What Is May Day?

All too few U.S. workers today understand or appreciate that May Day, as observed by Socialists, has a meaning directly related to their welfare and, indeed, to their survival. Its significance is more than that of the old Maypole festivities, which had their roots in primitive societies that each spring hailed a new season’s promise and the reunion of those blinded and enthralled.

The First of May was set aside as an international workers’ holiday by the International Socialist Congress, attended by the Socialist Labor Party, that met in Paris in 1889. The Congress called for the organization of huge demonstrations in many countries on May 1, 1889, in support of a general demand for an eight-hour workday. Demonstrations for the eight-hour day were repeated for several years. They had the beneficial effect of generating a sense of international class solidarity among the workers who participated in them the world over.

Capitalism helped compartmentalize the world into “nations.” “Patriotism” and other mystifications of nationalism were deliberately fostered by capitalists to keep their respective working classes blinded and enthralled.

Socialists utilized May Day to expose the “patriotism” of the capitalists as a fraud and a sham. They showed that capitalists needed the whole of the shop, the mine, the yard.

As Daniel De Leon once said, “The idea of May Day arose, not from the fragrancy of the fields, but from the sooty, dusty and suffocating atmosphere of the ship, the mine, the yard.”

The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party met in Regular Session at the Holiday Inn—Great America, in Santa Clara, Calif., the weekend of April 1–2. National Secretary Robert Bills called the NEC to order at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday morning. April 1. Bernard Bortnick was elected chairman for the session and Donna Bills was elected recording secretary. An agenda was adopted, which, among other things, provided for presentation of a report from the National Secretary and the election of committees for purposes of the session.

The National Secretary’s report was divided into eight sections on "National Headquarters," "State of Organization," "General Activities," "Party Press and Literature," "National Executive Committee," "Matters Requiring Action," "Party Finances" and "Editorial Matters." (Excerpts from two sections of the report are printed in this issue.)

The NEC adjourned at 4:35 p.m. on Sunday, April 2, the two committees for purposes of the session.

The NEC adjourned at 4:35 p.m.
Los Angeles SEIU Janitors Forced Into Labor Strike

By Ken Boettcher

A t press time, 8,500 Los Angeles janitors—members of Local 1877 of the Service Employees Internationa l Union (SEIU)—remained on strike. The Los Angeles strike is the first of what could be many strikes around the country this year as the SEIU pursues what it calls its “Justice for Janitors 2000” campaign.

Los Angeles janitors need justice all right. In 1997 1877 members voted to begin their strike April 3 against 18 janitorial firms. Those firms “are involved in the negotiation for a master contract covering about 70 percent of the office space in Los Angeles County.” The workers rejected the employers’ offer “of a wage freeze for one year and 40-cent-an-hour increases in the second and third years of a three-year contract. SEIU negotiators are seeking $1-an-hour raises in each of the three years covered by the contract. Janitors presently make $6.80 to $7.90 per hour, according to the Los Angeles Times.

The numbing drudgery of the work janitors must do, under the conditions and with the hazardous cleaning chemi cals they must use, has caused the struggle to attract much public sup port, especially in a city full of publicly seen faces. As Los Angeles, there is no shortage of local celebs who think the janitors should have what many call a “livable wage” of $10 an hour.

Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jackie Goldberg got herself arrested in one march supporting the janitors. So did state Senator Gloria Gilchrist, Gil Cedillo and Scott Wildman and Santa Monica City Councilman Paul Rosen stein. So did “a rabbi, a priest and seven top officials from local unions,” the Time s reported.

The state Senate even “stepped into the dispute and approved a resolution (SR26) by Sen. Hilda Solis (D-La Puente), chairwoman of the Industrial Relations Committee, calling on janitorial contractors and housing owners to improve the economic conditions of hard-working janitors under their economic control.”

An anonymous donor gave $500,000 to the SEIU in support of its campaign on two separate occasions since the strike began.

Most of these local celebs wouldn’t have any idea of what a “livable wage” was if it jumped up and bit them in the pants. The SEIU officials in charge of negoti ations apparently think that a “livable wage” is $10 an hour. As any worker making $10 an hour could tell them, $10 an hour—$20,800 per year at 40 hours a week—is still perilously close to last year’s officially defined federal poverty line of $17,184 for a family of four (a threshold that most anti poverty organizations agree is set too low). Tax in a spouse working full time and you have something that might be called “livable” were it not for the cost of housing and day care. In fact, what you get is a family without parents—with latchkey kids and family trouble brewing.

