

DAILY PEOPLE

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TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

MOTION SETS IN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found in full the pronouncement of the Omaha, Neb., organization of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic party, against the platform that its party adopted at its late Chicago convention.¹ The document is notable in more ways than one, and in all refreshingly spirited, and inspiringly suggestive.

Intrinsically, and looked upon from an absolute view-point, the pronouncement is a historic and argumentative document that does credit to the rising Socialist sentiment in the land. It furnishes one more evidence that Socialist science in America is no longer budding, but is in blossom. Its poise is solidly Socialist—revolutionary and yet self-contained: it not only announces mental emancipation from the incubus of national illusions, but it escapes the danger of leaping to the other extreme, flying off the handle, or “slopping over” a highly seductive hole to fall into except by the best ballasted. Such superb utterances as Franklin’s that property is the creature of society, and consequently, not “sacred,” as the modern bourgeois pronounce it, but the product of laws and can be made and unmade, have often misled the unwary into the delusion of supposing the American Revolution to have been the work of Millennialists; and on the other hand, a superficial insight into the distinctly bourgeois class lines of the Revolution frequently causes the unballasted to capsize and fail to appreciate the far look in the future of the scientifically trained minds of the Franklins of old. The Omaha document does not slop over.

But from a relative view-point also the document is valuable. It was the Eastern element in the convention that fashioned and that now uphold or submit to

¹ [See “S.L.P. Straight Goods,” page 3, below]

the dastard platform—dastard because an insult to sense, and dastard because a betrayal to the working class. In other words, the platform is the work of an element that is largely composed of that *Volkszeitung* material that has presumed to set itself up, with supreme contempt for America, as the pillar of Marxian Socialism. Whereas the cannon-shot at the platform proceeds from the Western element, the typically American element in the land.

Looked at from these two view-points, the document, which culminates in a ringing appeal to the wage slaves of the land to bury the middle class platform, attempted to be foisted upon them, deep down the realms of oblivion, is truly inspiring and suggestive. But—the question comes, What business has a set of men who know so much, who see so clearly, and who are brave enough to say what they know and see, what business have they to remain in the camp where they find they were betrayed? Can it be that, though these men see clearly through the rhodomontades of “freedom” of the American Revolution and perceive the material class interests which unavoidably practiced slavery while they preached freedom, can it be that such clear-sightedness notwithstanding, those same men fail to detect the bourgeois and private property interests—as manifested in the private ownership of their party papers, peddling of mining stock, endorsing of labor fakirs, etc., etc.,—which dominated their convention as it dominates their party, and that such interests must inevitably preach “class struggle” and practice “class oppression,” must inevitably preach “Socialism” and practice “Bourgeoisism?” Or can it be that these men, though they have discovered one part of the fraud that has so far duped them, still remain mentally enthralled to that other part—the organized system of calumny that, typical of the slimy character of Alexander Jonas, who typifies his *Volkszeitung* Corporation and kindred “Eastern elements,” wherever located, has been set in operation against the good name of the Socialist Labor Party?

Whatever the answer, Truth and Sense ever ultimately prevail over Falsehood and Nonsense; and, once set in motion, never stop until completely triumphant.

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S.L.P. STRAIGHT GOODS

Local Omaha of the S.P. Calls Upon the Wage Slaves to Bury Beyond Redemption the Middle Class Platform that the Late Chicago National Convention of Its party Traitorously Tried to Foist Upon Them.

[The below pronouncement was sent to this office by Local Omaha of the S.P.]

It may be said that the good features of the platform offset the objectionable ones and therefore we should overlook the bad for the good that is in it. If the platform committee gave us a pig and we find after the porker comes into our possession that he is owned by a colony of cholera microbes, surely for the few sound spots in his anatomy they wouldn't ask us to keep him to please the parasites that inhabit him; neither are we going to adopt a middle class platform to extend the life of a class of leeches because it condescends to mention the fact that the working class is the only class that has a right to be.

Therefore, in stating our position upon the platform adopted at the Chicago convention, we wish to do so from behind a barricade of historic facts. As in military science, soldiers are taught the strategic positions over which to throw their battalions, so in the war of words, if we hope to win the battle, we must marshal our phalanx of facts and logic in such a way as will shatter into fragments every opposing force and opposition.

The writers and defenders of the platform declare it to be the first American expression of the class struggle. We hold it to have completely blurred the lines of class division, to have set aside the Socialist philosophy for literary diction and brilliancy of style, and in so doing abrogated the science which alone explains the laws which brought these delegates together, we claim they have resurrected from the grave the middle class philosophy of individualism, to which the organized growth of industry had consigned it, and with the effrontery born of a training in

schools of respectability, parade this spectre before our eyes under the guise of Socialism.

