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EDITORIAL

THE “PASSING OF THE S.L.P.”?

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WITH the battle of the ballots in course of being delivered this day, a word of retrospect and prospect is in season.

True to its principles, unswerving in its tactics, relentless in the aggressiveness that marks a revolutionary movement, the Socialist Labor Party conducted this year's campaign throughout the country along the identical lines that have marked its course every day, during and outside of campaigns, ever since it unfurled its banner twelve years ago. It so happened that this year an extraordinary social phenomenon aided the Party to give point to its agitation and educational work, and, correspondingly, to emphasize its posture, the posture of a bona fide party of Labor, both in point of soundness and intrepidity. That social phenomenon was the coal strike.

The coal strike coincided with the campaign. That wages and politics are inseparable, the Socialist Labor Party had ever preached. The coal strike offered an extraordinary opportunity to emphasize the point. But the point could not be properly emphasized without breasting an intense storm of popular superstition, raised by the strike itself. In this very fact lay the all around testfulness of the opportunity. The S.L.P. headed straight for the storm. The storm of popular superstition in the case was the boundless admiration expressed for Mitchell the strike leader. The superstition arose from a just popular sympathy with the sufferings of the striking miners. It was a typical instance of how the heart can be captured to its own undoing. Just because the miners were pitiful victims of capitalism,—for that very reason, not admiration, but execration was the just meed of Mitchell.

The miners are workingmen: under the capitalist system the workingman is a merchandise, bought and sold in the Labor Market, just as beef or pork, or any other

merchandise: the same law that determines the price of all other merchandise therefore determines the price (wages) of the merchandise workingman: the exchange value of all merchandise declines owing to the decreasing social labor necessary to reproduce it, due to labor-saving machinery: consequently, the price of the working class cannot choose but decline. But—the workingman is a human being. This fact determines another, to wit, the total impossibility of “peace and tranquility,” the total impossibility of “harmony” between the Capitalist Class and the Working Class,—between a class, that would and must use the human being workingman as a merchandise, and the class that is made up of these human beings, workingmen. Not until that dark day shall have dawned upon us, when American Labor shall have come down to the abject coolie level, can there be “harmony,” “peace and tranquility” between the two classes. To hold up this fact is essential to all sound Socialist theory; to apply it and enforce it against whomsoever holds otherwise is essential to all successful Socialist tactics. Without both, Socialism becomes a by-word, a mere snare and delusion. Now, then, in the midst of the coal strike and down to the day when he addressed the miners’ convention at Wilkesbarre, advising that the strike be declared off, John Mitchell declared that “peace and tranquility,” that “harmony,” that “friendly business relations,” and “no irreconcilable conflict” should mark the relations between the capitalist and the workingman [see *United Mine Workers’ Journal* of October 23, 1902]. Alone, the Socialist Labor Party—its press and speakers—breasted the storm of popular superstition. It alone, at such critical and, therefore, seasonable hour, not only preached the abstract gospel of Socialism, but illustrated the same by holding up Mitchell to popular execration, despite all popular outcry in his favor. Thus the campaign was a test of sturdiness, of fitness; and the S.L.P. stood the test—it, and it alone. The organization that does that; the organization that does not flinch in the hour of danger;—that organization has roots that cannot be up-torn; its success is assured.

Periodically, during the last twelve years, that is, since its start, the “Passing of the S.L.P.” has been predicted; and the obscene birds of the political forest, deceived by the falling of dry leaves, and too near-sighted to detect the spread and strengthening fibre of the growing roots underneath, cawed back the silly prophecy. The S.L.P. will accomplish its task. And when that task shall have been performed; when the Socialist Republic

shall have been reared, beneath whose dome no slave shall bend, and the Working Class, and, with it, Humanity, shall have at last been emancipated;—when that task shall be done, then the Socialist Labor Party will take its place in a niche of the Pantheon where are enshrined the immortals that fought and dared for the human race, and that achieved success.

The "passing of the S.L.P."?

The S.L.P. is immortal.

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

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