Fact is that these janitors—and all workers—deserve a lot more than an income that keeps them pegged to some politically manipulated “poverty threshold” or some bourgeois notion of what should be enough for them to live com fortably. Workers deserve the full product of their labor, and nothing less. They deserve complete social ownership and democratic control of the economy that workers have to date merely built and operated for the benefit of a tiny minori ty of the super-rich—the capitalist class.

That demand is something the officials of the SEIU and its brethren pro labor unions of the AFL-CIO will never issue. For they are tied to the existence of capitalism, the economic system under which all workers are wage slaves of the employing class. They have not and will not challenge the existence of that system, for it is what grants them their privileged positions as merch anisers of labor power.

In the short run, however, the prima ry strategic problem the janitors face in their strike is the way they are organized. They work in buildings in which thousands or tens of thousands of other workers are employed. Many of those workers are union members. Yet, the other workers, particularly the “unionized” ones, must cross the janitors’ picket lines to honor their unions’ con tracts with their employers. Workers scabbing on workers is the fix that unions organized on craft or trade lines put workers in. Workers organized in industrial lines would not have that particular problem to deal with.

All the workers in the buildings serv iced by the striking janitors are them selves involved in providing a service. Some of those services may be essential to the production of commodities. Whatever the service or product may be, however, every worker engaged in the same industry should be organized in the same union, not scattered rather than a craft union. There should be no janitors’ union, or clerical workers’ union, or any other union separated from the industrial union representing all workers engaged in the production of a particular product or service. Just as they work together to keep things moving in the industry that uses their labor, so they should be organized together to resist the encroachments of their employers.

Real supporters of the janitors’ cause should be parties beyond their im mediate demands for a higher wage. They should also work to let them know that a secure economic future and an abundance for all lies in establishing in dustrial unions that would be better equipped to fight the day-to-day battles of the class struggle and lay the founda tion on which to build the Socialist Re public of labor.

SLP’s Web Site Producing Results

The following is a portion of the “Gener al Activities” section of SLP National Sec retary Robert Bills’ Report to the National Executive Committee in Session, April 1-2, 2000.

In 1998 the SLP Web site probably re ceived about 5,745 “hits” or visits from people all over the world. That number is based on the averages included in my reports to the NEC Session and the National Executive Committee last April.

Last year it is certain that the Web site received a minimum of 24,362 hits or visits from the people all over the world that the site is designed for. That total is for 48 weeks only, however, for an average of 508 a week. Multiply those contacts by the number of people who visited the Web site in 1999. That number of visitors has grown and grown significantly in a very short time.

The correlation between hits and contacts received has been 1,000 to one. Despite that figure to the number of actual e-mail contacts from leaflets would reduce the ratio of contacts from leaflets would require a distribution of about 5 million.

The workers who visit the site can also learn about the SLP, its call for the political and economic revolution that is necessary to put an end to capitalism, and how to apply for it. Write to: SLP, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218. Ask for the SLP Membership Packet.

Do You Belong?

Do you know what the SLP stands for? Do you understand the class struggle and why the SLP calls for an end of capitalism and of its system of wage labor? Do you understand why the SLP does not advocate reforms of capitalism, and why it calls upon workers to organize Socialist Industrial Unions?

If you have been reading The People steadily for a year or more, you qualify to be a member. And if you agree with the SLP’s call for the political and economic unity of the working class, you qualify for membership in the SLP. And if you qualify to be a member you probably should be a member.

More information on what membership entails, and how to apply for it, write to SLP, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218.
Global Injustice—It’s the Best That World Capitalism Can Do

Robert Bills, National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party delivered the following talk at the National Executive Committee Session Banquet on Saturday, April 1, in Santa Clara, Calif.

