

Daniel De Leon

## **Editorial: These Words Have the True Ring**

The Omaha *Western Laborer*, official organ of the Central Labor Union of that city, has a leading article that closes with this sentiment:

We predict that the leading reform party of the near future will be a Socialist one, which shall attack not only the more evident injustices of the competitive system, but the system itself. Social reforms are now being sought covertly through channels which are clogged by exploitation and robbery. Real social reform can only come from an open fight against the cursed competitive system which is strangling justice. The people must uphold Socialism itself in order to obtain the reform it demands.

These words have the true ring!

In these days—when the woods are full of quacks, and when those who claim to have at heart, not the well-being only, but especially the good name of our American people, insult the intelligence of our citizens by treating them as if they were babies, who have to be given sugar-coated pills, or flies, that are to be caught with lying molasses—to find one true, stout-hearted champion, who adopts a wiser and a manful course, is cause for great rejoicing.

Among those styling themselves reformers, it is no unusual thing to hear them declare they are Socialists, but (in a whisper) “we must not let on; the American people will not

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swallow that word; let us have the thing, but give it another name.”

Theoretically, a thing is not dependent upon its name for its qualities—good, bad, or indifferent. Nevertheless, to introduce into the great Social Question the tactics of “business”, of the hurrah clothing store, and of the patent medicine; to adopt the “tricks of trade”, and the chicanery of the bargain counter, by commending a thing under such name as may seem most captivating, is a policy not only unworthy, but fraught with disaster.

A great movement must depend upon knowledge, not ignorance; upon intelligence, not superstition; upon facts, not fiction; upon heroes, not dupes. To fall inside, is just as bad as to fall outside the breast-works. A victory that cannot be turned to use is usually worse than a defeat. Even if on false pretences, with a diet of sugar coated pills, and sailing under false colors, sufficient numbers could be drawn together to capture the breast-works, the victorious masses would then be sure to accomplish what the enemy had failed in—rout themselves. Compactness of forces is the result of sterner stuff than “business” principles.

The Social Movement is a great historic movement; wherever civilization has struck roots, there that movement is manifest; its philosophy, its tactics and its name have become as inseparable from it as the skin is inseparable from the live human body. The Social Movement is the Movement of Socialism. As such it is known, as such it is bound to triumph.

To cater to superstition by falsifying the name is no better than Iscariot’s deed of denying his Master. The enemy will not be deceived, he will only conceive contempt for that which he should be made to respect; while, on the other hand, the deceiving spokesmen and the deceived rank and file will sooner or later feel all the enervating effect, and suffer all the consequences, of falling out of touch with the Spirit of the Age.

Finally, to approach the question sideways; to treat it as oyster-openers do an oyster—sneakingly pry it open; to try

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upon it the tactics of the guerrilla warfare—harass its flanks, but leave its citadel untouched; to imagine the entrenched enemy to be a buzzard that will allow its feathers to be plucked “one at a time” and will not defend its smallest pin-feather as furiously as its largest primaries, and, accordingly to take to peanut politics, sing low and beg little, is to strike a chord too starved to thrill the masses to the daring of great deeds, to shove off victory, and to make certain final disruption and defeat. History, ancient and modern, even the most modern in this country, teaches us the lesson.

In the clear ringing notes of our Omaha comrade: “real social reform can only come from open fight” against the whole present system itself; “the people must uphold Socialism itself” in order to triumph.

Pizarro scaled the Andes and conquered a powerful empire with only 95 stout-hearted men, having first weeded out all the timid soldiers from his army. But a dozen champions like our Omaha comrade, and the capitalist scale of slavery and exploitation will kick the beam in our land.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the  
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