

Plain Words to Boston Workingmen, Jew and Gentile

*An Address Delivered Under the Auspices of the
Reorganized Jewish Section of Boston,
In Wells Memorial Hall, Boston, November 12, 1897.*

(From a Stenographic Report)

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Introduction

Plain Words to Boston Workingmen, Jew and Gentile was delivered at Wells Memorial Hall in Boston, Mass., on November 21, 1897, the same podium from which De Leon delivered his famous address on *Reform or Revolution* less than two years before.

There is more than coincidence to the fact that both addresses were delivered in the same hall, as those familiar with the earlier and far better known of those two speeches will soon surmise. *Plain Words* is in fact a sequel to the earlier talk.

Reform or Revolution has rightfully found a place among the classics of socialist literature. Without question it is one of De Leon's most important contributions to that literature, and endures because of the clarity and simplicity with which it distinguishes the terms that make up its title and their significance to working people.

Reform or Revolution was no abstract treatment of two theoretical concepts. It was a response to concrete developments then occurring within the developing socialist movement. At the very outset of his 1896 address, De Leon explains how and why the Boston sections had asked him to speak in their city.

"...When I was invited to come to Boston, the invitation reached me at about the same time with an official information that a reorganization of the party was contemplated in the city of Boston. I put the two together and I drew the conclusion that part of the purpose of the invitation was for me to come here to tell you upon what lines we in New York organized, and upon what lined we 'wicked' socialists of New York and Brooklyn gave the capitalist class last November the 16,000-vote black eye."

The reorganization to which De Leon alludes did not take place smoothly and without controversy. This is clearly alluded to in *Plain Words*.

Reform or Revolution, as stated, was not only a speech to define what reform and revolution are. It was a masterful explanation of what socialist tactics must be, and how workers must organize to advance their interests on the political and economic fields. *Plain Words* takes up where *Reform or Revolution* left off.

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However, it is difficult to assess where to place De Leon's 1897 address in relation to some of his better known works. Henry Kuhn, a former National Secretary of the Socialist Labor Party later elected to edit De Leon's works for eventual publication in book form, referred to it as an important statement on socialist tactics. He also recommended to the National Executive Committee of the SLP that it be published as a pamphlet, as *Reform or Revolution* had been. It is not known what if any decision the NEC made in principle, but the speech was never published as a pamphlet.

A few of the people and organizations mentioned by De Leon will not be familiar to most of today's readers. Joseph Baronness, a prominent labor faker of the time, is one of them. In most instances, however, the reason they are mentioned is made clear by the context in which they are identified so that they should not distract the reader from the point being made or the lesson being drawn.

What may prove helpful to some readers is the knowledge that the SLP was the only nationally organized party of socialism in the United States before 1897. Many European immigrants who considered themselves Socialists joined labor unions and fraternal organizations where their native languages were spoken. Some of these affiliated themselves with the SLP, and foreign language subdivisions, such as the Jewish section of Boston, were common.

But many of the European workers who immigrated to America and joined these organizations were actually reformers, anarchists or utopian Socialists, and not revolutionary Marxist Socialists at all. As a result, disputes among these politically diverse and frequently incompatible elements were commonplace. The 1890s were formative years for the socialist movement in this country.

After 1897, a second group claiming to be socialist and calling itself the Social Democratic Party came into being under the influence and leadership of Eugene V. Debs. The Debserie, as it was known, advocated the formation of "socialistic colonies" and similar utopian schemes. The "Social Democracy" attracted many of the utopians, visionaries, reformers and anarchists who were increasingly unwelcome in the SLP. The so-called Socialist Party, with which Debs' name is most often associated, was a later development. It did not exist in 1897 when De Leon delivered his *Plain Words to Boston Workingmen*.

ROBERT BILLS

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Jew and Gentile*

Comrades of the Reorganized Jewish Section of Boston, Workingmen and Workingwomen:

It is about two years ago, I think, that from this very platform I addressed you upon the tactics we were pursuing in New York, and thanks to which we had scored a very respectable success. I recommended to you that you adopt similar tactics if you desired to make progress. I am glad to say the advice given was taken to heart. You crushed the cockatrice of Anarchy in the egg; cleansed your ranks; merited the applause of the National Convention of the Socialist Labor party; and have since marched onward with firm steps, steadily gaining ground. Encouraged by such successful efforts on your part, I accepted the invitation to address you again on party tactics. Taking my subject—"Plain Words to Boston Workingmen, Jew and Gentile"—from the circumstance that this meeting is held under the auspices of the reorganized Jewish Section of Boston, reorganized after it has been rid of the undigestible material that hitherto disgraced it and hampered its work, I shall again take up the question of party tactics, and shall again draw from New York the illustrations and the examples I wish to hold up to you. This I consider all the more timely because of the fact that, in this city, you are now for the first time taking part in a municipal campaign. It may seem paradoxical to say, but you will presently agree, that, just for the reason that municipal campaigns afford the least ground on which to deploy Socialist issues, it is all the more necessary to conduct them with closest adherence to sound tactics.

