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SECT, CLASS AND POLITICS

Material Interests Will Trump Religious Ideas Almost Every Time

November 26, 2007

Dear Comrades,

Earlier today the proprietress of a New Age/Wicca bookstore told me that “socialism is abhorrent” . . . Needless to say, I don’t think I’ll give her my business anymore.

Apparently she is a Wiccan as well as a Republican. To me this seems contradictory. After all, hasn’t the Republican Party been commandeered by the religious right? If this person had stopped to think, she’d realize that the Republican Party is in cahoots with the right-wing Christianity—clearly a contradiction with her Wiccan beliefs. She cited Russia as the main paradigm of socialism, how trite and tired is that contention.

Anyway, her ignorant remarks about socialism got me down. Would you please help my lagging spirits? . . .

Fraternally Yours,
ROBERT JENSEN
Member-at-Large, Wis .

December 4, 2007

Dear Comrade Jensen:

Although you did not provide me with many details of your conversation with the woman, or how socialism happened to come into it, her opinions may not have been as contradictory as they seemed to you. Her objections to what she believes about socialism may have less to do with her religious views than with her status as a petty capitalist. After all, it seems improbable that she does not have at least an inkling of the influence that the “religious right” has within the Republican Party and that her religious outlook would find less tolerance there than within the Democratic Party or some procapitalist minor party, such as the Greens or the Libertarians. The reason she is a Republican, in spite of the “religious right,” and not a Democrat, where her religious views would be more readily accepted, is that her religious views are less important to her than her material interests as a “business person.” Even if she had no religious opinion, her ideas about socialism probably would be no different than they are. Even if her understanding of socialism was accurate, she might still consider it “abhorrent” because of the threat it poses to her interests as a petty bourgeois. What Marx wrote in *Capital* about the Church of England may apply to an individual as much as to an institution:

“In the domain of Political Economy, free scientific inquiry meets not merely the same enemies as in all other domains. The peculiar nature of the material it deals with, summons as foes into the field of battle the most violent, mean and malignant passions of the human breast, the Furies of private interest. The English Established Church, e.g., will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than on 1/39 of its income. Nowadays atheism itself is culpa levis, as compared with criticism of existing property relations.”

Abraham Lincoln had something similar in mind in 1860 when he said:

“The property influences his [the property owner’s] mind. The dissenting minister who argued some theological point with one of the Established Church was always met by the reply: ‘I can’t see it so.’ He opened the Bible and pointed him to a passage, but the orthodox minister replied, ‘I can’t see it so.’ Then he showed him a single word—‘Can you see that?’ ‘Yes, I see it,’ was the reply. The dissenter laid a guinea over the word and asked, ‘Do you see it now?’ So here. Whether the owners of this species of property do really see it as it is, it is not for me to say; but if they do, they see it as it is through two billions of dollars, and that is a pretty thick coating.”

You see, then, that similar occurrences and observations are not so unusual and have been noticed and commented on many times in the past. Material inter-

NOTICE

Henceforth—and until further notice—*The People* shall be published exclusively online. For the time-being, all future issues shall be posted on a quarterly basis and their contents shall be taken primarily from articles, correspondence and other matter published in the *SLP Newsletter* from the preceding quarter. The reasons for this changeover, primarily financial, will be explained in an early issue of the online edition. Efforts to resume in-print publication have begun and will be ongoing. To assist us in achieving that goal, the financial support of all SLP members, and all other friends and supporters of the SLP, is earnestly requested. Please send your contribution to the SLP, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042–0218, or [click here](#) to contribute on-line.

Thanks to all for your past and ongoing support.

ests will trump religious ideas almost every time. . . .

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

GLOBAL WARMING

Why U.S. Won’t Define It

The following was submitted to The New York Times in response to an article entitled “U.S. Will Not Define Global Warming.”

November 19, 2007

The invective aimed at the Bush administration, and for that matter Congress, is futile. The imperatives that govern the conduct of our present government come from the capitalist system. Yes, I’m sorry to say, it is a system and systems have compelling modes of operation that are beyond the means of individual politicians, experts, or benevolent bodies to change. They are controlled and not in control.

Profit is the name of the game and that curious motivation is intimately tied to the system of commodity production and the exploitation of wage labor. Because workers are robbed of the lion’s share of what they produce, they cannot buy back the enormous amounts of commodities produced for an uncertain market that must always expand under the capitalist system.

