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EDITORIAL

IDIOSYNCRASIES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT was May the second—the second day of the late Chicago national convention of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic party. A delegate rose in his seat and said:

“Mr. Chairman, before we proceed to our regular business, I understand that a so-called comrade from Colorado, instead of doing Socialist business, is busily engaged in selling mining stock. This is disgraceful, and therefore I make a motion to request this so-called comrade to return his badge and that he may not be allowed to enter this hall until after this convention has adjourned sine die.”

A violent tussle ensued. Why, here is a “De Leonite” insisting upon cleanliness in a Socialist convention! Here is an S.L.P. “impossibilist,” for sooth, demanding an impossibility,—a decided impossibility to that convention! Preposterous! In the midst of the pandemonium of motions to lay upon the table, points of order, amendments, etc., etc., from the possibilists, the voice of delegate James F. Carey rose; it rose above the din; it dominated the din. He said:

“I submit that if this convention is to take up every idiosyncrasy on the part of delegates, we have troubles enough without doing that.”

The effect of these words was well summed up by a delegate who followed and said that his Comrade Carey had “certainly hit the nail on the head.” Carey’s suggestion not to stir up the “idiosyncrasies” of the delegates touched a chord that vibrated from the chairman of the day, Mr. Moses Hilkowitz, alias Morris Hilquit, down to the last of the “idiosyncrasies” who ran the gathering. Indeed, what would have become of the “convention” if idiosyncrasies were to be raked up?

If a delegate or alternate whose “idiosyncrasy” was to peddle at a “national

convention” of “international Socialism” some mining stock was to be hauled over the coals, what safety would there be for the delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” was to declare that “Socialism is not the issue this year,” as did Gaylord of Wisconsin? or for the delegates whose “idiosyncrasy” was to have as many aliases or masks as countries though which they rolled? or for the delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” was to still carry about him the aroma of the rotten eggs with which workingmen on strike in Lynn regaled him when he tried to introduce scabs against them? or for the delegates whose “idiosyncrasy” was to embezzle trust funds? or for the delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” was to get up contracts, that were not worth the paper on which they were written, for workingmen on strike against the sweatshop, getting paid for the work, promising to divide with the workers, and then raising his “original accumulation” by cheating them and keeping the whole to himself? or for the delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” is to declare that under Socialism “a common laborer” would not be entitled to equal remuneration with “skilled labor” as did the sapient Dr. Titus? or for the delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” is to line up with people whom he denounced as fakirs, and to hold up their hands in fights between two capitalist concerns, in consideration of \$5 a day on secret or agitation strike committees—moneys wrung under false pretence from the rank and file, as did “Vice-President” Hanford? or for the delegates whose “idiosyncrasy” is to put together a single tax Hearst and fly-paper platform, and keep their faces while they claim it is a “revolutionist international Socialist” platform? or for a delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” is to have left the S.L.P. indignantly because the Party refused to allow him to use its press to boom a nasty business in which he said “there were millions”—as did delegate Lucas of Minneapolis? or for a delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” is to call the working class “swine,” as does delegate Taft in the Chicago *Socialist* as his justification for the swill that the new platform treats the workers to; or for a delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” is to speculate upon rich wives and debauching needy members of his “Socialist” organization by turning them into his private fellowshippers? or for the delegate whose “idiosyncrasy” is to vote a \$15,000 appropriation for an armory, and then lack the character to admit his wrong? or for the editor and private owners of the party press whose “idiosyncrasy” is to maintain that the safety of their “international party of Socialism” depends

upon their private ownership of its strongest weapon? And so forth and so on.

Obviously there was danger for the ruling spirits of that “national convention” if the “idiosyncrasy” of the peddler of mining stock were looked into. They being reminded that danger to themselves lurked behind stirring the “idiosyncrasy” of any one, calm was speedily restored. A mutual spirit of good will was established among the idiosyncrasies, and peace reigned once more in the convention.

Calm and “good sense” being restored, the possibilists closed the episode by carrying Carey’s motion “that the whole matter be expunged from the business of the convention.” And thus “De Leonism” and S.L.P. “impossibilism” was once more “put down triumphantly.”

(N.B.—The above facts are taken from the daily *Appeal to Reason* of May 4, 1904, a friend and enthusiastic organ of the convention of idiosyncrasies.)

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

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