MUNICIPAL CAMPAIGNS

Municipal issues, especially in these days of capitalist "sop-throwing" campaigns, are placed in an angle of vision that easily lead the eye away from the ground issue underlying all campaigns, and asserting itself with ever greater force,—the issue of Labor against Capitalism. Cheap gas, cheap fares and kindred matters are quite "taking," yet all agitation based upon them, not only leads away from, but is a blunt denial of

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Socialist principles and aims. Cheapness is among the last things that Socialism is after, because living can not be “cheapened” without the price of labor being proportionally cheapened. It follows from the scientific principle that labor is a merchandise under the capitalist system, that the laws of the market, which rule the price of all merchandise, must also rule the price of the merchandise labor. The smaller the quantity of labor needed to produce an article of merchandise the cheaper it is; if the things needed to keep the workingman alive, and in condition to procreate his species, become cheaper, the merchandise labor-power must become cheaper too. Those who have other things to sell than their own hides may be so much money in if gas, etc., is cheaper; but not the worker. Socialism has not the *market* for its objective point but the *factory*, the place where productive work is done. It seeks to put the implements of work in the workers’ hands; the rest will take care of itself. The municipal agitation for cheapness is a bourgeois agitation. Socialism seeks, not to make cheap gas for the workers, knowing that that will only make cheaper workingmen for the capitalist; Socialism seeks to put the gas plant itself and all plants in the hands of the workers, because only so can the worker be rid of the capitalist parasite and keep all that he produces.

Again, municipal issues have with them a fatal allurements. The utopian notion of furnishing “practical illustrations” of Socialism by municipal schemes is fatal, not only in that it panders to a sentiment that cannot but rob Socialism of its revolutionary pulse and thereby retard it, but also in that it denies by implication the material fact, never to be lost sight of, that the womb in which the Socialist Commonwealth develops is the womb of the nation, and, as a result, that the real issues of the day are essentially national in their nature; that all other issues, municipal and State, deserve attention in so far only as they connect directly with the central, the national revolutionary thought. Your municipal campaign in Boston can be made a Socialist campaign only in so far as you hew close to the principle that to carry Boston for the Socialist Labor party is merely to capture for the revolution one of the outposts of Washington—our real objective point.

It is for these reasons that sound tactics, important at all times, have a special and specific importance in Socialist municipal campaigns. In National, and even State campaigns, the very nature of the issues removes the danger of our attracting unripe votes, and thus being misled; our poll there is a pretty reliable barometer of the numerical ripeness of the proletariat. In municipal campaigns, on the contrary, many things, many unguarded expressions, are apt to contribute towards a swollen Socialist poll; such a poll would be an unreliable barometer of proletarian ripeness; few things are to be more carefully avoided by our movement than that of self-deception. Let “Hurrah movements” trot out figures that

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melt away like snow before the sun. Ours is a movement not of a day or of a man: it must be absolutely self-reliant. Hence in our municipal contests the question of tactics should be pre-eminent. Rather a small vote gained soundly than a big one that you know not what it may turn to.

The best way to introduce the specific tactical points I want to mention is first to give you an idea of what happened in New York last November 2 and during the campaign that closed with that day.

THE SITUATION IN NEW YORK

Outside of New York State, the capitalists and their parties have not yet reached the point of fearing the Socialist Labor party. In New York, especially in the now city of Greater New York, the Socialist Labor party is feared. The magnitude and spontaneity of our meetings, the firmness of our attitude, our unswerving career, have not passed by unperceived. But that is not all. Last year's campaign in the Ninth Congressional District set the district ablaze to such an extent that it forced its way into the capitalist press, and closed with a Socialist poll of over 4,300 votes—a larger vote than that cast for more than one of our Comrades now holding seats in some of the Parliaments of Europe: and this year's campaign in the Sixteenth Assembly District was of such a vigorous nature that our party came out second in the race, and so close to election that 700 votes would have turned the scales in our favor. The work, the vigor, the discipline, the enthusiasm that all this implies cannot choose but be sufficiently manifest to reach the alert eyes and ears of the capitalist foe. That foe knows that important Socialist victories are now at hand in New York; it knows that any one such victory means the starting of a new political era, means the closing of an old volume and the opening of a new;—and they have set their caps to delay, to prevent, if possible, the happening of that that will compel their press to take proper notice of the party.