What is required is a system of production for use and not for profit that is owned and controlled by the world’s working classes. We can start in the U.S. by supporting the Socialist Labor Party’s program of democratic socialism. Forget Tweedle Dem and Tweedle Rep. Support working-class democracy, the only means to get control of the global environment. All else is futile.

—Posted by B. Bortnick

SIU PROGRAM

SLP Member Urges Internet Discussion On Its Potential

December 20, 2007

With the U.S. working-class living standard in decline, endless war, workers displaced from homes by capitalist banking vultures and the big oil boardroom sitting in the White House, I believe one important subject is missing on the SLP website. It would seem prudent while capitalism butchers families over oil and ruins the planet, that we introduce the subject of how a revolutionary new Socialist Industrial Union (SIU) government could potentially correct capitalism’s leftover miseries, citing examples to start a discussion on this subject. (Such material should preferably be edited before appearance on the Internet.)

With a decent automobile costing \$20,000 and astronomical prices of other commodities spiraling upward under capitalism, it shouldn’t be difficult to produce at least the equivalent of \$200,000 per family with genuine socialism in the U.S. With productive capacity in working-class control, nonpolluting automobiles, as many homes as

needed and everything else could be a reality. We shouldn’t be kept on the defensive with an idea that could literally save humanity; we should be on the offensive. We must start an Internet discussion concerning this, I believe, in a manner that keeps infiltrating disrupters at bay.

December 27, 2007

Just a note expanding on potential Internet discussion regarding how the SIU could solve capitalism’s social problems.

Have a copy of 2002 *Georgia Directory of Manufacturers* in Rome library (would prefer a current copy). There is a national directory and possibly directories listing the types and locations of manufacturers for each state. The U.S. natural resource supply for manufacturing would also apply. Also need to find material on productive capacity for state of Georgia. Almanacs may include some of this material.

What I envision is a national group of members revealing a statistically potential SIU in operation going into full production to fulfill America’s social needs, including the need to build new facilities because of capitalist outsourcing, etc., reemploying U.S. part-time, underemployed and unemployed, etc., etc.

Fraternally yours,
C. JAMES MATUSCHKA
Member-at-Large, Georgia

SUGGESTS COMPACT DISK ON SOCIALISM

December 11, 2007

Has anyone ever considered having a CD on socialism produced? It could be available for a fee on the website. The content would certainly have to be easily understood without too much reference to that “old stuff,” as most people call it. In addition, it would have to address the falsehoods of socialism. I suppose that the cost may be far too exorbitant.

DONNA MEYER
Member-at-Large, Wis.

Producing a CD on socialism has been considered a number of times. The National Secretary brought up the subject at the 2001 National Convention, which subsequently adopted a motion supporting the idea but recognized the finite human resources at national headquarters to implement the project.

At its 2003 Session, the NEC adopted the following motion: “Be it resolved that the National Office be authorized to produce and distribute an SLP website CD whenever it feels it has the resources to do so.”

Circumstances have not yet allowed the National Office to pursue the idea. In the meantime, however, many working people have their own resources to download files from the SLP’s website and “burn” them onto a CD.

—National Office

De Leon on ‘Global Capitalism’

Under capitalism the world has become one city. The capitalists will, as the American capitalists have begun doing, transfer their plants to the cheaper countries. The resulting increase of the unemployed at home will then achieve what immigration would have achieved. It is beating the devil around the stump.—Daniel De Leon.

VENEZUELA

Establishes Daniel De Leon Foundation for Socialist Studies

January 28, 2008

Comrade Robert Bills,

My name is Guillermo Cerceau and I work for the Daniel de Leon Foundation for Socialist Studies, in Venezuela.

I found your name and email in the web page of De Leon works (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/deleon/index.htm>) and took the liberty of writing to ask for collaboration.

I am working on a biography of Daniel de Leon (in Spanish), by request of our Ministry of Labor. There is also a project for the translation of some of his major works into Spanish, to be published during 2008. I would appreciate any help you could give us in letting our people know about this great revolutionary.

Thank you for any help you can provide.

