

ACT IX.

*The Former. Rococo.**Mogol.* Rococo, you're an ass. I disavow you.*Lama.* We disavow you.*Mogol.* But a wise monarch will not permit anyone to leave his presence discontented. Behold, Rococo!*Lama.* The Order of Seraphims!*Mogol.* As a token of my personal appreciation of your good will. For your good sense I wouldn't give a copper!*Lama.* As an expression of my personal gratitude . . .*Is about to bestow a decoration upon him, but Rococo exit.**Mogol.* There was a dangerous reformer, for society!*Lama.* And he even despises decorations!*Mogol.* Let us now begin our proselytizing work with the reformed Discontented! It may be a big job to demoralize them again, but . . .*Lama.* In the name of the Triune Godhead! Let us go to it! Society must be saved, for though heaven and earth may perish, society must be maintained!*Finis.*

The S. L. P.

By MAX EASTMAN

The Socialist Labor Party received an extraordinary boost when Robert Minor's dispatch in the New York World quoted Lenin as saying that the idea of a Soviet Government was first formulated by an American, Daniel De Leon. Daniel De Leon was no doubt the strongest and truest theoretician in the American political movement, and his idea that the function of the political party is to capture the government merely in order to adjourn it, allowing an economic organization without affiliation with any political party to take possession of the instruments of production, is perhaps nearer to a picture of what happened in Russia than anything else in Socialist literature.

It is also, if taken as applicable to a gradual process, the only possible program of political action today. The mood and purpose of the Socialist in politics should be negative. It should be obstructive. His function is not to try to improve the political government, but to try to narrow the scope and dissolve the force of its sovereignty, at the same time throwing what trifle of protection he can round the growth of the industrial organization,

so that the change from a political to an industrial government may be accomplished with the least possible disturbance.

In one respect, however, De Leon's teaching was quite opposite to that of Lenin. De Leon was very positive in his advocacy of peaceful methods, or at least of putting the responsibility for the initial use of force upon the capitalists. Lenin in "The Disarmament Cry" some time before the Russian Revolution showed that he conceived the moment of change almost dogmatically in military terms, and his articles advocating insurrection immediately before the Bolshevik revolution are among the most powerful and characteristic of his writings. The impression I receive from DeLeon's pamphlets, however, makes me believe that his mind was too realistic and practical to hold any absolute dogma of this kind throughout the events that have passed in Europe. He would realize that where there are vast armies, the action of these armies is almost inevitably the core of the revolution.

There is another point, too, in which I think DeLeon's principles might have been altered somewhat by recent developments. He conceived of the industrial power of labor as not coming into play until after a "high political temperature" had been recorded at the polls. He thought that if industrial or mass action was needed at all in the process of revolution, it would be only after a revolutionary vote had been counted out. He did not use his imagination quite enough to realize that an industrial organization capable of seizing and holding the means of production, could not, in the nature of man, *exist* in revolutionary times without *acting*. And he was not so well acquainted as we are with the power of the bourgeoisie to "count out" the working-class vote before it is cast. He did not know how many ways there are of controlling that rather abstract and impersonal opinion which the workers express at the polls, and so keeping down the political temperature even when the industrial temperature is high. Without displacing the clear outlines of his theory, he might have shifted his emphasis a little upon this point in these livelier times, and he might have become what we lack altogether—an adequate theoretical leader of American Socialism. Whatever his personal characteristics may have been, he had at least that combination of hard-headed theoretic knowledge with realism in practical thinking which distinguishes Marx and Lenin, and has won them the unbounded confidence of men.

It is the more to be regretted that the inheritors of his tradition, the Socialist Labor Party, are not capable of realistic and practical thinking, and have acquired apparently little or no illumination from the events of recent years. I judge them col-