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reachers almost invariably start their sermons by a passage from Scripture to draw a moral by telling a tale. I would like to borrow from their example this evening by citing passages from socialist Scripture. Both come from things that Daniel De Leon wrote. The first should help to explain why I have drawn on the second. We had occasion to cite the first in the April issue of _The People_. If you have not received that issue, or picked it up here this evening, it will sound familiar to you. It was written in 1903, and the part that interests me here reads as follows:

“...Theoretical articles are only for the few. Only these have time and mind to sit down to such articles. But theory is needed. How convey it to the masses, who also have a right to know to what extent success...is there but one way—weave the theory into the events of the day. That is a much more difficult task than to reel out, or refine upon theory. It implies a thorough grasp of the theory, so thorough as to perceive its various manifestations in running events. That theory De Leon had in mind, of course, was the theory of socialism and how to bring knowledge of that theory to the masses. That was the task of the Socialist Labor Party of America, 156 E. Dana St., Mountain View, CA 94041-1508. It is published monthly by the Socialist Labor Party of America, 156 E. Dana St., Mountain View, CA 94041-1508. Periodicals postage paid at Menlo Park, CA 94025. Return address changes and new subscriptions: P.O. Box 994, E. Dana St., Mountain View, CA 94041-0994. Communications: Business correspondence should be addressed to The SLP, 156 E. Dana St., Mountain View, CA 94041-0994. Subscriptions: Payment by international money order only. Single copy, $7 per 100; 501-1,000 copies, $6 per 100; 101-500 copies, $8 per 100. All subscriptions $7 per 100; 501-1,000 copies, $6 per 100; 101-500 copies, $8 per 100. Rate Watch does not say that these things should not be done—that there should be no rules and regulations—only that the rules should be different and that they should be decided against, not by a system which has already been decided now. They say that the WTO and, presumably, the corporations, the government, the employers, the International Monetary Fund should be “democratized.” Corporate Watch and others who would “democratize” the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, the corporations and the political state have no wish to abolish the social system that creates these things. They sometimes refer to that system as capitalism, and the theory of capitalism as being criminal in its conduct, but they do not see, or do not want to see, that these institutions of capitalism come into being, and are maintained, not because capitalism is a criminal system. They seem to believe that if they were given the admission to the councils of these criminal institutions they could reform them.

There once was a man who said: “The American people, where the public interest is at stake, should say a second theory—or perhaps I believe that if capitalism is the best of all possible systems. The upshot of all this is a view of the real world that is what we said. And so they are—for some. Never mind that in spite of the so-called full employment and the so-called tight labor market, 5.9 million workers are officially recognized as being unemployed. Close your eyes to another 3.4 million workers who are involuntarily locked into part-time jobs. Dismiss as immaterial the fact that another 4.6 million workers who want jobs—any job—cannot find them. And by all means do not be “mised” when you hear that yet another 16.7 million workers who want full-time jobs don’t have one. They work so hard that they have a hand in it—the best of all possible systems can do.

Of course, not everyone swallows that theory whole hog. There are those who believe that if capitalism is the best of all possible systems it would certainly do with some changes. Taken together, those who think this may be said to represent a second theory—or perhaps I should say a secondary theory—about the capitalist world we live in. It is the theory that capitalism can be reformed and thereby made to do the things required of it. And if you examine the statements you’ll see that the beneficiaries of that system are making a living out of it are the people who make the system when it is the system that makes the Al Capones. They seem to believe that if they were given the admission to the councils of these criminal institutions they could reform them.

Well, the man who said that was Al Capone, the Chicago gangster, and the opponent of the War who makes the system when it is the system that makes the Al Capones.

The second passage from socialist Scripture I want to cite is longer. It is the one I want to use to weave the theory into the events of the day.” It comes from De Leon’s Reform or Revolution. "Revolutions triumphed, whenever they did away with a dictatorship that was marching straight upon their goal. On the other hand, the fate of Wat Tyler ever is the fate of the people: their leaders, in the case of the Middle Ages, were weak enough to allow themselves to be wheeled into placing their movement into the hands of Richard II, who needed them for a moment, and who disposed of them by murdering the men to the gallows. You will perceive the danger run by movements that put leadership except such as stands square-shoulder leadership, partially as what is being done. There is the theory that capitalism is the best of all possible systems. The upshot of all this is a view of the real world that is what we have been told. And so they are—for some. Never mind that in spite of the so-called full employment and the so-called tight labor market, 5.9 million workers are officially recognized as being unemployed. Close your eyes to another 3.4 million workers who are involuntarily locked into part-time jobs. Dismiss as immaterial the fact that another 4.6 million workers who want jobs—any job—cannot find them. And by all means do not be “mised” when you hear that yet another 16.7 million workers who want full-time jobs don’t have one. They work so hard that they have a hand in it—the best of all possible systems can do.