Nor yet is that all. Our right to a place on the official ballot is a sore in the New York capitalist's eye and a thorn in his side. Despite the shameful manner in which we are counted out in the rural districts of the State where we have no organization, they have not been able to wipe us off the official ballot. Count us out as they may in the rest of the State, the vote in New York City alone renders our place safe. The increase of this vote makes us all the safer, and infuriates the foe all the more. But besides their failure in this direction, another thing contributed at the last campaign to intensify their efforts against us. The party nominations in New York are arranged in columns. Each party entitled to a place on the official ballot has a column for itself; and they are arranged according to the vote they polled at the last gubernatorial election. Now, the S.L.P. holds virtually the third place. The Republican party comes first; the second and third columns are taken up by the two factions of

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the Democratic party; these two are virtually one party; the S. L. P., consequently, is the third party. It got into the third place last year by driving the Prohibitionists back. Now, then, this third place is important. There are "historians" going about who advance the theory that "third parties have no room and no chance in this country." The fact is that this country's history, short as it is, is the history of the success of "third parties" (applause);—of course, of third parties that know what they want, that know how to get there, and that are determined to do so, in other words, that have a mission to fulfill. That the S. L. P. is such a party, the foe knows. When the sample blanket ballot was published, and it was ocularily and pictorially brought home to the foe that we were the third party in New York, the effect upon their press was visible. For a day or so the surprise of the capitalist press got the best of their judgment, and they had editorials and squibs commenting upon the "promotion" of the S. L. P. ticket, etc. Then there followed silence; and upon the silence there followed a sight and sound that was unique, inspiring, instructive.

I shall not here go into the evolution of the Henry George candidature. Suffice it to say that it went through a series of stages; its last stage was reached when the sample ballots were published. With one accord, the capitalist press announced and boomed him as "the candidate of the Socialist Labor party." Editorials appeared stating that it was "a trick" on the part of the Socialists to set up another ticket; that they were all going to vote for George. Straw votes were published, in all of which a large vote was given to George; even Paddy Gleason, who was wholly swept out of sight, was "straw voted" into prominence; silence reigned as to our candidate; occasionally only, as if to emphasize the point, we were granted 1 vote. It was George, and George again; George "the Socialist," George "the idol of the revolutionary element"; George "the representative man of the S. L. P." And most notably in the midst of all this, Henry George, who had been strutting the stage of American history for the last ten years as the great "Socialist Killer," and who justly entertained for Socialism the aversion that the ridiculous mouse entertains for the cat, never once opened his mouth in denial of this robust political lie. His meetings, small though they were, were inflated in the press into "mammoth Socialist rallies"; ours, however big, did not get a whisper.

Our party fought its way in the city under this bi-diurnal deluge of false information, palpably intended to confuse the masses and discredit the party. The conspiracy failed, in so far as it failed to wipe us out. Our square came out with the loss of *not one man*; nay, it came out with fully 1,000 new recruits;—stronger, more vigorous, better disciplined and radiant. (Applause.)

ATTITUDE TOWARDS UNIONISM

That this test could not have been stood, and this result achieved but

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by tremendous energy and the soundest of tactics in the navigation of such waters goes without saying. With regard to the tactics observed I shall mention a few, such as may have their application here in Boston as well.

The first in the order of importance is our attitude towards unionism. Each Socialist Labor party has to break through a special shell of its own, in which it happens to be laid. In Germany, the party had to break through the shell of the Utopian chimeras of Lassalle; in Italy and Spain through the shell of Anarchy; in France through the kindred one of excessive devotion to the idea of physical force revolution; and so on. Here in the United States it had to break through the shell of

IDOLATRY FOR THE WORD UNION

Time was when, in its devotion to the cause of the class through whose loins it is strained, the S. L. P. bowed down in meek reverence before the labor union without looking further. As the Union consisted of proletarians, the same as the party, most of whose members were, as they are yet, also union men, the party felt sure that the Union, whatever its errors, was bound to develop in the right direction. It erred in this. For reasons too long to go into here, the old trade union, wrongfully planted from the start, underwent here a development that landed it into the hands of a class that is peculiar to American conditions, a sub-class of the capitalist class, to wit, the *labor fakir*. In the hands of this gentry, the Union retrograded. All the advantages to be derived from it by the proletariat in point of discipline, information, organization, consolidation, etc., oozed out; in the hands of this gentry it became a channel of corruption for the working class, a means to keep them divided and in ignorance, an institution that perverted their vision by turning it away from the right direction and in the direction of middle class aspirations. In the hands of these gentry, the Union became a caricature of the middle class, with all the illusions and weaknesses of that class, a curse to the workers, an impediment to progress,—but a source of revenue, if the paltry Judas wage can be styled revenue, to the Labor Fakir.

