

Financial Support
Yours Is Needed to
Advance the SLP and
the SIU program.
www.slp.org/support.html

Study, Think Act!
Many Historic and
Current Resources
Available at
www.slp.org

SLP TO FIGHT ON!

Party Closes National Offices — Suspend In-Print Edition of The People — Funds Exhausted — Plans for SLP's Future — Financial Support Critical to Success — Appeal and Pledge

The following is the text of a general letter sent to every subdivision and member of the Socialist Labor Party under day of March 19. It is reproduced here for the information of all other friends and supporters of the SLP.

*

Dear Comrades:

This is to inform you that the National Office has suspended publication of *The People* and all New York Labor News shipments, and that National Headquarters will close effective March 31. The reason is lack of funds. I will send a detailed report to the membership in due course. For the present, however, it is imperative that Comrade Donna Bills and I concentrate all our time and effort on clearing out the headquarters and arranging for the preservation of the archives and other historic matter. We also intend to keep and store certain basic office equipment that we will need if we can rally the membership and regroup sometime in the months ahead.

I must drop Comrade Bills from the payroll at the end of the month and I must do the same to myself as soon after that as I can finish the job of closing things down. Beyond that, we must find jobs for ourselves immediately because the response to our last fund appeals through the *SLP Newsletter* was insufficient to prevent us from using virtually all of the so-called severance package to keep things going this long.

Once we have closed the office and succeeded in finding new sources of income for ourselves, we will consult with the NEC on regrouping and getting a "new start."

This is not the end of the SLP, but it will be if the membership does not respond soon with some serious financial support. (I was deeply frustrated, annoyed and upset recently when a Party member confessed he does not even read the *SLP Newsletter* and did not know how serious the problem is! I know that member is not the typical SLP man or woman, and Comrade Donna Bills and I are extremely grateful for all the generous backing and support received from the majority of our comrades and friends. Nonetheless, you will understand my disappointment and frustration. When I said it would take every SLP man and woman to keep the Party afloat, I meant every SLP man and woman.)

Comrades, please bear with us. **We are not abandoning the ship.** Rather, we are tossing overboard what we can no longer afford to carry and will get to work on getting the SLP and *The People* back on course as soon as we can. Please do everything you can to help us. To be plain and blunt: **We need cash and we need it now!** We need it to make it through this period of transition to get a fresh start, and we need to do it with a minimum of delay. One look at the economy; one look at the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; one look in general at the capitalist shambles, will tell you that the SLP is needed and needed as never before.

In spite of something I wrote last month and that you will read in another column, I believe it is feasible to scale the SLP headquarters down from a \$120,000–\$150,000-a-year operation to a \$35,000–\$40,000-a-year operation. It depends on Comrade Donna Bills and I finding suitable employment and on the SLP continuing to receive that level of financial support from members and other supporters. It would mean moving into a much smaller office, renting a storage locker and a dramatic reduction in the variety of SLP literature, but it would enable us to continue the website and to resume publication of *The People*. I have not worked out the particulars

and there are many ifs, ands, buts and maybes to resolve, but if we can count on your financial support we will leave no other stone unturned to make it work—but your unstinting support is critical, an absolute must.

Dear comrades, please help us strip the SLP ship down and make it fit and ready for action again.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

'OUR SINGLE IMPERATIVE'

February 25

At this writing the results of the National Telephone Committee have not yet been released nor, as far as I know, has the NEC reached a decision regarding the status of the SLP.

Our Party is the repository of a body of knowledge gained through great sacrifice by the working class and through the efforts of exceptional individuals who dedicated their lives in charting the passage of the human race to a practical, sane and a cooperative future—to that democratic, classless society of abundance and freedom called socialism.

We live in a time when socialism can no longer be postponed as "the luxury of a later date" without putting our planet and its entire cargo of life, so painfully evolved over four billion years, in serious peril.

We, of the SLP, have never deluded ourselves that the tremendous social adjustment demanded by the collapse of global capitalism could be precipitated by our own actions. A social revolution comes as a result of historical development and its timing is unknown.

Neither have we been discouraged by the smallness of our numbers. We are among those historic few who have entered into comradeship by chance and circumstance to assume voluntarily a responsibility that is both a burden and a privilege. For more than a century SLP men and women have carried this *ark of a new social covenant* through a world of growing misery, exploitation, butchery and environmental destruction. And for that long has our message fallen, mostly unheeded, at the feet of an increasingly fragmented and demoralized working class. Yet socialism is "the answer" so urgently sought in all the wrong places by those who still cling, unseeing, to the corpse of capitalism for salvation.