Yours,
GUILLERMO CERCEAU
Fundación Para la Formación Socialista
Daniel de León Venezuela

January 28, 2008

Dear Mr. Cerceau:

Thank you for the email you sent this morning, which I read with considerable interest. I would be pleased to collaborate in any genuine effort to bring the life and works of Daniel De Leon to the attention of Venezuelan or any other workers. However, you must forgive my ignorance. I am not aware of any official Venezuelan government interest in De Leon’s life and works, of your foundation or of your own background and interest in such an undertaking. I would like to know more before I make any commitment similar to what you propose and more about what you believe I could do to assist you.

Please forgive me if I seem somewhat skeptical about all of this, but I have received similar inquiries and requests in the past that have led to results that caused me to wish I had been less cooperative than I was.

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

February 11, 2008

Dear Mr. Bills,

Please allow me to apologize for not answering before; I have been out of town since I wrote to you. I see the date of your mail and I thank you for answering so quickly (which makes my need to apologize stronger!).

I understand your concerns, given the circumstances you mention. I work for the Vice-Minister of Labor, in the organizing commission for the Daniel de Leon Foundation for the Socialist Education of the Working Class. As it does not yet have a legal constitutive act (we believe that will be ready next month), I was thinking if a (snail) mail from the president of the commission or the Vice-Minister, with the official letterhead of the Ministry of Labor would satisfy your legitimate concerns.

What would we expect from you? Well, in principle, help with selecting the most important works, maybe helping us to establish the right historical context for those works to be properly understood. We have on staff two professional historians, and both have written academic studies about Daniel de Leon. However, we believe that someone who has access to original materials and who has more than “academic” interest might be of great help.

Being a working class institution, with help from the government, we do not have much budget to pay collaborators, and we count on militant solidarity to do our job. We would not ask from you (if you decide to help us) any thing but advice and guidance on selecting documents to translate. Of course, if you would like to collaborate with some essay or in any other form, we would be
(Continued on page 2)

VENEZUELA . . .

(Continued from page 1)

more than pleased.

In any case, whatever the relationship we can establish, it has been a pleasure meeting you. Exchanging views with comrades of other countries is always a good thing in itself.

Please let me know if these suggestions would be satisfactory to you.

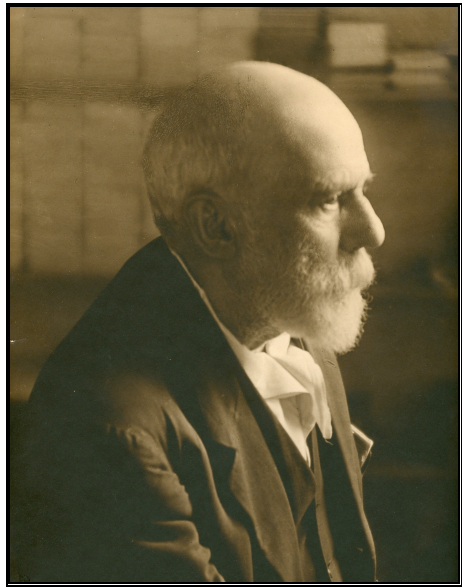
Yours,

GUILLERMO CERCEAU
Fundación Para la Formación Socialista
Daniel de León Venezuela

March 11, 2008

Dear Mr. Cerceau:

Thank you very much for your email of February 11, which you began with an apology for a few days' delay. Well, as you can see, it has taken me a month to respond to you. You did not owe me an apology for the short delay between my email of January 28 and yours of February 11, but I certainly owe one to you. Permit me a few lines to underscore the reason for having taken so long to get back to you.



DANIEL DE LEON

The Socialist Labor Party, De León's party, is in financial trouble and is on the verge of abandoning its present headquarters and of suspending its publication, *The People*. (This is not a "pitch" for financial support from oil-rich Venezuela. It is just a fact.) Most of my time and that of my fellow worker has necessarily been devoted to preparing our archives for transfer to the Wisconsin State Historical Society, where most SLP files and records have been on deposit for the past 101 years, and in tracking down a possible home for the original bound copies of *The People*, *Weekly People* and *Daily People*, including original volumes of the papers edited by De León himself. Apart from that, there are thousands of photographs and books, numerous pieces of original artwork, a stock of literature and tons of what might best be described as trash or junk to wade through for disposal. That said, I hope you will better understand why I have taken so long to respond to what you wrote on February 11.

