

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 3, NO. 175.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1902.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

ARE SOCIALISTS FAILURES?

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT has become the fashion for mediocre ministers and intellectual dependents of the capitalist class to denounce Socialists as failures. To the inability to succeed is socialist criticism attributed. It is also held that this ill-success debars Socialists from the moral right to make such criticism.

Were success a safe criterion on which to base criticism and the right to criticize, capitalists and their defenders would be compelled to hold their peace forever. Capitalism is notoriously a failure. This is amply attested by the existence of widespread poverty in the midst of abundance, by the periodic crises, entailing untold suffering on millions in many nations, and by the increase of suicide among all classes of capitalist society. The latter fact alone should forever seal the lips of capitalism, for it is among its own upholders that self-murder—that mortal confession of failure to overcome life's problems—is more often resorted to than among the Socialists at whom they point their critical fingers.

Further, it is obvious that such a criterion cannot serve as a basis for criticism or the right to criticize, for its logical application would obversely compel millions of sane, industrious, thrifty and unsuccessful men and women who uphold capitalism to shut their mouths. This theory would, in other words, cut the ground from under capitalism's own feet.

Let us reject this absurd theory, then. Let us face the question, "Are Socialists failures?" and answer it with a vigorous "No!" and with facts.

In Germany, in the good old days of Marxian Socialism, it was a well-known fact that in those electoral districts where illiteracy was most prevalent, the capitalists and reactionary candidates for the Reichstag never failed of election. Those districts having the least percentage of illiteracy and inhabited by the highly skilled industrial artisan,

however, always went Socialist.

In this country it is well-known that the Socialists comprise the more highly-paid, skilled and thoughtful portions of the working class. It is generally admitted that the study of Socialism appeals to those gifted with a mental and emotional make-up capable of serious, sympathetic and analytical observation, study and thought. Men of such characteristics cannot be classed as failures, except in the perverted imagination of mediocre ministers.

If we approach the matter from another side it will be found that Socialists are successful from other standpoints. Owen, Engels, Singer and Bebel are men who, as capitalists, acquired wealth, while achieving fame as philanthropists, philosophers and economists. Lassalle was a brilliant lawyer and orator. Ferri is one of the great anthropologists and criminologists. De Paepe, Wolders, and Liebknecht were organizers and statesmen whose abilities were more than a match for the Bismarcks of their day. Fourier anticipated capitalist concentration more than half a century ago. Saint-Simon advocated international courts and other means of promoting world-wide peace. Above them all towers Karl Marx, satirist, historian, philosopher, economist among economists and organizer of modern International Socialism: a man of varied attainments, whose prescience is universally acknowledged, a man whose ideas and politics have influenced the actions of governments on two continents and whose power and influence for good are growing from day to day!

Failures indeed! Where are the ministers who can compare with such a galaxy of bright stars in the firmament of success?

*Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded October 2006*