This is natural in a period of social disintegration, but capitalism, dynamic even in precarious decline, has yet to reach that point where misery is no longer willing to endure in ignorance where desperation becomes the stimulus to thought and action. When that happens the spark we tend will become a conflagration.

Our debt is to the past but our responsibility is to the future. If we can neither build nor maintain then we must retrench and progress by increments. It is in the nature of ideas that no intellectual spark is too small to become the illumination of an age—but even a spark held in trust can go out.

In practical words, if we are forced by necessity to close our headquarters and suspend *The People* then let us trim expenses wherever possible, remove to more modest quarters with a part-time staff and reduce our official organ to an online quarterly or whatever is within our means. *Our single imperative is to keep the Spark placed within our care...alive and at the ready.*

Fraternally yours,
ABCAP

February 25

Dear Comrade . . . :

This will acknowledge receipt of your email of...

By "results of the National Telephone Committee" I assume you mean the dollar amount that can be attributed to the committee's work. That is true, though I

believe the National Office made it clear to the membership that the committee's efforts prevented the accumulation of any deficit during the third quarter of the 2007 calendar year. As for the actual dollar amount, it was difficult to ascertain because those who contributed during that period did not always mention having been contacted by the committee. From what the National Office can tell, however, \$11,163.00 in contributions can be traced directly to the committee's efforts.

I do not think it is realistic to think in terms of a scaled down headquarters operation with a part-time staff and an electronic version of *The People* only. The printed edition of *The People* has been the Party's only source of income for many years now. The number of online readers is not only small when compared to the in-print readership, that fraction of the readership brings us no income. It is the membership—primarily the older membership—and other long-time financial supporters who take *The People* who account for most of the Party's income, and only a small number of them receive *The People* electronically.

If it becomes necessary to close the offices and suspend *The People*, I do not believe it will be possible to continue anything with a "part-time staff" Donna and I will have to find full-time work, which may not be easy given our ages, that we have worked for the Party and only the Party for all these years (we have no references and not much for our resumes) and the general economic atmosphere of today, in which the competition for jobs is bound to make our transition into the labor market very difficult. I hate to say it, but I have a hard time envisioning either of us devoting any time to the SLP, at least until that problem is resolved. Perhaps, if the Party [were] to receive a sudden infusion of \$30,000 or \$40,000 over and above the normal flow of income and expenses, it might be possible to scale things down to the level you suggest. The way it looks to me now, however, we will have to cease all operations by the end of May, and I have some doubt that we can stretch it that far.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

February 25

Dear Comrade Bills,

I understand your point but closing the Party seems to hold no great promise for anybody or any thing either. The situation needs some of that old cliché: "creative thought." At least I am encouraged that you seem to think that we will scrape through April...and perhaps into May. That's a mini-reprieve but it's something! . . .

Fraternally,
ABCAP

February 25

Dear Comrade . . . :

I wish that "brainstorming" was likely to produce some idea that would prevent or at least postpone what now seems virtually inevitable to me. As I said, however, without some sudden windfall of funds within the next few weeks we will simply have to close down. In a certain sense, we have already shut down. This week, Donna and I will begin in earnest to prepare the archives for shipment to Wisconsin and to look for a new home for the bound volumes of *The People*. (We have bound volumes dating from 1895 or 1896.) Sometime in March, I anticipate disposing of all the literature so we can put the cabinets and shelving up for sale.

The library could be a major problem. Someone has suggested that we try to sell it off. I'm not sure if that can be done. We may not have enough time to do that because it would involve a considerable amount of preliminary clerical work. We have a list of most of the books, but more is needed than that.

(Continued on page 2)

DUKE UNIVERSITY

Bound Volumes of Daily People, Weekly People and The People To Reside With Its Special Collections Library

February 27, 2008

Duke University
<special-collections@duke.edu>
To Whom It May Concern:

We are in possession of a complete set (bound volumes) of the New York *Daily People* (1900–1914), which was edited by Daniel De Leon (1852–1914). (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/deleon/pdf/index.htm>) As far as we know, it is the only complete set of the *Daily People* still in existence.

We also are in possession of a complete set of the *Weekly People* (1900–1978) and most volumes of its predecessor, *The People* (New York City, 1891–1900). These collections also are in bound volumes (*The People* from April 1894 through June 1900, when its name was changed to *Weekly People*).