This baneful development had gone on unperceived by the party. Its old beliefs continued its old reverence. And the Labor Fakir alone profited thereby. To the party, in whispered tones, he was a Socialist, “doing all that he could for Socialism”; he thus disarmed opposition; and, with the prestige he derived from the party’s credulity, he found his path all the freer to ply his nefarious trade. What that trade is I shall illustrate with a few instances.

We have in New York a “Cloakmaker’s Union.” That organization consists essentially of the Anarchist Barondess and his disreputable cronies. With the assistance of the gutter-snipe capitalist reporters, the business firm—it is nothing short of a business firm—of Barondess & Co. keeps

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itself before the public. How does this “firm” subsist? Disagreements between the cloakmakers and their bosses are frequent. At every such time the men naturally seek aid from some organization. The only one in their trade is Barondess’; the information is kept up before their eyes by the gutter-snipers, very much like Jacob kept up peeled rods before Laban’s ewes. The men go thither; to be listened to they must “become members,” or, to put it plainer, they must pay dues. There is your revenue, until the next trouble breaks out bringing a new windfall.

At such times, always with the assistance of the gutter-snipe reporters, the papers are filled with the “heroic efforts of the Cloakmakers’ Union” to “wipe out the sweating system.” This furnishes another stream of revenue to the precious firm. The stirring stories touch the hearts of credulous old and philanthropic ladies. These rush forward with various sums, that, of course, are placed in the hands of the “Committee.” A fierce campaign is waged, in the papers, against the sweat-shops. The farce cannot be continued for ever: the philanthropic ladies must see some results. Suddenly we are informed, again through the zeal of the gutter-snipe reporters, that “*the sweating system is abolished.*” When the “firm” believes that the public has forgotten all about this victory, the farce is started all over anew. The sweat shops, just abolished, are to be abolished once more: and thus the swindle is perennially repeated. (Laughter and applause.)

More recently, kindred “firms” have “enlarged their business” by adding to it a new “department”—a “Legal Department.” Some unconscionable adventurer, a little cleverer than his unfortunate fellow countrymen—most of these cloakmakers are Russian Jews—settles down as an additional vampire upon these poor men and exploit their racial bonds. Birds of a feather flock together. The Labor Fakirs’ “firms” and these shyster lawyers make common cause. If a strike does not come on of its own accord, it is investigated. The sweat shop is once more to be “abolished.” For its “abolition” the men are cheated into the belief that “contracts” are necessary and binding. The shyster is introduced as a benefactor, overflowing with charity. He is engaged to draw up the “contracts”—to the tune of \$2 a piece. (Laughter.) He philanthropically promises to “contribute” 50 cents on each contract to the union. Several hundred “contracts”—not worth the paper on which they are written—are drawn up, signed and delivered. My shyster forgets all about his promise; pockets the whole fee, perhaps, probably, “goes divvy” with his pals, the fakirs; and the sweat-shops are once more “abolished.” (Laughter.)—until the impecuniosity of this rascal gang instigates a new strike, and the sweat shop is to be “abolished” once more.—Is such an organization a “Union”? Is it not rather a compact of brigands preying on the unfortunate proletariat? (Loud applause.)

Take another illustration. More than once *The People* has shown by

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signed communications that branches of the "Garment Workers," another precious "union," consist of "officers and a book." These officers go to sweat shops and shops that deal in prison-made goods, frighten the boss with the book, said to contain the names of thousands of members; the boss then "sees" the officers; and they sell him the label, and pocket the proceeds—What sort of a thing is that? A union? Yes—a union of vultures on the working class. (Loud applause.)

Again. In the printers' trade we have in New York a so-called "Hebrew Typographical Union." It leaves its own trade unorganized; deserts fellow proletarians in the midst of a fight, thereby aiding the bosses by such downright scabbery; seeks to keep its jobs at the expense of leaving all others wholly disorganized; and receives the aid and protection of a German "union," whose own main endeavor seems to be to throw into the camp of the unorganized its own fellow-members, who aided it in gaining whatever it now has, but have since lost their jobs.—Are these unions in every proper sense of the words?—Such organizations cannot, but disrupt, enfeeble and degrade the working class. (Applause.)