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At this writing 6-year-old Cuban Elián González is still being kept from his father in the Miami home of his American great uncle. He is still constantly surrounded by a rabidly anti-Castro mob that has reportedly at times numbered in the thousands. That mob still claims to represent Elián’s interests, believing it has the right to prevent the boy from returning to his home, father and grandparents. But nothing remains as the real motivation of this venomous crowd more clearly than the chants of “War! War!” and “War!” which they uttered outside poor Elián’s window. What is it that could possibly pervert the minds of so many to utter such a grotesque incantation? What could make them turn into a political football the fate of a 6-year-old boy still mourning the loss of his mother? What kind of people are these who make innocent Elián a poster child for their reactionary rantings? The answer is to be found in the common history of many in the crowd. Some, to be sure, are the known victims of repression by Castro’s bureaucratic sta- tist regime. But many more are or have known those thrown out of Cuba along with the good nature which accompanied the dictatorial regime. In 1959 when Castro’s guerrilla forces won the country’s down- trodden and impoverished. Its unwillingness to disturb the mili- tary-style of “law and order” maintained by the Fujimori regime could merely sur- vive a month without U.S. backing.

In truth, the United States has done nothing to help Lori Berenson. It has neither lifted the legal harassment nor moved from the city; the good nature which refuses to see wrong has been as cruel as it has been oppressive. Thousands of Peruvians have been tossed into prison by hooded judges without benefit of trial since 1992. Thousands more have simply disappeared as under equally despotic regimes in Argentina and Chile. Fujimori is also responsible for the forced steriliza- tion of thousands of Peruvian Indians.


Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroads, land and all other instruments of productive capacity; the right to control the production to satisfy human needs, not, as under capitalism, for sale and profit. Socialism means direct control and management of the industries and social services by the workers through a democratic government based on their nation- wide economic organizations.

Under socialism, all authority will originate from the workers, integrally unit- ed in Socialist Industrial Unions. In each workplace, the rank and file will elect whom they consider experienced or representative to act for them. Within each shop or office division of a plant, the rank and file will participate directly in formulating and implementing all plans necessary for efficient oper- ations. Besides electing all necessary shop officers, the workers will also elect repre- sentatives to a local and national council of their industry or service—and to a central congress representing all the industries and services. This all-industrial congress will plan and coordinate production in all areas of the economy. All per- sons elected to any post in the socialist government, from the lowest to the highest level, will be directly accountable to the rank and file. They will be subject to re- moval at any time that a majority of those who elected them decide it is necessary. Such a system would make possible the fullest democracy and freedom. It would be a society based on the most primary freedom—economic freedom. For individuals, socialism means an end to economic insecurity and exploitation. It means workers no longer need be common laborers who toil in a dehumanizing factory market and become obstacles to those working to correct them.

Don’t Be Too Good natured

Lori Berenson is a 30-year-old “free- lance” American journalist. Four years ago a military court in Peru condemned her to life imprisonment on a charge of “treason to the fatherland.” The court that handed down the sentence was presided over by a hooded judge, and Berenson had no opportunity to defend herself. Berenson, however, has been in touch with the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), a guerrilla hand that the despotic Peruvian regime of Alberto Fujimori has characterized repeatedly as a terrorist group, no doubt to distinguish it from the “law and order” represented by himself. Berenson has denied being involved with either group, though she has expressed strong sympathy for the country’s down- trodden and impoverished. Berenson’s case has been as cruel as it has been oppressive. Thousands of Peruvians have been tossed into prison by hooded judges without benefit of trial since 1992. Thousands more have simply disappeared as under equally despotic regimes in Argentina and Chile. Fujimori is also responsible for the forced steriliza- tion of thousands of Peruvian Indians.

With this master performance for a model, Gompers stepped last Sunday before the footlights of the Central Fakertated Union. His “performers” were the order of Judge Freedman, engaging the Gompers Interna- tional Union of Cigar-makers from support- ing the striking and locked-out cigarmakers with national aid. Gompers struck the kind of fortune that Artemas Ward describes as the “brulld, torguo, bulbud” style and fairly quick success. We account his coming to violate Justice Freedman’s injunction; I shall violate it by—
again, many a heart, in dread anxiety, stopped beating; Judge Freedman’s heart? Bless you, no! The heart of the treasurer of socialism—

Mock-Turtle Gompers

Mr. Samuel Gompers has again broken out of the old work-shop, wherein he is not to be matched. This time it was on the stage of the variety theater known as the Central Fakertated Union. The story of the old work-shop is known, who, flying off on a certain occasion into a paroxysm of rage at some remarks about her appearance that the boss made in the wild attitude of a Medea: “If anyone says I am old and homely, I shall rush to the table, grasp the carving knife, and—” all hearts stepped into their shoes and the climax came—and cut myself a slice of bread.”
promising of any that yet appeared on the stage of history. The program of this revolution consists not in any one detail. It demands the unconditional surrender of the capitalist system and its system of wage slavery; the total extinction of class rule is its object. Nothing short of that—whether as a first, a temporary, or any other sort of step can at this late date receive recognition in the camp of the modern revolution.