In spite of our present woes, however, we have every intention of regrouping and making an all-out effort to get the SLP back on its feet as quickly as we can after working our way out of our present predicament. I am confident that we will succeed at that, and that I will then be in a better position for making myself available to assist you in your commendable project. Indeed, given what you mentioned as the assistance and cooperation I could offer, our problems should not pose any obstacle, though they might produce some delays similar to the one I am apologizing for here.

The possible letter you mention from the Vice-Minister, and perhaps a copy of the legislation you mention would be valuable to me. I would be grateful for receiving them. (Regardless of what else might happen, we will be keeping our post office mailing address indefinitely. I will append it at the end of this.) What might be more of a practical help, however, are the academic papers you mention, particularly if they have been translated into English, though that is not necessary. They would provide me with some insight into the knowledge, background and frame of mind, so to speak, of the scholars working with you. Those papers would help me get a "feel"

for the authors, as we say. Would it be possible to have copies mailed to us?

Again, I apologize for not responding to your email much sooner than now and hope that my explanation for the delay is sufficient for you to accept it.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS

National Secretary
Socialist Labor Party of America

N.B. Nothing further has been heard on this matter since the preceding was written.

CAPITALISM MEANS EXPLOITATION OF WAGE LABOR

December 27, 2007

Dear Mr. B . . . :

Thank you very much for your letter of December 3, the photos and the article. As you requested, I am returning the article with this.

You asked that we return your article if we could not use it. There are several reasons why we cannot, but the most important are our different ideas on the origins of capitalism and what capitalism actually means. You trace it to creation of the Federal Reserve less than 100 years ago, and see it as a byproduct of the monetary system, whereas we see it as a system based on the exploitation of human labor through the wages system and private ownership of the means of production. Apart from that, capitalism, as an emerging system, can easily be traced back four or five hundred years and as the dominant system to the American and French revolutions of the late 18th century.

As for the rest, here is a portion of a speech on the Illinois State Bank that Abraham Lincoln delivered in the Illinois State Legislature in January 1837 that strikes me as relevant to your special concerns.

"I now proceed to the resolution. By examination it will be found that the first thirty-three lines, being precisely one third of the whole, relate exclusively to the distribution of the stock by the commissioners appointed by the State. Now, sir, it is clear that no question can arise on this portion of the resolution, except a question between capitalists in regard to the ownership of stock. Some gentlemen have the stock in their hands, while others, who have more money than they know what to do with, want it; and this, and this alone, is the question, to settle which we are called on to squander thousands of the people's money. What interest, let me ask, have the people in the settlement of this question? What difference is it to them whether the stock is owned by Judge Smith, or Sam. Wiggins? If any gentleman be entitled to stock in the Bank, which he is kept out of possession of by others, let him assert his right in the Supreme Court, and let him or his antagonist, whichever may be found in the wrong, pay the costs of suit. It is an old maxim and a very sound one, that he that dances should always pay the fiddler. Now, sir, in the present case, if any gentlemen, whose money is a burden to them, choose to lead off a dance, I am decidedly opposed to the people's money being used to pay the fiddler. No one can doubt that the examination proposed by this resolution, must cost the State some ten or twelve thousand dollars; and all this to settle a question in which the people have no interest, and about which they care nothing. These capitalists generally act harmoniously, and in concert, to fleece the people, and now, that they have got into a quarrel with themselves, we are called upon to appropriate the people's money to settle the quarrel."

The Federal Reserve requires all member banks to hold stock in the system. In that regard it does not differ much in its organization or purpose from the State Bank of Lincoln's early days. There is not much difference between the individual capitalists of Lincoln's day and the institutional capitalists of our own day. It is a matter of scale, not of substance. The SLP aims to uproot the substance of the thing.

At any rate, a socialist industrial democracy, such as that advocated by the SLP, will have no need of money and will replace it with the labor time voucher.

That will effectively put an end to all financial speculation and to such fraudulent practices as those that have caught millions of unwary working-class men and women in the current mortgage scandals, much as the Savings and Loan scandals of the 1990s caught millions of others.

I hope that your holiday was a good one for you and yours and that the coming New Year brings you good health and happiness.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS

National Secretary

A SCARY BOOK

And a Contribution

November 18, 2007

Dear Comrades,

Please find enclosed . . . a \$200.00 contribution . . . in recognition of our party's and press's financial situation.