“The Socialist party, in convention assembled, makes its appeal to the American people as the defender and preserver of the idea of liberty and self government in which the nation was born.”

The American people, the defender and preserver of liberty!

In the light of history, members of the Platform Committee, what does this mean to the working class? Is the materialistic conception meaningless to you? Have the “ideas of each age” ceased to be “the ideas of its ruling class?” If it has become meaningless to you, say so. If not, why mock us with your sentimental hypocrisy about the preservers and defenders of liberty when these ideas of liberty as well as morality and justice but reflect the economic interests of our masters. Liberty, besides being “something sweet to the palate of the flesh,” is a relative term, like pleasure, which is only relief from pain, finds expression in its opposite, slavery. Hence the struggle of a class in its own interest means liberty for that class. No struggle of a class which is not waged in its own interests, though it may think so, is a struggle for liberty. The ideas which dominate it have fallen from above.

The revolutionary struggle of the American colonies for independence was economic in character and was waged entirely in the interest of the manufacturing and commercial classes. When England chartered the colonies, she intended them to follow agricultural pursuits; being herself a great manufacturing nation; she desired the colonies to furnish the raw material for the same, but she reckoned without her host; the colonies soon became her rival, having developed in less than two hundred years an annual export and import trade of \$40,000,000. These figures are based upon the report of 1790. As the colonies produced more than the home market could consume, they radiated out into the world’s market. This brought them into competition with the British capitalists, who, alarmed at their new rival, went to their home government and demanded the enactment of laws repressing the rising manufacturing industries of the colonies; act after act was passed against the manufacturing interest of the colonies.

Act 5, George II, CXXII, was passed in 1731 at the instigation of the wardens

and assistants of the company of felt-makers of London, to prevent the inhabitants of the American colonies from exporting hats of their own manufacture to any place whatsoever.

In 1750 a law was enacted declaring the iron industry of Pennsylvania a public nuisance. Following these laws came the navigation acts, sugar acts, tax against molasses, which crippled the rum industry, the principal commodity used in the slave traffic; then came the stamp act and the tax upon tea. These repressive laws aroused the manufacturing interests of the colonies. The *Boston Gazette* of April 28th, 1765, has this to say: "Whose natural right is infringed by the erection of an American windmill, or the occupation of a water mill on a man's own land, provided he does not flood his neighbors. A colonist cannot make a button, a horse shoe, or hob nail, but some sooty iron monger or respectable button maker of Britain shall bawl and squall, that his honors worship is most egregiously maltreated, injured, cheated and robbed by the rascally American republicans." At the same time that these acts were being passed, repressing the manufacturing interests of the colonies, Great Britain, according to Bolles, was giving bounties to encourage the agricultural industry; thus showing that the conflict on was not between the agricultural interests and the British government, but between the manufacturing and commercial classes of the colonies and the British capitalists.

This attack of the home government upon the manufacturing and commercial interests of the colonies brought these several little states for mutual protection together in 1774 in the continental congress. Here it was resolved in the name of liberty and of property to boycott English made goods. They met gain in 1775, and finally in 1776 the "immortal declaration" was penned. Then followed the years of sanguinary strife, the peace treaties and the institutions of America came into being in the name of liberty. Liberty for whom? Not for the black slave of the South; certainly not for the white redemptioners of the North, but liberty for the master class of America to go on their way unhampered by the British government; in other words, liberty meant free trade, not only in merchandise, but in human flesh and blood.

Our class, whether black or white, were not considered by the founders of "our" institutions, and the platform that hurls such nonsense broadcast not only insults