Taking a still broader view of the situation, see the attitude of the A. F. of L. It places its membership on the ground of the capitalist issue of the tariff. In the tobacco trade the manufacturers want cheap tobacco, hence want a low tariff; the raisers of tobacco leaf in the country want high prices for their goods, hence want a high tariff. Gompers gets his cigarmakers' unions to petition Congress in the interest of the bosses, the manufacturers, for a low tariff; the tobacco leaf raisers get their men to petition Congress for a high tariff; and thus the workers, whose interests are one, if they stand on the interests of their own class, rush, divided at one another's throats because they are misled by the Labor Fakir into capitalist class issues.

No need of multiplying illustrations. Of such is the bulk of the "unionism" in the land to-day; hence the working class is disorganized, and a prey to capitalism. Such "unionism" is a fraud. The interests of the Labor Fakirs require the continuance of this disorder. While the party ignored this fact it indirectly promoted the conditions under which the proletariat remained in abject hopelessness and darkness, with the result that the party, in the eyes of the broad masses, shaped the suspicion that already was being attached to the Fakir, and had no standing whatever in the country.

But the superstitious reverence for the word *unionism* finally came to an end. The party broke through that shell. It raised its Arm and Hammer, lustily played that with heavy raps over the heads of the existing fake unionism. No longer did it bow down before the word; it began to look behind that word. All progress dates from then. The fakirs howled, and some of their dupes howled with them, but the rank and file saw a new light and breathed a new air. It is no accident that in New

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York last election day the party's heaviest gains were made just in the districts whose organizations and candidates were most uncompromisingly on the war path against the deviltry of fake unionism, and in favor of bona fide unionism, the unionism that is built upon the solidarity of the proletariat—the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance. (Loud applause.)

Let me recommend to you to fearlessly follow that path, unterrified by the noise of the Labor Fakir. In the Sixteenth Assembly District, where the party organization was conspicuously on the basis of New Trade Unionism, i. e., of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance, an incident happened that is worth noticing. Our watchers were accurate in their reports; they reported just two ballots on which their candidate for the Assembly, whom the fakirs had concentrated their rage against, was stricken off. These two otherwise Socialists had been made enemies, but in their stead over 700 had been made friends, and they put that candidate that much ahead of the ticket. Those two could have been kept as friends only by an attitude that could not have attracted the 700 (applause). By the party's old policy, it kept 2 by losing 700 (applause.) The tactics, with regard to unionism, that we follow now attract 700, though we may temporarily lose 2. Fall to fearlessly on this path. The necessary ally of the political movement for the emancipation of the proletariat is the class-conscious trades union; that implies that the inevitable foe of the party and hindrance to the redemption of the working class is the fakir-controlled class-unconscious so-called "union." Build up the former; be known as the upholders of its cause and the uncompromising adversaries of the latter. This is indispensable to success, because that is indispensable to kindle the fires of class-consciousness, and thus to weld the proletariat into one solid, irresistible body. (Long applause.)

ATTITUDE TOWARDS RACES

Next in importance, as applicable here in Boston also, is the New York attitude towards the several races.

When the thoughts of great men fall into the hands of little men a mess is the inevitable result. The Socialist or proletarian movement is international: this is a profound thought, dropped from master lips. Unable to understand this thought, there are those who deny all national inherited feelings. Man, the best of us, the firmest in the humane principles of our great cause, still is man, and flesh, and apprehensive. We are apt to love our own children, our own homes, just a little better than we love others' homes and children. I'll confess to you that, to me, for instance, the word "America," associated, as it is, with the earliest remembrances of my childhood and woven in the nursery tales of the great deeds of her sons, and of the surpassing beauties of her natural sceneries, awakens within me a feeling that no other country's name

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can awaken. We must count with this feeling. It is a virtue. Like all other virtues, if driven to excess, it may become a vice and harmful. We should utilize the good that is in it, and that it is capable of.

Take the Irishman for instance. He were a monster if the word "Erin" did not quicken his pulse with love. Generations of heroic struggles against a foreign domination have woven that word into his very heart-strings. The thought of freeing Ireland from British domination is natural, is praiseworthy. To sympathize with this feeling and to promote it wisely is no denial of the internationality of our movement. On the contrary. We, who are already Socialists, and know the secret of the birth-place of slavery, are the only ones who can show the proletarian sons of Erin the path to her liberation. That path lies exactly upon the elevated plane of International Socialism, and his passionate love for Erin will help him to see it. For instance. During the Pullman strike it came out that Queen Victoria owned large blocks of stock in the Pullman prison-pens. Her grand-father, when his workingmen in America, the colonists, went on strike and refused to yield him dividends—taxes, as it was then called—had to send redcoats over to try and coerce them. His grand-daughter, now that America is "free," when her wage-slaves in Pullman go on strike, needs not go through the trouble that her grand-father did; she can let a Grover Cleveland, named "President," in fact her lackey, together with her other lackeys on the Bench, in the Senate, etc., do her dirty work. The Irishman who, justly fired by hatred of the British rule, has his attention called to such facts, cannot fail to see through the deception practised upon him when miscreants of his race call upon him to support the Democratic and Republican henchmen of the Government that he hates. He is then switched on to a track that enables him to drop the illusions of old and to perceive the class struggle. His formerly limited patriotism enlarges; his very love for Erin makes him shake off his misplaced love for the Irishman who is a capitalist, and draw himself close to all his fellow wage-slaves of all nations. This is no sneaky exploitation of his virtue; his virtuous love for Erin can win him to the cause of mankind. It is a portal that we do not lock and bolt in New York. On the contrary, we open it wide with the Irish and in all similar instances. (Loud applause.)