We are downsizing our offices and eager to find a new home for these historic newspapers. We wish to know if Duke would be interested in having them. Our offices are in San Jose, Calif. If I have addressed this to the wrong person, I would appreciate being pointed in the right direction.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary
Socialist Labor Party of America

February 29, 2008

Dear Mr. Bills,

I think that this sounds like an intriguing possibility. I wonder how many total volumes the set(s) amount to? and are they large volumes like modern newspapers or tabloid in shape?

Thank you for thinking of us,
ANDY ARMACOST

Head Collection Development
Department and Curator of Collections;
Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special
Collections Library Duke University
Durham, N.C.

March 1, 2008

Dear Mr. Armacost:

Thank you very much for your email of February 29.

The *Daily People* was a full-sized, seven-column newspaper published in New York City from July 1, 1900, through its final issue on February 22, 1914. The dimensions in their bindings are 16.5 inches wide by 20.5 inches tall. I attach a facsimile of the front page of the very first issue to give you an idea of its appearance.

The inaugural issue comprised 16 pages divided into two sections of eight pages apiece. Thereafter, the Sunday edition was of eight pages and the Monday-Saturday issues were of four pages apiece. Accordingly, while the outside dimensions of the paper were comparable to the *Herald*, *The Sun* and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, for example, it was nowhere near as thick.

What we have is one complete set in 27 bound volumes. Each volume comprises six months' of newspapers, except the last, which runs from January 1, 1914, through the final issue on February 22, 1914.

We also have two incomplete sets of the *Daily People*, similarly bound.

Lists of the one complete and two partial sets are included below. All of the volumes, the complete set as well as the partial ones, have been packed in boxes as if for shipping for over a decade, the reason being that we have moved twice within that time into smaller quarters that allowed us to do nothing more than store them and keep them safe. Now we are being forced to move into something even smaller that will not allow us to do even that much. Indeed, I am afraid we will have to abandon our headquarters altogether.

The point is that if we fail to find a new
(Continued on page 2)

DUKE UNIVERSITY...

(Continued from page 1)

home for these historic newspapers sometime within the next 30–60 days we will have no choice but to destroy them. At one time, I contemplated offering them to Mr. Baker and his American Newspaper Repository. He had at least one SLP newspaper that I know of (*Radnicka Borba*), which went to Duke when he transferred his collection. That is what led me to Duke.

When I wrote the other day, I mentioned that we also are in possession of a complete set of the *Weekly People* (1900–1979) and most volumes of its predecessor, *The People* (New York City, 1891–1900). These collections also are in bound volumes. I am as eager to find a new home for these as for the *Daily People*, but will take them up separately.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

March 3, 2008

Dear Mr. Armacost:

The People (or New York People, as some historians have referred to it) was launched as a full-sized weekly newspaper on April 5, 1891. It continued under that name until June 1900, when the name was changed to *Weekly People*. (The change corresponded to the launching of the *Daily People* on July 1, 1900.) The *Weekly People*, also a full-sized newspaper, continued under that name until December 1979, when its frequency and size were reduced and the original name (*The People*) was resumed. Front-page facsimiles of *The People* and *Weekly People* are attached.

Again, I am eager to find a new home for these historic newspapers, which is something I must do very soon.

I insert a complete listing of what we have, below. [Not included here.] (You will note that we have multiple copies of most, but that the volume for 1907 is missing.) The volumes of *The People* that we have are bound by volume year (e.g., April 1895–March 1896). The *Weekly People* is bound by calendar year.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

March 3, 2008

Dear Mr. Armacost:

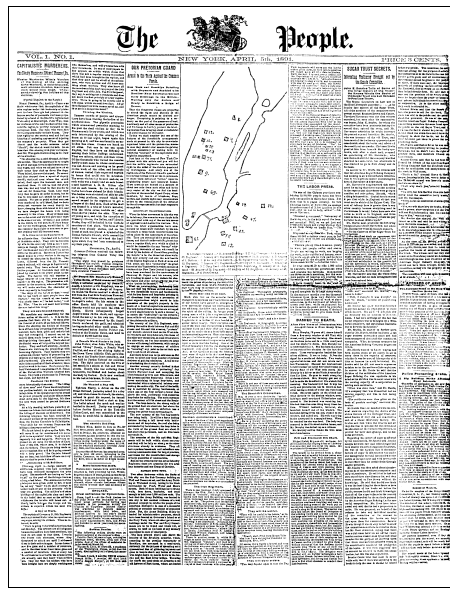
In addition to *The People*, *Weekly People* and *Daily People*, we have two bound volumes representing the complete run of the *Industrial Union News* (IUN), published monthly from 1912 until 1923. The IUN was the official organ of the Workers International Industrial Union, or WIU, which was known originally as the Detroit IWW. The Detroit IWW was established in 1908 as a result of the break between the socialist and anarchist wings of the original Industrial Workers of the World. The Detroit IWW and its newspaper, the IUN, represented the socialist wing. (We also have an unbound set that would be suited for micro-filming. Someone else already did it, but they did a terrible job. Large sections of many pages are so black that they cannot be read.)

