

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 6, NO. 147.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

OF COURSE THEY SMILED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE transactions of what is called the “convention of the A.F. of L.,” at Pittsburg, but which in reality is the gathering of a number of worthies who there correctly denounce one another as “scabs” and as “in the pay of the Employers’ Association,” were enlivened on the 8th day of the sessions by a scene of somewhat different nature. Mr. Victor L. Berger, of “Socialist” party renown, had the floor. He was “boring from within.” To use the photographic language of the report, “an audible smile rippled over the convention,” while “Gompers, Morrison and others on the platform gave him the smile all the time he was speaking.” What was he saying that was so mildly funny? The gentleman was endeavoring to convince his audience that he is a devoted Unionist.—No wonder they smiled.

Whether one hears the speeches, or reads the articles of the “intellectuals” who preside as Editors over the privately owned press of the so-called Socialist party, one note is easily caught; it pervades, as a “leit-motiv,” every tune that they sing. That note is the conviction that Unionism is a passing, an incidental manifestation of the Socialist Movement. In the opinion of these uncommonly self-satisfied wiseacres, the economic organization of the Working Class has no mission in the final and practical establishment of the Socialist Republic. The Union, according to them, is good enough only in the way that a bowling-alley club might be—a body in which, numbers of men being gathered, they can easily be reached for voting cattle, and from which, numbers of dollars being collected in its treasury, appropriations may be more readily obtained for political campaign purposes. For the Union these gentlemen have no other use; with them the Political Movement is **THE** thing. These views bear the distinctive ear-mark of the bourgeois radical.

In the arsenal of the bourgeois radical, politics is the sole weapon known. This is natural, above all, typical. The bourgeois radical, consciously or unconsciously,

proceeds from the premises of the “established Order”; unconsciously or consciously, he, accordingly, aims at “Reform” only. With the bourgeois radical, Political Government is as much an institution of all time and for all time, as capitalism is an eternal affair in the opinion of the class-conscious bourgeois, or capitalist. The bourgeois radical, being an “intellectual,” does not think it necessary to even read such works as Lewis H. Morgan’s *Ancient Society*, or Marx’s and Engels’s sociologic utterances; or if he does read them, he simply makes a parade of their names, but the fortifications of his mind are so wholly pre-occupied with his own bourgeois conceptions that he is unable to master what he reads. What he reads on these subjects leaks through him like water through a sieve. Accordingly, the bourgeois radical has not the faintest inkling of the fact that the on-coming, the Social Revolution, in which he is dabbling, implies the total overthrow of the Political State, and the rearing of the Industrial Commonwealth, the casting off of Political Government and the establishment of Industrial Administration. Having no inkling of that fact, the bourgeois radical has no thought other than for the Political Movement. He, consequently, has not the remotest conception of the determining factor that Unionism is in the achievement of the Social Revolution, and, naturally enough, cares naught how ill constructed a Union—a quarry for votes and funds for his political hobby—may be. Provided only the Union is of such a nature that he can pull its legs for votes and funds, the bourgeois radical is satisfied.

The labor lieutenants at the Civic Federation, gathered at the Pittsburg convention of the A.F. of L., are men of just the low cunning to see through and yet humor the bourgeois radical. Of course they smiled amusedly at the politician Berger’s protestations of love and affection for Unionism.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded January 2009

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