This is the obverse of a medal, that, as all medals, has a reverse. For the very reason that such national features may be useful and must be cultivated, we must strenuously resist the attempt to enlist respect for alleged national characteristics that are not virtues but vices, that are not noble features but defects, that are not national but freakish. This issue was forced upon us by an element, mainly from among the Russian Jews, which, although it is to the Jewish race what the slum-proletariat is to the working class, sought to array itself in all the dignity of that race, and demanded not recognition merely, but supremacy *as Jew*.

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We frequently compare conditions created here by capitalism with Russian conditions. That can only be a figure of speech. Despotism such as Russia's exists nowhere else within the domain of civilization. That this despotism must tell upon a people is inevitable. It has told severely upon the Jew in Russia. When he escapes from that bondage and lands here, his newly acquired freedom at first seems to bereave him of his senses in the potentiality of its enjoyment. The overwhelming majority of them fly to the other extreme: they straightway become Anarchists. With the time, the acquaintance with a freedom never tasted before works marked changes in the Russian Jewish immigration. The individuals begin to develop according to the special aptitudes, or the bent of each. Some become capitalists, others strolling adventurers, and many grow into Socialism. Some, however, and, unfortunately for them, not a few, have been so affected by oppression in Russia that the springs of their minds seem cracked, or have lost all elasticity. These see in every institution of order a Russian ukase; in every one who resists disorder a Russian policeman; in everyone who does not tolerate their trampling over him a Russian Tzar. Freedom, as they understand it, is the right to outrage whom they please with impunity. Physically and mentally these people are diseased. Unfortunately for them whatever progress they were making towards a healthier frame of mind, men of their own race jumped in to retard.

As the worst enemy of the Irishman, the Italian, the Slav, etc., comes from the ranks of their own race, so likewise, from the ranks of the Russian Jew come the men, the leaders, who seek to exploit his weakness for the gratification of the private malice which their narrow-breasted brains breed. These leaders, who, strolling like rolling stones westward from Russia, have acquired only the worst features and none of the good of the nations among whom they sojourned and now sojourn, of ungovernable conceit and vanity, superficial knowledge, meretricious abilities, characterless, unscrupulous, and bereft of all sense of propriety, sought to ride the party. They played upon the unfortunate, diseased Russian Jew. Although these leaders themselves are a libel upon the Jew, they donned the mask of apostles of the Jewish race, to aid them in their scheme—and thus sought to introduce the Semitic question into our ranks—just as their fellows have vainly tried in Europe. By fraud they captured three of our Assembly Districts with the wretches who were weak enough to listen to them, threw the party constitution overboard, instituted there a system of terror and rowdysim, and, stupidly imagining from their first successes that they had the party by the throat, they began to claim superior rights for the Jew over the Gentile, and to seek to dwarf our great cause to the small measure of their own petty notions and vanities.

For a time we held our breath and looked on, and tried reason. The

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gravity of the situation finally dawned upon us. And we met it in the only wise way. The “national” or “race” characteristics claimed by this element and put in operation by it, even if really national or racial, were of the sort that had to be crushed; it kept out the decent Jewish element, and, of course, the Gentile too. New York saw that; pulled itself together, and, with one grab of this element by the nape of the neck threw them out.

Philadelphia, so circumstanced that it could take in the situation more promptly, had taken the lead by putting these people out, and promptly gathered the fruits of its policy by more than doubling its vote. New York followed, and, by the firmness it showed in upholding order and squelching a perverse movement of scheming adventurers, earned increased respect, was able during the campaign to present a solid front, that otherwise it never could have presented, and gained votes everywhere;—even in the reorganized districts, its percentage increased. (Long and loud applause.)

ATTITUDE TOWARDS “SOCIAL DEMOCRACY”

A third tactical question that New York had to deal with, and that not only you but all our Sections have to confront, arises from the “Social Democracy,” that has recently been launched here.