Are the people who are leading the movements that object to the effects of capitalism today the roots of the Wat Tyler in modern dress? Are their efforts at "democratizing" the WTO and other institutions more comparable to marching on the feudal castle and crying out: "My lord, you must change your ways!" Are they the ones who doubt that fulfilled Wat Tyler and his followers at the hands of some modern Richard II?

The Socialist Labor Party says that is precisely the case. If you understand what we are led to some questions:

- Who can do something to change the world for the better?
- What should they change it to?
- How can it be done?

The world, after all, isn’t quite the way the romanticized or the popularized versions of those kinds of beings who can ask, and answer, questions about it. People can—have—done more than that. They have changed the earth itself, contending against, having done it before, they can do it again.

But we’ve raised three questions, all of which require the correct answers. Or else the world, like the weather, will whirr out of control, and the people in it will be tossed about like drops of rain.

Each one of the three questions we’ve raised is of critical importance. And the who, what and how are each as important as a fourth question we could raise—"the when" of the question.

Socialists offer answers to all four questions. And by “Socialists,” I mean the Socialist Labor Party. If you know the least thing about the SLP, you won’t be surprised by the answers we offer.

The “what” is the nature of capitalism. By that we mean those millions who have no control over the productive forces—that vast majority who own nothing but the ability to perform productive labor, but who are deprived of the opportunity to exercise that ability without first turning it into a commodity to be sold.

The “who” is socialism. And what do we mean by socialism? What does the SLP mean? Daniel De Leon put it this way: “Socialism means but one thing, and that is the abolition of capital in private ownership and the direct control of the productive forces—that vast majority who have or which is at your fingertips. It’s you who have it within your power to determine if and when the fourth question can be answered—and answered with precision.

That answer to the question “where” may surprise you. But it shouldn’t—and shouldn’t for one good and simple reason. What is that reason? It is that you are the main element of your class. And it is your awareness of that fact—your willingness, or readiness, to act on it—that may well make the difference.

Let me shift gears for a moment. Let me pose one more question—one that has occurred to all of us at one time or another, but more often to workers skeptical about socialism. My question is this: "What do Socialists want to do so long as the world is in current order?

Or to put it another way: "Aren’t Socialists chasing impossible dreams?" Or isn’t the working class hopeless?"

They are not unreasonable questions to ask. The questions are not unreasonable because they are not vague. Yet, they stem from a lack of knowledge—knowledge of history, but especially knowledge of working-class history. It is this latter threat that is the struggle within the proletariat. And it is this latter threat to the consciousness of the working class that Socialists convince workers that capitalism is the source of the dangers that beset us. It is this certainty about the danger of capitalism that makes the working class aware of its position, and bring them under their own “direct control.”

Because of these things, workers also need a political party of their own—one that will serve a twofold purpose. First, to make the working class aware of its position in capitalist society, i.e., to educate the workers and stimulate their class-consciousness. Second, to challenge the ruling class’ control of the state—a institution which socialism will abolish, but which today exists to enforce class rule.

These are the answers the Socialists offer in response to the questions I raised.

Those questions were posed in reply to a common observation—that our society is riddled with contradictions; that they are dangerous and threaten our survival; and that the source of the contradictions, and the dangers they pose, is the system that gives rise to them.

The dangers are evident to many; but the answers the SLP offers are less evident to at least those who recognize the problem—but are deprived of the opportunity to exercise that ability without first turning it into a commodity to be sold.

The dire facts are the same. But the difference in what the SLP offers is clear in two ways. By that we mean those millions who have no control over the productive forces—that vast majority who own nothing but the ability to perform productive labor, but who are deprived of the opportunity to exercise that ability without first turning it into a commodity to be sold.

But most workers are not aware of this. They raise other questions about the unions than the fact that the unions protect their members against wage cuts? Benefit losses? Dangerous working conditions? Factory closings?