We also have one bound volume, representing the complete volume year (1923), of *Arbetaren*, official organ of the Scandinavian Socialist Labor Language Federation. It is in Swedish. (*Radnicka Borba* was published by the South Slavonian Socialist Labor Language Federation. Duke received some of these from Mr. Baker's American Newspaper Repository.) I do not know how long *Arbetaren*, but from the attached facsimile you will see that it was around in 1904.

In addition, we have a single bound copy of *The Tocsin*, for November 10, 1898, a local newspaper published by Section Minneapolis, SLP. I know nothing about the history of this newspaper and was surprised to find it boxed together with the 1923 volume of *Arbetaren* [published].

We would also like to make a gift of these to Duke, if you are willing to accept them. The problem is we cannot afford to ship them. As I mentioned, we are forced to abandon our headquarters for lack of funds, and we must do it soon.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary



Front page of the first issue of *The People*, published at New York City, April 5, 1891. No copies of this issue, or of any subsequent issue published before April 1894, are known to survive except on microfilm. Bound volumes of *The People* from 1894 to 1900 were among the SLP newspapers shipped to Duke University in August 2008.

March 4, 2008

Dear Mr. Bills,

These are all quite interesting. As you might imagine, we would only be interested in one set of the titles. We already hold a small run of *Weekly People* (part of the American Newspaper Repository), and might just be interested in part of what you offer for this title. My next step is to confirm our space to receive the items. I do not anticipate any problems with Duke covering the postage. Is the *Tocsin* that you mention just a single issue or a single annual volume?

If you did not already know we hold the Socialist Party of America Papers (<http://library.duke.edu/catalog/search/s/000874823>) to which these titles would be a great complement.

Thanks again for these offers. I will be back in touch soon.

ANDY



Facsimile of the front page of the first issue of the New York *Daily People*, published July 1, 1900, and daily thereafter, without interruption, until February 14, 1914. Bound volumes for all years but 1907 were among the SLP newspapers shipped to Duke University in August 2008.

March 11, 2008

Dear Andy,

Thank you very much for your email of March 4, and please accept my apology for not responding immediately. Closing down the headquarters of a 132-year-old organization where I have worked for the last 37 years is proving to be as painstaking as it is a painful process.

I went through your website to locate information on the *Weekly People* collection you mentioned and found that it spans the years 1955–1979. I also came across something to indicate that these are kept in boxes, and that the boxes indicate that the papers are not in the best of condition. (Unfortunately, I have not succeeded in navigating myself back to confirm my initial impression.)

At any rate, you have the list of what we have to offer, and you will tell me whether or not you would want me to include one each of our 1955–1979 volumes.

Incidentally, I deeply appreciate your

statement that Duke would have no problem covering the “postage,” though I do not suppose that necessarily means shipping through the USPS in preference to UPS or some other private service. I assume you will also instruct me on that score once other decisions on your end have been made.

You asked about *The Tocsin*. It is a single issue (Volume I, No. 15, dated for November 10, 1898) that has been bound.

You also indicated that you need to confirm the availability of space in which to store the volumes. I hope that can be determined soon (1) because I have to unpack and repack them all to guarantee you the best in quality that I have, and (2) because I have got to get out of here before much longer.

Again, thank you for your response and your patience in awaiting this reply.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

March 13, 2008

Dear Mr. Bills,

If the volumes are in good condition we would be interested in receiving one run of each of:

Weekly People
The People
Daily People
Arbetaren (single volume)

I have confirmed that we have the room to receive the materials, but we can only handle one set of each title. Looking into our partial run of *Weekly People* I see that it is unbound in cord-tied bundles. I think a complete set in bound volumes would be a substantial improvement and the binding will actually improve the preservation of the volumes in the future.

Regarding shipping, I can think of two options:

1. I can supply our FedEx number for 3rd-day air shipping
2. If you have access to a loading dock and wooden pallets I could arrange for a tractor-trailer truck pickup.