our intelligence, but outrages the memory of the victims degraded by them. “Our institutions” of liberty were called into being by the exigency of a mixed association of slave-driving agriculturists and labor fleecing capitalists. In 1776, when the world was fired with the torch of liberty sent flaming from Philadelphia by its authors declaring that the inalienable rights of man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was a sacred heritage, hundreds of thousands of our class were groaning under the yoke of the slave driver. Thousands of the white workers of Europe were being purchased by the ship load by the class whose interests brought the revolution. Thousands were being sold into bondage for debt, or placed in dungeons for the same offense; apprentices were enslaved to pay the obligations of absconding masters. The *Boston News Letter* in 1718 states that in the previous year there had been eighty burials of Indians and negroes in Boston. This loss, estimated on basis of thirty pounds, amounted to 2,400 pounds. If white servants had been employed instead at fifteen pounds for the time of each, the town had saved 1,200 pounds. A man could procure 12 to 15 pounds to purchase the time of a white servant, that could not pay 30 to 50 pounds to a negro or Indian. The white strengthen and people the country, others do not.” The foregoing quotation tells you in what estimation your class was held by the ruling class of the colonies. It tells you also that Boston owned white vassals as well as negro and Indian slaves. Indentured servants, says Weeden, page 695, Vol. II,¹ were a constant factor in the social system. “They were coming into the country under one or another form of service. In 1746 Robert Galton advertises in Boston, with various goods, a few boy servants indentured for seven years, and girls for four years. In 1750 a number of Irish servants are to be sold; the men are mechanics, the women fit for either town or country. Unexpired service under indenture was offered for sale like any other article of value.” Washington, the father of his country, says Hart, many years after 1750, writes to an agent enquiring about buying a shipload of Germans. The treatment of these redemptioners was as heartless as that meted out to the slaves. “The courts whipped, imprisoned and fined erring servants.” The fine imposed and his board during confinement was paid by his master. The victim, if not able to pay

¹ [*Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789, William B. Weeden*]

this upon his release from prison, which of course he never was, his master was given the privilege of selling him to any English plantation. By an act passed by Rhode Island in 1645, run-away servants are to be returned to the colonies from which they escaped. Under these conditions we can readily see how impossible it was for the redemptioner to hope to be other than a life long slave.

This great body of the population, in company with numbers of free laborers, were denied the rights of citizenship under the constitution of the several states that formed the American republic. Property qualifications were the basis of the elective franchise, also for the holding of office. Out of a population of 200,000 inhabitants in Connecticut, in 1775, only 4,335 were voters; thus showing that more than 30,000 of her male population of voting age was disfranchised. Connecticut had no other constitution than her colonial charter until 1818; Delaware, in 1831, abolished religious and property qualifications, except the paying of taxes; Virginia had a property qualification for voting until 1830; South Carolina's constitution of 1790 provided that a freehold of five hundred acres and ten negroes, or a real estate valued at a hundred and fifty pounds sterling, free from encumbrance, was a necessary qualification for voting; Maryland had a property qualification for voting and office holding until 1810. In 1821 New York abolished the freehold qualification and substituted requisites of taxation, service in the militia and firemen. The latter part of the eighteenth century found Vermont without a property qualification; Rhode Island had her colonial charter until 1842. Dr. Jameson states in the *New England Magazine* for the month of January, 1890, that in Massachusetts, from 1780–89 inclusive, only sixteen per cent. of the male inhabitants over twenty-one years of age, were entitled to vote, while but three per cent. actually voted. Bradford, in his history of Massachusetts, page 349, gives a draft of a constitution agreed upon by the convention of the state of Massachusetts Bay held February 28th, 1778. Under section 3 of this constitution no person is qualified to hold the office of governor unless he is possessed in his own right of a five thousand dollar estate within the state; the lieutenant governor shall possess \$2,500, \$1,250 to be in real estate. An estate of \$2,000, \$1,000 to be in real estate in the state and an estate of \$1,000 divided in the same way shall qualify man to hold the office of senator or representative. Section 5 of the same document makes \$300 over and above all

charges the qualification for voting for the afore named officials. Massachusetts in 1820 abolished freehold or property qualifications for voting. An ordinance for the government for the Territory of the United States, northwest of the Ohio river, enacted in Congress July 13th, 1787, provides that representatives must hold in their own right, in fee simple, 200 acres of land within that territory; that a freehold of fifty acres shall be requisite for voting. It also provides that a member of the council of five appointed by Congress shall be possessed of a freehold in five hundred acres of land.

These historic facts lay bare all of the Yankee gush about American liberty and portrays the conditions of our class under those glorious free institutions. Like their black brothers, the white laborers, without voice or vote, were never deemed part or parcel of the people; they had no part in the affairs except to fight the battles of the commercial and agricultural classes. The public opinion of those days, as now, was not of their making; the liberty of the colonies and the institutions that arose upon the soil of its realization were to them only means of exploitation. As a class they were still in their swaddling clothes. The conditions necessary to bring them to their feet had not yet arrived, but the elements were at work. The industrial revolution that was sweeping over England, brought about by the inventions of Hargreaves, Arkwright, Crompton, Cartwright and Watts, backed by the cotton gin of Whitney, was soon to arouse them to a knowledge of the fact that they were a class, separate and distinct from "the preservers and defenders of the idea of liberty," but before their historic role could appear upon the stage a battle between the agricultural and capitalist classes must transpire. Some claim that the capitalist class did not exist during the revolutionary days. This is an error. Not only did the capitalist class exist, but the revolution was of its making. So powerful was their influence that, backed by the commercial slave dealers, they succeeded in dominating the constitutional convention in 1787. It was the merchant class, says Wright, who held the Annapolis convention of 1786, which resulted in the convention of 1787, that gave us the federal constitution. It is worth noticing, declares Andrews, that it was interstate commerce which brought about the Annapolis convention and the convention that framed the constitution.