Every consequence of workers’ attempt to learn the answers to these questions. It’s because the unions are not organized for that purpose. They are organized instead to discipline workers—not as Socialists understand the term, but as understood by a class that needs and cannot survive without a docile workforce.

The AFL-CIO and the life are organized against the working class. This is a key point in understanding why socialism seems “slow to come.” And it is evidence of another fact that must always be kept clear in mind—the fact of what De Leon did.

"The in-class struggle," De Leon said, "is the struggle within the proletariat." And that did the miserable deed of that.

He meant, first, that capitalism itself had drawn the line between its interests and the interests of the working class. He meant, second, that capital has itself into the difference between reform and revolution—between the conviction, which is the essence of reform, that efforts to strive for improvements within the system are preferable to efforts to overthrow and replace it.

By moving the question to allow for the possibility of improving society through reform, that day is gone. And that, too, has been one of the contradictions of capitalism have led to are proof positive of that fact. Further, they prove another fact—and a third fact, that the consciousness of the proletariat.

First, the other, or second, fact is this: Capitalism cannot be reformed or improved. And, even if it could with direct regard to such problems as unemployment, poverty and the like, it cannot be reformed in regard to the primary problem that is a threat to the human race. It is this latter threat that it poses that underscores the socialists—"the...--contention that every effort to deal with the effects of capitalism at this late date is pure folly.

Second, that third fact is this: While we as Socialists are sensitive to the crimes and outrages capitalism commits in its own interests, while we are conscious of, and deeply affected by what capitalism does to us, we are not conscious of what it does to others here in the United States, but everywhere in the world, and it is the latter that it poses in regard to the millions who have drawn the line between its interests and the interests of the working class. For they have rejected the principle of unionism and all that hangs thereby. It is actually this very order, this very system, that is the vast majority of the working class. For they have refused even to attempt the organization of the working class.

But most workers are not aware of this. They raise other questions about the unions. The answer that the unions protect their members against wage cuts? Benefit losses? Dangerous working conditions? Factory closings?

The AFL-CIO and the life are organized against the working class. This is a key point in understanding why socialism seems “slow to come.” And it is evidence of another fact that must always be kept clear in mind—the fact of what De Leon did.

"The in-class struggle," De Leon said, "is the struggle within the proletariat." And that did the miserable deed of that.

He meant, first, that capitalism itself had drawn the line between its interests and the interests of the working class. He meant, second, that capital has itself into the difference between reform and revolution—between the conviction, which is the essence of reform, that efforts to strive for improvements within the system are preferable to efforts to overthrow and replace it.

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We salute with thanks and appreciation all those who contributed to the Socialist Education Fund during the first 12 weeks of the current year, and to those who contributed to the Socialist Education Fund since then, totaling $26,511.61.

Section Cleveland, John & Lois Reynolds, Chris Dodge. Thanks Due to Socialist
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Robert & Patricia Burns; Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Os- 
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socialism with its methods—of how we, as class-conscious Socialists, must not fail to keep our priorities in order. In reading that definition to you I would ask that you look at the word that it was written in 1908—keep in mind, not in being not as much as because of the examples he cites. It is not strongly insisted that socialism means but one thing, and that is the abandonment of capital in private hands, and the turning over of the means of production—the direct control of the ...workers in them. Anything else is not socialism, and has no right to sail under that name."

And here we pick up the thread that distinguishes socialism and aims those who believe they can improve capitalism:

"Socialism is not the establishment of an eight-hour day, not the abolition of child labor, not the payment of a minimum wage, not the overthrow of the right of the ...to accomplish that goal.

Our strategy as a revolutionary movement is nothing more than the application of those methods—of the tactics—that will carry us to our goal. The SLP has always stressed the importance of the correct strategy and tactics. For the success of our movement depends on it.

Other movements use other tactics—tactics which do not correspond to their goals. But we must never confuse our methods with theirs, anymore than we would confuse our aim with their reform aims.

"It cannot be too strongly insisted that socialism is the collective ownership of the means of production of the world. Socialism is the long-term goal of the revolutionary movement. As such, it must adopt certain fighting methods—of the tactics—that will carry us to our goal."

(Continued from page 3)

To break the chains of wage slavery, workers need socialist education.

