers are robbed as consumers and not, as Socialism teaches, as producers.

Its attitude toward reforms in general does not differ essentially from that of the out and out capitalist reformers. In its anxiety to capture political office it seizes upon everything that agitates the mind of the people, regardless of whether it concerns the workers as a class or not. The S.L.P. does not refuse ameliorations offered by the capitalist class, but contends that the more revolutionary the workers become, the stronger they make their economic and political organizations, the more ready, aye anxious, will the capitalist class be to throw sops to them in order to keep them contented.

The program, therefore, of the Socialist Party is in keeping with its basic principles. Its anti-Socialist and bourgeois theories have led to its entering into collusions and logrolling with capitalist parties in different places of the country.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the differences between the two parties are fundamental and important. Any organization, such as the Socialist Party, which organizes the workers on wrong lines is fated to fail in bringing about Socialism. The differences must be settled; correct principles adopted; and then only will progress toward Socialism be made. The Socialist Labor Party holds the key.

[*There follows an appendix consisting of the Socialist Labor Party's Platform adopted by its national convention on April 10, 1912.*]

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