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# *The American Socialist* Martyred in the Great Cause of World Democracy and Peace.

by J. Louis Engdahl

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*The American Socialist* is dead!

As the official mouthpiece of the national Socialist Party it has spoken its last.

It has been martyred in the great, sacrifice-demanding cause of world social and industrial democracy and universal peace.

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The national administration, which has seen fit to suppress *The American Socialist*, will not admit that it has been martyred.

The post office department merely charges that we have violated a statute passed to aid in the prosecution of the war and that we should therefore be treated like any ordinary transgressor of the law.

I believe that the post office department has placed a wrong interpretation on the Espionage Law, under which *The American Socialist* was suppressed. Members of Congress who voted for the law make the same claim. Even the Department of Justice, at Washington, disagrees with the post office department in the interpretation of the law. I have pointed this out before. It cannot be shown too often.

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I am allowed this space to sound a requiem over the ashes of a fallen monarch in the struggle for humanity, because the publication in which this statement appears, *The Eye-Opener*, is being permitted by the post office to take over the subscription list of the late *American Socialist*.

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The last issue, Saturday, Sept. 8 [1917], went to press on Saturday, Sept. 1, and in conformity with our efforts to keep the paper alive pending the decision of the post office department on our application for another second class mailing privilege, a few thousand were sent out to the larger cities by express for distribution by local carriers.

To seek to serve all of our subscribers in this manner meant early and complete bankruptcy. It was therefore decided on Tuesday, Sept. 5, to cease entirely the publication of *The American Socialist*, and to have *The Eye-Opener* go to all of our subscribers instead.

Two days later, Friday, Sept. 7, the post office notified *The Eye-Opener* that it could not serve the subscribers of *The American Socialist* if *The American Socialist* still remained in existence. If there was a single spark of life left in our paper, this ruling of the post office stamped it out completely.

There is no argument between the two positions: permitting *The Eye-Opener* with its second class mailing privilege to serve all the subscribers of *The American Socialist*, or trying to keep *The American Socialist* alive by sending out a few copies each week by express at great expense. The death sentence was not of our choosing. It was inevitable under the circumstances.

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I therefore urge upon all the former readers and subscribers of *The American Socialist* that you give *The Eye-Opener* the same unswerving support that you have always given to your own paper. Serve it loyally and it will be loyal to you.

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*The American Socialist* died in order that others might live.

During the more than two months of bitter persecution that it suffered, it never raised its voice in its own behalf alone. It spoke for a free press everywhere.

Whatever sacrifices it made were offered freely in order that liberty of thought might not be abridged or crucified.

It is still contended that every word it uttered has been within the law.

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Three issues, June 16th, 23rd, and 30th, the last being our famous Liberty Edition, were declared unmailable by the post office censor at Washington.

Beginning with the issues of July 7th and up to and including the issue of August 11th, *The American Socialist* was issued under a local censorship in Chicago.

We were then notified that our second class mailing privilege had been revoked because the June issues had been declared unmailable. Although these three issues had all been mailed to our subscribers, the post office nevertheless held that the continuity of the publication had been interrupted and we were therefore no longer entitled to our mailing privilege.

Application was duly and immediately made for another second class mailing privilege. Four weeks have passed, however, and no decision has come from Washington. Week after week, we have waited in vain.

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Our counsel went to Washington and even had an audience with President Wilson, who declared he was opposed to the suppression of Socialist publications. The Department of Justice had already declared not one article had appeared on which an indictment could be based.

We got our final answer on Wednesday afternoon, Sept. 5 [1917], when a score of operatives from the federal building in Chicago, reinforced by deputy marshals and local police, swooped down on our office

and demanded everything in sight, from typewriters to mailing lists.

If the provisions of the search warrant served on *The American Socialist* and the Socialist Party National Headquarters had been carried out nothing would have been left but the bare walls.

When it became apparent to the federal district attorney's office that we had nothing to hide, that all the activities of *The American Socialist* and the Socialist Party had always been open and above board, the federal authorities satisfied themselves with a file of *The American Socialist*, copies of leaflets, pamphlets, and books, in addition to a few letters taken from our files and the books showing our financial transactions. We do not know what use they intend making of these.

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That is the story briefly told.

I repeat: I feel that the national administration has made a mistake. I believe it will live to see that it has done wrong. I cannot see what it hopes to accomplish by its persecution of the Socialist and radical press.

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We must struggle as best we can to present our arguments to those in power, to present our case to Congress, to the courts, to the people. On the advice of Postmaster General Burluson, himself, we are planning to carry our contention to the courts, that Socialist and radical publications are being illegally deprived of their second class mailing privileges. That is where we must now take our stand.

You have already contributed liberally to The Free Press Defense Fund. The receipts have so far met the expenses of the two months' struggle of *The American Socialist* on behalf of itself and all other liberty loving publications.

Our inability to have our second class mailing privilege restored; the death of *The American Socialist*, are but temporary defeats. We must save the remainder of our press. We can do it. You can help bring complete victory by responding immediately....

***Edited by Tim Davenport.***

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