Also, I am lowly but interestedly reading *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, by Jeremy Scahill. It is a bit scary: the relationships of the right wing, religions, politics, economics, and a private military-police potential beyond that of the Pinkertons of 100 and more years ago.

We need contributions to continue our humble work for the working class.

Fraternally yours,
ROY K. NELSON
Member-at-Large, Mass.

IN MEMORIAM

George S. Taylor

The National Office has received the sad news that veteran SLP member George S. Taylor of Philadelphia died several months ago. Unfortunately, no other information is available at this time. Many members and other friends and supporters of the SLP will recall that Taylor was the SLP's candidate for Vice President of the United States in 1968, a former member of the party's National Executive Committee, and for many years Organizer of Section Philadelphia, SLP.

—National Office

Ada Bikar

Section Cook County, Ill., sadly reports the death of sympathizer Ada Bikar. Mrs. Bikar, who was married to SLP member Al Bikar for 63 years, was in her nineties when she passed away in January. Ada Bikar never formally joined the SLP, but her support of our cause was unquestioned. She was a past *Weekly People* Club member, actively raising funds to support the Party's journal for many years. After the club disbanded, Ada Bikar continued to support the Party and its official journal financially.

Section Cook County and the National Office have sent their condolences to Comrade Bikar.

EXPLORE THE SLP'S WEBSITE

WWW.SLP.ORG

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

SOCIALISM is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroads, land and all other instruments of production. SOCIALISM means production to satisfy human needs, not as under capitalism, for sale and profit. SOCIALISM means direct control and management of the industries and social services by the workers through a democratic government based on their nationwide economic organization.

Under socialism, all authority will originate from the workers, integrally united in SOCIALIST INDUSTRIAL UNIONS. In each workplace, the rank-and-file will elect whatever committees or representatives are needed to facilitate production. Within each shop or office division of a plant, the rank-and-file will participate directly in formulating and implementing all plans necessary for efficient operations.

Besides electing all necessary shop officers, the workers will also elect representatives to a local and national council of their industry or service—and to a central congress representing all the industries and services. This ALL-INDUSTRIAL CONGRESS will plan and coordinate production in all areas of the economy. All persons elected to any post in the socialist government, from the lowest to the highest level, will be directly accountable to the rank-and-file. They will be subject to removal at any time that a majority of those who elected them decide it is necessary.

Such a system would make possible the fullest democracy and freedom. It would be a society based on the most primary freedom—ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

For individuals, socialism means an end to economic insecurity and exploitation. It means workers cease to be commodities bought and sold on the labor market, and forced to work as appendages to tools owned by someone else. It means a chance to develop all individual capacities and potentials within a free community of free individuals. It means a classless society that guarantees full democratic rights for all workers.

SOCIALISM does not mean government or state ownership. It does not mean a closed party-run system without democratic rights. Those things are the very opposite of SOCIALISM.

"SOCIALISM," as the American Socialist Daniel De León defined it, "is that social system under which the necessities of production are owned, controlled and administered by the people, for the people, and under which, accordingly, the cause of political and economic despotism having been abolished, class rule is at end. That is socialism, nothing short of that." And we might add, nothing more than that! Remember: If it does not fit this description, it is not socialism—no matter who says different. Those who claim that SOCIALISM existed and failed in places like Russia and China simply do not know the facts.

SOCIALISM will be a society in which the things we need to live, work and control our own lives—the industries, services and natural resources—are collectively owned by all the people, and in which the democratic organization of the people within the industries and services is the government. SOCIALISM means that government of the people, for the people and by the people will become a reality for the first time.

To win the struggle for socialist freedom requires enormous efforts of organizational and educational work. It requires building a political party of socialism to contest the power of the capitalist class on the political field and to educate the majority of workers about the need for socialism. It requires building SOCIALIST INDUSTRIAL UNION organizations to unite all workers in a classconscious industrial force and to prepare them to take, hold and operate the tools of production.

You are needed in the ranks of Socialists fighting for a better world, to end poverty, racism, sexism, environmental disaster and to avert the still potent threat of a catastrophic nuclear war. Find out more about the program and work of the Socialist Labor Party at www.slp.org and join us to help make the promise of socialism a reality.