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The best that capitalism can do (of the University of Wisconsin, October 1917)

There is much more we don’t know, but we do know that De Leon did not move directly from the ULP into the SLP. His young wife died at about this time, and Grover, their one-year-old son, died the same year. Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward was published in 1888 and Bellamy Clubs soon sprang up all over the country. In May of that year, the Workers’ Advocate, which was the SLP’s English-language newspaper at the time, listed De Leon as having been one of the “in-class strugglers.” The Socialist theory of capitalism proves that capitalism is the cause of all the economic and social problems that plague the world today. It proves that you can’t change capitalism in the way that will eliminate those problems. It demonstrates that workers who believe that democracy will socialism come depend very much on our clarity as to goals and methods.

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(Continued from page 9)

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Report on De Leon's Works

(Continued from page 9)
President Clinton has described him as a ‘man we can do business with.’ The man Clinton was referring to is Vladimir Putin, the ex-police officer whose battle honour ‘Mordor’ listed beside his name, is the American ‘business’ class— the capitalists who see Russia as a land of new opportunities for investment, exploitation and despoliation. American workers could be excused if they concluded from President Clinton’s description of Putin that he is a man who meets the ‘democratic’ criteria that some others, such as Yugoslavia’s Slobodan Milosevic or Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, do not measure up to. Well, perhaps not quite. As the San Jose Mercury News recently put it: ‘Putin has proclaimed himself an ad- vocate of democracy and reform. It is expected to point Russia toward a more authoritarian course, as already mani- fested by his restrictions on the press, un- reliable justice system, and the break- away republic of Chechnya, support for new powers for security services and pro- fessed reinterpretation of military training in secret schools, such as November 27.’

If Putin is something less than the American “business” class—the capitalists who see Russia as a land of new opportunities for investment, exploitation and despoliation, he is “a man we can do business with.”

From being an active mugwump in 1884, De Leon wrote many more articles than those of recent years. Clinton says U.S. Can Do Business With Russia’s Putin

Thirteen years ago, SLP National Secre- tary Robert Bills informed the Party’s 38th National Convention that he had undertaken a new effort to identify and collect the works of Daniel De Leon with a view to their eventual publication in book form. According to an article by J. William Jones in the People of the People, Aug. 29, 1987, Bills informed the convention that an earlier effort “fizzled out when the De- pression came along in the 1930s and mon- ey became scarce to secure a place for an organization like the SLP under the best of circumstances.”

The convention formed the 38th National Con- vention “that he intended to pursue this effort to a successful conclusion with the approval and support of the membership and all ad- vocates of Daniel De Leon.” The convention noted that Bills’ presentation was met with an enthusiastic round of applause and expres- sions of approval and encouragement from the membership.

The People

With the aid of a microfilm reader-printer, the task of collecting De Leon’s works from The People of the People Daily was completed several years ago. Since 1982 most of what had been photographed from microfilm has been typed and stored on computer disks. When the SLP National Executive Com- mittee met in Regular Session last month, Bills devoted a portion of his report on “Party Progress Report” to an update on where the project stands today. The following is tak- en from that portion of his report:

All of Daniel De Leon’s works typed in 1999 are from the Daily People years, 1906–1914 and 1912–1914. Those from the 1906–1908 period were acquired, for the most part, and those from 1912–1914 were obtained from the National Office.

The first group comprises De Leon’s works from the Daily People years, 1906–1908. The second group covers January 1912 through March 1913 and January through February 1914. The total of editorials and other Daily People matter typed during the year is 1,270. Six hundred of these are from 1906–1908 and 670 are from 1912–1914.

These works by De Leon are stored on computer disks, together with 5,570 typed earlier, i.e., between 1992 and 1998. Sev- eral copies of the entire collection of ap- proximately 6,840 separate items, plus 85 more typed this year, are stored on large capacity Bernoulli disks. This year we also took the added precaution of storing two complete, those not already typed, as of January 1 on compact disks, or CDs.

What was left for typing as of January 1 was the balance of 1908 (April–December), all of 1909 and 1910 and the balance of 1913 (also April–December). The 85 addi- tional typed articles since the start of the project have been typed on Bernoulli disks and will be stored on CDs in due course.

