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EDITORIAL

AN OPEN LETTER ACROSS THE PACIFIC.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Daily People Office, 2-6 New Reade st.,
New York, May 28, 1905.

T.S.

Care of G. Yamne,
Manager of *The Socialist*,
Tokyo, Japan.

Dear T.S.—
In the name of the Socialist Labor Party of America, we wish to call your attention to a serious error of fact that crept into your otherwise valuable article [“Japanese Exclusion”](#), published in the Tokyo *The Socialist* of the 3rd instant, and which we reproduce in this issue. In the course of your article, you say:

“Our American comrades often look at our people as undesirable immigrants, and their representatives at the International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam proposed to adopt a resolution to exclude barbarians such as ‘Asiatics’. Are the principles of Socialism to be applied only to the white people? Are we unfit to join the international Socialist movement? Are we to understand by Socialism that it only seeks to increase the interests of a particular race?”

We join you fully in the principles that underlie the three questions with which this passage closes, and warmly do we join you in the indignation expressed by your three questions at the opposite principle. But you err when you charge to the delegation of America the iniquitous resolution presented at Amsterdam. The error

is painful to the Socialist Labor Party; you must have incurred it inadvertently. The delegation of the Socialist Labor Party at Amsterdam is free from such a stain upon their Party and upon their own individual character. The blot lies wholly upon the delegation of the party which sails in this country under the several names of “Socialist”, “Social Democratic” and “Public Ownership”. The facts in the case are all officially of record.

On pages 119–120 of the French edition of the report of the Amsterdam Congress, issued by the International Bureau at Brussels, is found the resolution that you refer to, together with the list of the names and nationalities of its proposers. You will find on that discreditable list the names of only three proposers from America—Morris Hilquit, H. Schlueter and A. Lee. Furthermore, page 9 of the same report, where the list of the delegations of the several parties from America is given, will inform you what party those three names belong to. You will find that all three belong to the “Socialist” party: you will not find one name of the Socialist Labor Party delegation among the proposers of the iniquitous resolution.

But the skirts of the Socialist Labor Party are not simply negatively clean of the soilure of such an anti-Socialist action; they are affirmatively clean of such soilure. The report made to the Socialist Labor Party by the chairman of its delegation to Amsterdam contains upon this very subject, a passage that helps to throw light upon the affair, and that was published in the Party’s organs, the *Daily People* of last November 28, and the *Weekly People* of December 3. The passage is this:

“There was a proposition signed by Van Koll, of the Holland delegation, restricting the immigration of ‘inferior races.’ The Committee on Emigration and Immigration elaborated the matter, and finally a proposition was formally introduced bearing six signatures, those of H. Schlueter, Morris Hilquit, and A. Lee—all members of the ‘Socialist,’ or ‘Social Democratic’ party delegation—among the lot. This proposition virtually retained the clause ‘inferior,’ by using the word ‘backward’ races, and sought to explain it by placing in parentheses the words ‘such as Chinese, Negroes, ETC.’

“Such a posture was perfectly in keeping with the working class-sundering, guild-spirit-breathing A.F. of L., which dominates the eastern wing of the party that furnished three out of the six signatures to the proposition, all the three signatures being from the East, from New York, at that, and two of the three, employes of the New Yorker Volkszeitung

Corporation. How much in keeping with the anti-Socialist Gompers A.F. of L. the proposition was may be judged from the language of the 'Labor' Mayor Schmitz of San Francisco, in his salutatory address to the annual convention of the A.F. of L. that was opened in San Francisco on the 15th of this month (November, 1904). He included the Japanese (!!) among the races to be proscribed; and his recommendation was adopted by the convention. The 'ETC.' in the proposition presented at Amsterdam begins to be elucidated. Moreover, how wholly in keeping with the spirit of the Eastern wing of the said 'Socialist', alias 'Social Democratic' party, the proposition was, is a fact that stood conspicuously advertised in the late Presidential campaign. On the bill-boards of the city of Troy, N.Y., there were posted during the recent Presidential campaign huge posters on behalf of the Social Democratic party. In the center of the posters were the pictures of Debs and Hanford; between them appeared the motto from the *Communist Manifesto*: 'WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE!'; and above it all, in commentary of the party's interpretation of the great Socialist motto, there was an exordium to the workers enumerating among the atrocities of the capitalists, that 'THEY WANT UNRESTRICTED IMMIGRATION'—evidently ranking the party on the side of restricted immigration, and seeking support from such an anti-Socialist sentiment.

"The proposition being put in print and circulated in the Congress, the canvassing commenced. The bulk of that day I was elsewhere engaged and did not appear in my seat. Imagining he could take advantage of that and secure both the American votes for his A.F. of L. guildish resolution, Schlueter approached my fellow delegate, Poehland, and sought to rope him in. Of course he failed egregiously, and found out that the Socialist Labor Party consists not of one man but of a solid body of Socialists. Poehland repudiated Schlueter's request for support: repudiated it with scorn. Of course: Where is the line that separates 'inferior' from 'superior' races? What serious man, if he is a Socialist, what Socialist if he is a serious man, would indulge in 'etc.' in such important matters? To the native American proletariat, the Irish was made to appear an 'inferior' race; to the Irish, the German; to the German, the Italian; to the Italian—and so down the line through the Swedes, the Poles, the Jews, the Armenians, the Japanese, to the end of the gamut. Socialism knows not such insulting, iniquitous distinctions as 'inferior', and 'superior' races among the proletariat. It is for capitalism to fan the fires of such sentiments in its scheme to keep the proletariat divided.