I would like to have some estimate, when you are ready, of the number of boxes so I can inform our warehouse people as to what to expect.

Many thanks,

ANDY

P.S. I wonder what you may be doing with your older records and files? Is there a repository archiving your institutional history?

March 14, 2008

Dear Andy,

Thank you very much for your email of March 13.

I will assemble one set of everything we have for shipment and do my utmost to choose the best where I have multiple copies. It will probably take all of next week to get them ready....

My initial estimate for the entire shipment would be 73–75 cartons, give or take.

Strapping them onto pallets probably would be the safest and sanest defense against rough handling, but that would entail an expense I am not confident we could cover. Perhaps strapping two boxes together would firm them up, but that probably would not do much to protect the corners. We have access to a roll up door, but not a loading dock that would be level with the bed of a semi-trailer, etc.

You asked about the SLP's archives. They have always gone to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (now the Wisconsin Historical Society) under an arrangement originally worked out in 1907 between the SLP and Richard T. Ely. We have about 20 years of original records and a smattering of older things in the office, which I hope the society will accept. I cannot imagine that they would not accept them, but if not I may have to look elsewhere.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

SMALL THINGS

March 29, 2008

May I suggest the note from Ms. Drdul published in the monthly newsletter? It may give the membership the encouragement to mail our material to individuals and groups.

The best.

MICHAEL PRESTON
Member-at-Large, N.Y.

[Comrade Preston is alert for opportunities to send SLP material to individuals whom he judges are receptive. Over time, his efforts have resulted in a number of new subscriptions for the Party. In this particular instance, and after reading her locally published letter to the editor, Comrade Preston sent Ms. Drdul a copy of *The People's* November-December issue along with the leaflet *American Workers Can Build a Better World—National Office*]

Dear Michael,

Glad to hear you appreciated my letter to the editor! I'd like to thank you for the positive feedback and for the Socialist Labor Party materials. I've sent for the subscription to *The People*. It really is doing small things like letters and outreach and mutual support that leads to accomplishment. Keep on speaking up and spreading the word!

LISA D.

FORMER PRISONER

Grateful for Free Subscription

Hello!

First let me thank you for the free subscription all of these years. I really and truly appreciate it, and I'm sure those I passed each issue on to also appreciated them.

I'm writing with good news. I've finally, after 10 long miserable years, received a parole. While I would love to continue receiving *The People*, I do understand that free subs are meant for prisoners. I hate to deprive another prisoner of a free sub just so that I could continue to get one as a parolee! Obviously, I will be in no position to actually purchase a sub for probably quite some time. I reckon it'll be quite a difficult time for me for a while.

Anyway, thanks again. I've included my contact information below. Take care, wish me luck, and keep up the great work.

Revolution & freedom for all,
JAMES DUANE
Michigan

...IMPERATIVE

(Continued from page 1)

Some indication of the condition each book is in—the condition of the binding, whether there have markings in the text, etc., would have to be gotten up before we could offer them for sale on eBay or through some other medium. We might be able to do something quick with some of it, but not all, and it is not my top priority. My top priority is getting the archives ready for shipment and finding some institution that will accept and preserve the bound volumes.

There are many other details and problems for the two of us to attend to, such as deciding when to announce suspension of *The People* and to offer refunds on the unfulfilled portion of subscriptions. Although I plan to keep the post office box open, the offer to refund subscriptions will have to be made before we lock the door on the office. Our envelope supplies are low and I cannot see any sense in reprinting them now. That means we may have to think twice about sending out a fund appeal because we may need some of those envelopes for the other purpose.

I have no idea what to do about the card catalogue index of *The People*, which dates from about 1930, the microfilm, the microfilm reader-printer (which is too old and dilapidated to sell), or the 152 binders of De Leon's works that took me years to copy and assemble. We have desks and chairs, a photocopier and computers, and heaven knows what else to dispose of, and once it's gone it's gone—it would take thousands and thousands of dollars to replace it all. (That is one reason why we need a substantial infusion of funds now and not later, because if it did happen to come along, but after we had cleaned out the office, we would have to spend it all just to get back to where we are now.)

Well, I am trying to work this out so that we do not pass the point of no return where it concerns office equipment, etc., as long as possible, but the only way to be absolutely certain of going to the last minute is to resign ourselves to junking most of it rather than selling it. I guess that is where all of my “brainstorming” must be concentrated from now on: hoping for a “miracle” while preparing for the final disaster. Believe me when I say it's a stress builder.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

Explore @ www.slp.org