The People

In my report to the 43rd National Con- vention, I mentioned that Mr. De Leon had hoped to increase the Party’s collection of SLP and other newspapers that might be valuable sources of information on SLP his- tory. As of June 1999, we have several issues readily available in the National Office library, and I re- ported on what were then three recent acquisitions. These new acquisitions were a microfiche edition of Edward Bellamy’s Na- tionalist magazine (1889–1891), and micro- filmed editions of the original IWW’s Indus- trial Union Bulletin (1907–1908) and the WIU’s Industrial Union Record (1912–1914). I also reported that I was looking for a com- plete edition of The Socialist (1902–1903), which was the official organ of the SLP of Great Britain. Eventually a British company was found on the Internet and arrangements made to buy the three red volumes.

The film was received and added to the collection in June 1998. My hope is that these newspapers do not stand entirely from a historical best of mind. It stems from a belief that the Party’s history is a valuable and understood weapon in our arsenal, as well as a means by which we may have use of that history, how- ever, we must know what it is and where to find it. Historic newspapers and magazines such as The Socialist, The Nationalist and, of course, The People are among the most valu- able and complete resources available for gathering up that kind of information.

The People

One of the interesting things that can be found in The Socialist, for example, are de- tailed reports on the famous 1911 Clyde- bank strike at the Inge Singer Sewing Ma- chine factory in Scotland. That strike was led by the British SLP on industrial union lines, and at least two articles from The So- cialist would make a valuable SLP pam- phlet or supplement to The People to mark the 90th anniversary of the strike next year. The British SLPs role in the Clydebank strike, and similar struggles of our own from those years—such as the 1911 Parisian silk weavers’ strike led by the Detroit Socialists—should be made better use of in the future.

Regardless of our better use of these exam- ples than we have in recent years.

Similarly, not everything that De Leon ever wrote was for The People or for social- ism. Apart from his academic works for Co- lumbia University’s Political Science Quar- terly, De Leon wrote or spoke for a number of other movements favoring the 1890s. He may have countenanced himself a Republican before the presidential election campaign of 1890, but when the GOP nominated James G. Blaine for president he definitely worked closely with the “Independent Republicans,” known to history as “mugwumps,” who op- posed Blaine’s candidacy but backed the Democratic nominee, Grover Cleveland. Some idea of what De Leon’s political think- ing was in those days may be surmised from the title of a mugwump tract that he wrote:

TO BUSINESS MEN:

A Specimen of Mr. Blaine’s Diplomacy—
Is He a Safe Man to Trust as President?

From being an active mugwump in 1884, De Leon passed through the United Labor Party led by Henry George (1886–1888) and the “Nationalist” movement led by Edward Bellamy (1888–1890) before finally joining the SLP in September 1890. The fact that he and his first wife named their second- born son after Grover Cleveland suggests that he also passed through the Democratic Party itself before the New York mayoral campaign that was to make him a figure of the labor- movement in the autumn of 1886.

A knowledge of De Leon’s passage through these movements is important to this discussion. He is important because of the expe- rience he gained while passing through them did as much or more to mold his thinking on reform and revolution as his passage through the Knights of Labor did to clarify his thoughts on trade unionism and indus- trial unionism. It establishes that the con- clusions he drew from those early experi- ences were those of a dynamic participant in the struggles of the day, and those that of a scholar, a teacher: an academic: a man on the world from behind the walls of an ivy-covered fortress.

De Leon, we know, wrote two important articles for the Bulletin of the Bellamy Bellamy Club of Madison” in August 1889, which in later years would be incorporated into the SLP papers. “James G. Blaine” and “The Eleventh Census Conspiracy” in February 1890, which prompted a lengthy editorial by the Boston Herald and a reply from De Leon in March. However, De Leon also may have written many more articles for two other newspapers several years be- fore he joined up with the United Labor move- ment. Although I have never seen one of these articles, or even a direct quotation from one of them, at least one would be backgrounds— De Leon in August 1889, it is sug- gested that De Leon came close to losing his position as a lecturer at Columbia University before he was hired by the Daily People. News- papers I have in mind are The Leader and The Standard.

The People

That date was set up by the New York Central Labor Union for purposes of the 1886 mayoral campaign in that city. It act- ed as the quasi-official organ of what was then the strongest and potentially unassailable United Labor Party. (The name was not adopted until after the election.) Its main purpose was to encourage voters to cast their ballots for a united labor ticket, and to counter the daily attacks on the ULP and its mayoral candidate by the New York City press. It was what he wrote for that paper during the mayoral campaign of 1886 that Sorensen claims almost cost De Leon his job at Columbia.

The Stolen Ticket, later in October. (Continued on page 7)