"Upon the howl raised in the Congress the proposition was withdrawn."

For further light upon the subject, and also in justice to a portion of the said so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party, the following explanation may help to enlighten you:

You should not be surprised at the attitude of the Messrs. Hilquit, Schlueter and Lee. There is in this country a certain class of Germans who are intellectual and moral misfits; they have the notion that they represent the German race; their ludicrous stupidity goes to the length of setting up the German (as represented by them!) as the superior of all races; and they carry the grotesqueness of their impudence to the point of insulting all other races and nations, the American people included (!!) and calling them “ignorant”, “corrupt”, “intriguers”, “dishonest even in the language that they speak”, etc. Where such mental qualifications reach such manifestations, they usually will be found to go hand in hand with crass ignorance and actual corruption. It so happens in this instance. The Germans in question know of Socialism but the phrases; they have no real grasp of the Social Question; what with that and their own sordid interests, they are all beneficiaries of the Gompers A.F. of L.; and true to the Marxian principle that material interests dictate opinion, they inhale the A.F. of L. anti-Socialist sentiment on races and immigration, and breathe it forth. Now, then{,} this element which is really a caricature of the German race and of Socialism, are focused in the Volkszeitung Corporation, a private corporation of this city; and the three names from America, who appear as the proposers of the said anti-immigration resolution, ARE ALL CONNECTED WITH AND BENEFICIARIES OF THE SAID CORPORATION—Hilquit is a stockholder in it, Schlueter and Lee are its hired employes.

That the whole so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party should not be made to bear the whole onus of the disgraceful conduct of these three men appears from the circumstance that Nicholas Klein, one of the said party’s delegates at Amsterdam, emphatically denounced the proposed resolution in the Congress, and joined the Socialist Labor Party delegation in successfully resisting the placing of such an affront upon International Socialism. Nevertheless, even after making all due allowance for this circumstance, the said so-called Socialist party can not be spoken free. For one thing, it never repudiated the conduct of the three Volkszeitung Corporation men; for another thing, it continues to tolerate one of these men, Hilquit, on its National Committee.

The error into which you inadvertently fell will furnish you with an illustration of the hardships that bona fide Socialism has to contend against in this country at

this stage of the Movement. But progress is making out of the wilderness; it will no longer be long before the Socialist Movement of America will no longer be disgraced abroad and at home.

Fraternally,

EDITOR DAILY PEOPLE.

REPRINT

JAPANESE EXCLUSION

(From the Tokyo, Japan, *The Socialist*, by T.S.)

ONE of the leading papers of San Francisco recently made charges against the Japanese in the United States, and the Japanese government to secure the prohibition of the immigration of the Japanese into that country. The contention of the long series of articles and editorials hitherto published is that the Japanese in the United States form an undesirable element of their population and that the Japanese at home are inspired by sentiments of bitter hatred against Americans. In order to prove the first it is said that the Japanese work for starvation wages, are responsible for the increase of crime in California, that they intend at all costs to preserve their old standards of living, and are utterly hostile to their institutions and laws.

It is scarcely necessary for us to state that these charges are most unjust, as there is not one of these charges which can be substantiated. It is already an established truth that there is no more peaceful class of immigrants on the Pacific coast of the United States than the Japanese. They are generally more educated, and have higher moral standards than the European immigrants who are flocking there. They do not work

for starvation wages, as every man who employs them knows. They sell their labor at the highest price. They do not as a rule underbid American labor.

As to the second charge, that the Japanese at home are inspired by sentiments of hatred against the Americans, American residents in Japan will openly laugh at it. In fact, we are on the most friendly terms with the Americans, and we are proud to say that the Japanese is the nation who has the least, if any, race prejudice. We have no enmity even with the Russians, and the Russian prisoners enjoy more liberty and hospitality than they are with their army.

There is one more ridiculous charge against the Japanese Government of systematically planning to deluge the Americans with cheap labor. Our Government has exercised and does exercise a supervision of the going of our people to the United States. Only students and merchants are permitted to leave Japan for America and they are obliged to certify that they do not go there as laborers. We are rather complainants against our Government for putting upon us such unnecessary restrictions, and their charge is obviously unjust, and unwise.

We will not attempt to refute any more about such vague charges, as it is quite evident that these charges are nothing but a mere agitation in stirring up race prejudice. We wonder, however, is there ever a day when we may enjoy universal brotherhood of labor, while such agitation is afoot. Our American comrades often look at our people as undesirable immigrants, and their representatives at the International Congress at Amsterdam proposed to adopt a resolution to exclude barbarians, such as "Asiatics." Are the principles of Socialism to be applied only to the white people? Are we unfit to join the international Socialist movement? Are we to understand by Socialism that it only

seeks to increase the interests of a particular race? We know that the European immigrants, who are yearly pouring into America in great numbers, are mostly illiterate men, and are greatly contributing to the vices in America. On the contrary, our immigrants to America are very few in number, and much civilized in literally sense. Still the Americans wish to exclude the latter instead of the former. If this is not race prejudice, what else can it be? We should not like to say their agitation is ill-timed, unwise and unjust, as our politicians would like to say, but wish to know what justifies them in so doing from the point of view of a Socialist?

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

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