No sooner were they successful in placing their party (the Federal) in power

than it, and the class it stood for, fell crushed beneath the stroke of an economic thunderbolt. Cotton raising, owing to the crude method of ginning it, was very unprofitable. This problem was solved by the invention of Whitney; with the cotton gin, cotton became king, and the slave power, or agricultural class, became predominant in every institution of the United States, coming into power with Jefferson in 1801, and from that date until 1861 it was the dominant class of the country. The morals of that period were furnished by slave power. The Bible became the text book of the slave system. The preacher, who has ever been the minion of the master class, preached the gospel, in its economic interests; the school, the press and the platform kept company to its baton. In 1794, says Hart, "Jay appeared to suppose that cotton was not an American export, but since the invention of the cotton gin, in 1793, the cultivation of cotton by slave labor had grown more and more profitable and in 1820 that export was valued at nearly \$20,000,000. The planters of the northern belt of slave holding states did not share in this culture, but they found an increasing sale for their surplus blacks to their southern neighbors. They had therefore joined with members from the northern states in the Act of March 2nd, 1807, to prohibit the importation of slaves." The Federal party, the great champion of the manufacturing and commercial interests of New England and the middle states, which gave Adams 71 electoral votes in 1796 and 65 in 1800, sunk to only 14 votes in 1804. From the election of Jefferson in 1800 to the inauguration of Lincoln in 1861, the slave power or agricultural class ruled supreme. No sooner had this interest become predominant than the elements of dissolution set in. The hand tool was being supplanted by the machine using tool; human energy as a motive power was giving way before steam; the modern factory had made its appearance; the wage-system was becoming a stern reality; chattel slavery was repugnant to its favorite children, the capitalist class; repugnant because its institution shackled their advancement. The class conflict began anew; the morality of slavery was held to be immoral, its institutions to be in league with the devil, its constitution a covenant with hell. Liberty became the war cry of the industrial interests of the north. These sentiments were becoming crystallized in different political groups; Abolition, Free Soil and Liberty parties were springing up; phrase mongers like to-day were in evidence. The rights of man were sown

broadcast throughout the land by the satellites of the coming saviors of man. But behind all of this sentimental verbiage lurked the cold economic proposition, capitalist liberty and rights of man were only synonymous for wage-labor; free labor versus slave labor was the issue; like the slave breeders of Virginia, who joined forces with the manufacturing class of the north, to put a ban upon the importation of slaves, because this competition reduced the prices of their human merchandise on the plantations of the south. Like those good christian gentlemen, the capitalist class, purchasers of human labor power, were desirous of freeing the great volume of human commodity in the bodies of 4,000,000 blacks. "Either the plantations of the south," exclaimed Seward, "will be cultivated by free labor of the north, or the fields of New England will be tilled by the slave labor of Louisiana and Alabama." So the battle waged between the two systems; the slave power determined to drive the Mason and Dixon line to the borders of Canada, the capitalist class as determined to hurl it with its laws into the Gulf of Mexico. As the capitalists gained in power, the others lost in prestige Strength to one was weakness to the other. One's gain was the other's loss. Thus the pendulum swung. The sun-dial of time had registered 1860; the political cohorts under the banners of the Republican and Democratic parties have met, the first in solid phalanx, the last in a series of disintegrated groups. Lincoln, the champion of the capitalist class, was declared the victor. He was seated; the slave power revolted; the south was deluged in blood; Shiloh and Gettysburg furnished the shroud and Appomattox the grave for the corpse of chattel slavery.

The capitalist class did not seize upon the institutions of the slave economy. It abolished them. At Appomattox was interred the morals of slavery; its literature, religion and songs, and above its grave the institutions of capital have blossomed to decay. For already the proletarian hosts are marshalling for the fray. Not to resurrect the institutions of the fallen slave power or agricultural class; not to revive the institutions of the dying middle class; not to capture the institutions of to-day on the plea that they have been diverted from their mission; we come in the name of proletarian liberty, which means our own class interests. With Marx, we hold: our only ideal to be "the letting loose the elements of a new society." Our institutions we are bringing with us; our morality, our religion, literature, plays and

songs, our ideas of social organization keep company with our class consciousness and class solidarity. Our economic movement will change to meet the changing forms of industrial development; our political party has come to conquer the powers of government that we may abolish it for and industrial democracy organized by and for the working class.

