

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: The Elections in D.A. 49

We learn from the metropolitan press that during the last month D.A. 49 of the K. of L., situated in New York city, was the storm centre of opposing forces active in the labor movement. From these papers we gather that the occasion for the storm was the annual election of officers; that there was a concentration of all the old forces, together with a small Populist contingent, against the Socialist forces; that on Sunday, the 13th of January, the two locked horns; that two ballots for District Master Workman were taken; that both resulted in a tie, William L. Brower of the Shoemakers' Council, said to be the Socialist candidate, and James McKay, said to be the anti-Socialist candidate, receiving 66 votes each; that the D.A. then adjourned, to continue balloting last Sunday, the 27th, and that on that day all the Socialist candidates—Brower for D.M.W., Michael Kelly for D.W.F. and Patrick Murphy for Recording Secretary—were elected by majorities ranging from 26 to 61 out of an increased total poll of 180, i.e., the victors polling from 103 to 113 of all the ballots cast.

Taking these statements, upon which the metropolitan press is substantially agreed, as correct, we would conclude that the late elections in D.A. 49 have a significance that is most cheerful.

Superficial observers, if they are capitalists, rejoice at, if they are friendly to labor sigh over, what they call the “ceaseless dissensions” among the workingmen. Neither understands that struggle is the law of social construction, and that in sociology,

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the same as in biology, it is just out of the seeming confusion of warring elements that matter and movements crystallize by the ruthless process of eliminating undigestible or useless and concentrating healthy and useful elements. Never, even at the hour when the capitalists were wildest with joy and the uninformed friends of labor lowest in despondency at what they took to be “eternal” wrangles of the workers, did the Socialists feel in the slightest shaken in their conviction that the joy of the one and the sadness of the others were wholly unfounded. With their eyes upon the pages of history and of science, the Socialists carried on undismayed their programme of agitation, knowing that here in America the same experience would be made which our fellow proletarians in the old countries have gone through. Day by day events have justified Socialist confidence and tactics. Whoever looked below the surface here could not fail to discover the solid concentration of labor forces going on upon Socialist principles below the confusion that reigned on the surface and the disruption of all else.

The elections in D.A. 49 are the latest illustration of the cheerful truth of these statements. For the last three weeks the capitalist press has been teeming with articles against the Socialists in D.A. 49, and for some time before the elections such articles appeared off and on. Their purpose was evident. They were intended to appeal to old prejudices and to arouse old antipathies between race and race, nationality and nationality, creed and creed. But it all failed; it was like howling into a burned-out house from which the inmates had fled. The workers had learned immensely. The cry of “Wolf!” only evoked laughter. The emphatic proof of this appears from the above figures. They show that, after each side had, on Jan. 13, brought up 66 adherents, on Jan. 27, with all the aid given them by the capitalist press, which threatened “secession” and other dire calamities to D.A. 49 in case the Socialists won, the anti-Socialist forces were not able to add more than 11 votes to their former strength, while the Socialist Knights added 37 to theirs.

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It might be thought that this big Socialist increase was due to “hustling.” But this we know is not the case. During the fortnight between Jan. 13 and 27, the Socialist Knights were mainly engaged in encouraging and otherwise aiding their brothers on strike against the Brooklyn railroad companies. It is unquestionable that the events in Brooklyn, by demonstrating the folly of the “practical” men in the labor movement, and by verifying one and each of the Socialist principles, helped greatly to bring on the triumph of Socialism in D.A. 49. Many a healthy and sound brother must have been converted, and the howl of the capitalist press against the Socialists must have greatly benefited them.

Finally, it must not pass unperceived that the poll at D.A. 49, given by the papers at 180, is the very largest cast in any delegated labor organization in the city, we would almost say in the land, for the last five years. That in itself is an imposing manifestation, to which point and sense are added, that at least 103 votes thereof were Socialist, or were given for candidates whom the capitalist press had sought to “tar” as Socialists.

The labor movement in New York is making firm and steady progress. Let the work of agitation, education, organization proceed with renewed vigor.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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