

EDITORIAL

PETTIGREW'S KEEN SCENT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Senator **Richard Franklin Pettigrew**, defeated in his own State, forthwith inflated his nostrils for carrion. His own party¹ is annihilated; he seeks for a new one; and he steps before the political footlights with a name, manufactured by himself, for the new concern which he would like to ride. That name is the "Social Labor Party."

This combination tells quite a tale, it gives an inside view into the workings of a politician's mind, which is an interesting thing.

For ten years the Socialist Labor Party has stood in the field. Its arguments were unshakable, its facts were undeniable. It stood its ground, and has continued to stand it, despite all opposition, intrigue and chicanery, as only sound principles, and unflinching rectitude and conscious ascendancy can stand its ground. Of course, it did not grow fast. Its posture nevertheless attracted attention, and not a few discerned in it all the elements needed for ultimate triumph. But—they found fault with



RICHARD FRANKLIN PETTIGREW
(1848–1926)

its name. In the first place, "Socialist" was too outspoken; these critics did not venture to deny that Socialism was right; "of course it was" said they, "but it never will do to say so"; in the second place, "Labor" was a shocking word, it denoted "classes," it would keep away the intellectuals, etc., etc.

Senator Pettigrew now looks over the political battlefield and he sniffs certain whiffs. He sees the much-boomed Social Democracy turn out a ridiculously small vote everywhere, especially in the West, the theatre of Mr. Debs' "great exploits";

¹ [Silver Republican.]

and the Senator evidently does not forget to contrast this small vote with the rodomontade "endorsements" received by Mr. Debs from "organized labor" all over the country. And yet he sees some kind of a vote. This is enough to make him sympathize with the word "Social." On the other hand, he sees the Socialist Labor Party breast a storm that was expected and intended to smash it. He sees that vote mop the floor with the Debserie in Colorado and other places, despite the howl of the Organized Scabbery, and he justly concludes that Labor is with the S.L.P., while only wind is with the Debserie. Accordingly, the ex-Senator realizes that the word "Labor" is a powerful one, and he accepts it. Thus he pieces together the name of his new party, and calls it the "Social Labor Party."

Interesting it is to watch how these politicians cannot rid themselves of the rooted belief that the people are but flies to be caught with bird lime. They do not realize that the masses stick to old parties by mere force of habit, and that something stronger than bird-lime is required to bear them away into new channels. The late elections have proved this. If bird-lime could do the work of soundness and manliness, the Debs' vote would be up in the hundreds of thousands instead of crawling, as it is, around less than one-half of 100,000, and the Socialist Labor Party would be wiped out, instead of having an unquestioned increase to register over the previous presidential year.

No "Social Labor" or any other compromise will do. Nothing short of the party that builds upon Labor and that is so unquestionably Socialist that it calls itself, and is known to be, such.

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

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