In treating and judging that “Social Democracy” we must guard against being affected by the ill-natured remarks that, with increasing frequency, are dropping from its leader, chief and owner against our party and its “hired men,”—as he pleases to call those of our Comrades whom the party’s vote has chosen to carry out its mandates.

Mr. Debs is a gentleman of extraordinary imagination. He can see thousands of men in an organization where the less imaginative cannot see but a baker’s dozen. We became acquainted with this feature of his when his organ, the *Terre Haute, Ind., Railway Times*, printed speeches of his in which, with a mixed metaphor, similar to that in which he is now claiming the “Social Democracy” to be running “as a wild fire” and “shaking the country from center to circumference,” he announced the progress made by his American Railway Union, and claimed for it 130,000 members, when, in fact, the thing was so dead that its managers were at their wits’ end how to start something new. With this imaginative power he saw thousands and hundreds of thousands ready to follow him, and actually enlisted in anything new that his fervid brain might conceive. But that was not enough to generate the “Social Democracy.” Something else was needed, and that something else was found.

A party such as the Socialist Labor party, wedged in between the reactionary forces of the land and conspicuously revolutionary, can not choose but attract freaks and crooks and schemers—the flotsam and jetsam of modern society. Such elements soon find the S. L. P. not to be

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what they imagined; they find it "narrow," "intolerant," "bigoted," "impractical" and "impracticable." The result of this, to make short a long and harrowing story, is that this element is either thrown out of the party or walks out in disgust. In either case, it is violent at, and full of denunciation against the S. L. P. This is the ash-barrel refuse of the S. L. P., increased by kindred spirits, who did not go through the routine of admission and expulsion, or "indignant" resignation. Unhappy the man who lends an ear to these "alienated individuals and elements of strength." No goose is stuffed like him. The imaginative man does not mean to lie, with him it is pure imagination; the "alienated" brigade, however, does not imagine, it simply lies, and lies with all the power of stupid, vindictive and shallow viciousness. It inflates its numbers, its capacity, its power: the frog in the fable is not a circumstance to them.

This element is and was a necessary force, if the thing can be called force, in the production of the movement under contemplation. The two streams,—pure imagination and unqualified falsification—met. Each deceived the other with its pretences. It was a case of "Dupers duping dupers." Out of the copulation of these two mutually duping forces was born that quaint production that eventually if not sooner, will find its place in the museums of political curiosities as the "Social Democracy of America and Patagonia." (Laughter and prolonged applause.)

How shall we treat it? Fear it? Not at all. Denounce it wholesale? Not at all. Pat it on the back? Not at all. New York took the correct stand.

In the first place, the Social Democracy need alarm nobody. Mr. Debs stood before now in the way of the S. L. P. in New York, with results that were highly gratifying to us. It is now something like three years ago when in the midst of a campaign, and when he was a much more interesting figure to the proletariat, he appeared in New York, spoke for the People's party, carried about its literature, etc.: net results—the Populist vote went down and ours jumped up. During that same campaign he went across the river into New Jersey and stumped for the Populist candidate for Congress, a violent traducer of the S. L. P., Mr. Josie Buchanan. Mr. Debs' meetings were by all odds larger than ours; he had then, as now, no judgment of appearances; he declared Buchanan elected; net results—the S. L. P. candidate came out greatly in the lead of Mr. Buchanan. It is not the size of meetings and the furor into which these may momentarily be thrown that tells. What tells are the arguments that leave lasting impression. Phrases about sufferings that all know all about, denunciations of conditions that all recognize, unaccompanied by the scientific presentation of the causes, are barren, they do not point out the right path, and are lightly forgotten; and when such speeches are interlarded with points and arguments that insinuate economic errors, their effect for good is still more transient. The masses of our people will not stir except for the revolutionary cause, and that needs the cannon-

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ball of science; not blank cartridges. Our attitude, consequently, need not be one of fear toward the "Social Democracy." (Applause.)

Nor, in the second place, should our attitude be one of denunciation. This "Social Democracy" can be and is a source of comfort for the S. L. P. in more ways than one. Do you realize how monotonously irksome our work would be if we were forced to present Socialist economics and sociology always from the same side? We would simply break down under the weight. But erroneous movements and issues come to our aid, and thereby enable us to preach and prove the same scientific principles from ever fresher sides. Thus the tariff issue, the gold and silver issues, etc., etc., and now the numerous false issues raised by the "Social Democracy," furnish us fresh materials; thus the science of Socialism is given added chances by the new errors with which it may be contrasted, and the work of its propagandists is made easier by the introduction of variety from the outside. (Applause.)