Backed by these historic facts we again affirm that the platform, which appeals to the American people as the preservers and defenders of the idea of liberty, repudiates the Socialist philosophy; because these facts teach that the history of America has been a history of class struggles, between the rising manufacturing class of the colonies and the British capitalists, which culminated in the revolution. Between the commercial and agricultural classes for supremacy in the new government, resulting in victory for the former in the constitutional convention and before the legislatures of the several states; between the two same interests, in 1800, which laid low the capitalist class for sixty years. And the conflict raged between them during the period leading up to the fall of the agricultural class, in 1860, and finally the struggles going on to-day between the victorious capitalist class and the awakening proletariat.

But possibly we have misunderstood your term, "American people." Do you mean the agricultural class whose interest gave birth to the Democratic party? Do you mean the capitalist class, in politics, the Republican party? Do you mean the wage workers, who have given us the Socialist party? Or do you mean the entire aggregation? If all, what means our class divisions? Why not forego our separate existence and unite our fortunes in the welfare of the whole? If on the other hand, the American people signify the working class, why not be candid enough to declare it? Why lose us in a maze of phraseology? There is but one deduction to be drawn from your term, "American people," namely: it means the entire population, and therefore attacks the scientific ground of the movement.

Further, you affirm, that to this idea of liberty both the Republican and Democratic parties have been equally false, because they struggle to maintain the present industrial system. Do you not know that the Republican and Democratic parties, as stated before, but politically reflect the idea of liberty portrayed in the interest of the capitalist and agricultural classes? That they are the offsprings of

those interests and will die with them? Are they false to their trust of striving to maintain their existence and the classes which called them into being?

And again you say, "Our American institutions came into the world in the name of freedom, that they have been seized upon by the capitalist class as a matter of rooting out the idea of freedom from among the people; that our state and national legislatures have become the mere agencies of great propertied interests?" Ah! at last we have the definition of your "American people." It means all classes outside the GREAT propertied interests.

This is why in the third clause of the platform you define "working class" under the broad appellation "producing class," which practically takes in the entire agricultural and middle classes. The proletarian hide has, indeed, been stretched to the bursting point. At last the mask has fallen and divulged your middle class visage. No wonder you cry out against the "passing of liberty and the coming of tyranny." No wonder you cry out that your political institutions are being used as the destroyer of that individual property upon which your liberty and opportunities depend. And no wonder that from the labyrinth of your middle class philosophy you cry out in one breath that the private ownership of the means of employment ground society in economic slavery and in the next gasp declare that Socialism comes so to organize industry and society that every individual shall be secure in that private property in the means of life upon which his liberty is being thought and action depend. This medley of phrases, reduced to their final analysis, signifies that the liberty of being, thought and action of the individual depends, not upon the social ownership of the means of employment, but upon the private ownership of the means of life. Therefore Socialism comes to rescue the people from the successful assault of capitalism upon the so-called basis of their individuality.

Was ever the same quantity of error and contradictions marshalled together in like space before? Aye! not even the Kansas City platform could have as little meaning to the wage class as this pyrotechnical display of words.

So this creature, with its Democratic and single tax tail thrown in, is called the first American expression of the class struggle. "Sane Marxian Socialism! O! what a fall was there my countrymen then. I and you and all of us fell down whilst bloody treason flourished o'er us."

WAGE WORKERS OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, WE APPEAL TO YOU. RESENT THIS INSULT OFFERED TO YOUR CLASS; SINK THIS MIDDLE CLASS DOCUMENT; BURY IT SO FAR IN THE REALMS OF OBLIVION THAT THE TRUMPETERS WHO HAVE HERALDED ITS COMING CAN NEVER MORE RECALL IT. DOWN WITH THE REVISIONISTS' PLATFORM.

(Read *Industrial Evolution of the United States*, by Carroll D. Wright; *Industrial History of the United States*, by Prof. Bolles; *New Manual of the Constitution* (page 357), by Andrews; *Constitutional Studies*, by Schoeler (pages 321–37); *American Politics*, by Cooper (book IV, page 10); *Documentary History of New York*, Vol. 1, page 516; *The Rise of the Republic*, by Frothingham; *Formation of the Union*, by Hart.)

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