Furthermore, this "Social Democracy" is a blessing in another way. Prof. Ely, in a book not otherwise replete with thought, puts in the brilliant thought that the Exclusion Laws with which Bismarck scourged the Socialist Labor party of Germany redounded to that party's profit: they pulled out of the party all its freaks and shady characters, and kept new ones of that stripe from joining. The Exclusion Laws made the German S. L. P. a very unattractive thing for any but the best materials in point of character and sense, and thereby enabled that party to keep itself strong, pure and aggressive. Ditto, ditto, is this "Social Democracy" doing for us. It, the same as all its freak predecessors have done, is purifying our ranks grandly of the freaks and schemers, and such other fishy material together with the weak-kneed, whom our "intolerance," etc., had not yet rid us of. If you read the *Social Democrat* of Chicago, and see the names of "S. L. P. members" in St. Louis, Chicago, New York, Boston, etc., and of some others, who, "but for our intolerance would have become members of the S. L. P." the spectacle must strike you as edifying. Me it forcibly reminds of the roaring student song of my student days about how into Noah's ark there marched

The animals two by two—
The elephant and the kangaroo,
The flea
And the chimpanzee. (Loud laughter and applause.)

The "Social Democracy" deserves our gratitude of rendering us the important service of ridding us of such element or switching it away from us. (Applause.)

Finally, there are those who are down on the "Social Democracy" claiming that it leads off good people. No doubt it does that in some cases. But the only salvation of such people lies just in the New York treatment of

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the "Social Democracy." By holding a firm attitude, an attitude that criticises with a firm hand, that calls things pointedly by their true names, that neither is angered into intemperate fault-finding nor weakened by undue considerations, such good elements, as the "Social Democracy" may attract to it, will be enabled to discover their error and join us. To Mr. Debs himself we are hereby rendering a great service. He will some time discover that the flatterers, who now beset him, and the informants, who now have his ears, played him a scurvy trick; while the ruthless economic and sociologic criticism to which we subject his plan, may aid him, if there is in him sufficient vigor of mind and character, to perceive his mistakes, acknowledge them, mend his ways and turn about. If Mr. Debs is what some who know him claim, we shall yet see him in the S. L. P. camp—a valuable man, because a reformed man, and a reformed man because of our present attitude towards him. (Applause.)

FORWARD WITHOUT FALTERING

I might mention some more tactical points, but the hour is late, and these are the principal ones, that have their direct and actual application here.

Push forward upon uncompromising lines. Such conduct alone is calculated to make clear our principles and thereby attract the masses. It must be our endeavor at this period to gather the best material in point of character and vigor. The howl raised by our march is a good sign. It is not the howl of friends turned to foes, but of concealed foes forced to show their colors. Only right principles can effect that unification that is needed for the success of our cause. Woe to the man or men who would interfere in this work of unification; who would set private ambitions or rancors above principle, and thus aid the cause of Capitalism by dividing the revolutionary forces. The path of the S. L. P. in the past is strewn with the carcasses of such; an infuriate proletariat will within short time treat such gentry to shorter shrifts. All the signs point to the conclusion that, accidents excepted, we, as we are here in this hall to-night, shall live to see the triumph of the S. L. P., the downfall of capitalism; and that, as the reward of the arduous labors now resting on our shoulders, we shall enjoy the satisfaction of handing down to the children of this generation a better world to live in than that our fathers handed down to us. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

QUESTIONS

At the close of the address Comrade Byron Efford recited one of his stirring poems, and then the floor was opened for questions. A handful of Russian Anarchist Jews, who had promptly joined the "Social Democracy" in the pursuit of their policy of pushing anything that they think may injure the S. L. P., and who constitute the bulk of this

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“American” Socialist movement, demanded the floor for questions and tried to create a disturbance. They were promptly brought to order by the information from the Chairman that if they misdemeaned themselves they would be physically put down and out. Most of the questions put were by them, and those questions illustrated to perfection the points that the speaker had scored against them. One of these questions, the first one put, was typical of the rest. Morris Jolles asked:

“The speaker says that all Russian Jews are rascals. I want to ask him why he solicits their votes in the Ninth Congressional District?”

The speaker: “I request all those who heard me use the words imputed to me by this gentleman, to raise their right hands.”—No one raised his right hand.—“None? To make the point doubly clear, I now request all those to raise their right hands who know that I did not use the words put into my mouth, and did not express the sentiments imputed to me by this gentleman.”—The hands of the large audience went up; before they were let down, the speaker turned to the questioner, and pointing to the forest of arms that were still raised, said: “That is my answer to your question, sir.”