
Labor News Company:

Growth of the Party's Literary Agency, and Significance Thereof.

by Advisory Board, Labor News Co.

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The growth of the party is registered in several ways: the increase of the vote from 36,000 in 1896, to 82,000 in 1898; the increase in the number of Sections from 200 reported in the National Convention of 1896 to over 400 at present; the doubling of the circulation of *The People*; the establishment and maintenance of several local party papers, the *Class Struggle*, *Tocsin*, *Workers' Call*, etc.; and finally the continuous and systematic agitation carried on in all parts of the country. All these elements of the party's life show unmistakably a healthy growth.

There is, however, another factor, not less important to the progress of the party than any of those mentioned above. And yet, strange as it may seem, it is generally ignored not only by the enemy but even by active party members. We mean the spread of the party's literature and the growth of the institution entrusted with this work: the NY Labor News Company. The reason for this seeming anomaly is obvious. All the other factors mentioned above do their work in the open light of day and in full view of the public, while the Labor News Co. deals directly with individuals only, so that the general public was hardly aware of its existence. Though located until recently on the top floor of the Labor Lyceum, it did its work, so to say, underground, mole fashion. But the subjoined account of the growth of the party's literary agency during the last 6 years will show that the mole is "a worthy pioneer" and that it has

"worked in the earth fast" indeed.

Cash Income of the Labor News Company from 1893 to 1898:

1893	\$ 884.15
1894	1,104.17
1895	2,569.47
1896	2,592.93
1897	2,774.55
1898	3,819.44

The cash income does not represent the entire amount of literature sold, but it shows that the sales have more than quadrupled in 6 years.

The activity of the Labor News Co. has been most marked since August 1, 1898. It was then that the series of changes was inaugurated which culminated in the removal to 147 East 23rd Street; the opening of a store, which will no doubt prove a great help to the agitation in the metropolis; and the establishment on a firm basis of a book business, which has, we believe, the largest stock of bona fide Socialist literature to be found anywhere in the English-speaking world. The cash income from that date, August 1, 1898 to February 28, 1899, was \$3,108.75. That is to say, the amount of business done in these 7 months exceeds nearly FOUR TIMES that of the entire year 1893, and is larger than the total amount of the

entire preceding year, 1897.

But alongside of this quantitative increase there is also a qualitative improvement. Time was when *Merrie England* was almost the entire stock in trade.† Now, whatever the merits of that book might be, it has one fundamental defect: its thought is not entirely emancipated from the thralldom of bourgeois domination. Its enormous popularity is in fact due to this defect: it is easily understood by the masses of the people filled as they are with bourgeois views, notions, and prejudices. Its writer has not raised himself to an understanding of the process of historical evolution and of the dominant role of the struggle of the classes in that evolution. This is now changed. *Merrie England* has been dethroned from its supremacy and is now largely replaced by that class of literature which is imbued with the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat and swayed by the mighty genius of Karl Marx.

During the entire year 1898, *Merrie England* was sold in 5,218 copies.

During the 7 months from August 1, 1898, to February 28, 1899, the Labor News Company sold:

Marx — *Capital*, 108 copies; *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 446; *Communist Manifesto*, 551. Labor Library (the four Kautsky pamphlets, Engels' *Development of Socialism*, and LaFargue's *Religion of Capitalism*), 4,348.‡ LaFargue's *Right to be Lazy*, 523. McClure's *Socialism*, 623. Connolly's *Erin's Hope*, 1,007. DeLeon — *Reform and Revolution*, 925; *What Means this Strike?* 7,801.

What Means this Strike? with its central idea of the class struggle and its uncompromising tone has supplanted in the favor of the public *Merrie*

England, with its invertebrate sentimentalism. It is now only about one year since the publications of *What Means this Strike?* and nearly 3 editions, aggregating 15,000 copies, have been sold!

The following additional figures will be of interest.

From November 22, 1898 to February 28, 1899, were sold 442 of Lassalle's pamphlets (*Workingmen's Program* and *What is Capital?*).

From December 13, 1898 to February 28, 1899, were sold 167 of Marx's *Wage Labor and Capital*, which has just been introduced to the American public.

From October 19, 1898 to February 28, 1899, were sold 1,877 copies of the *Socialist Almanac*.

From February 8, 1899 to February 28 were sold 1,925 copies of the first *Supplement to the Socialist Almanac* — 1,925 in 20 days!

These figures show what the Labor News Co. is destined to become: not only a powerful agency of propaganda but also a source of income to the National Executive Committee for agitation and organization. And it depends on the zeal of the comrades to accomplish this speedily.

In conclusion we would call the attention of the comrades to the following significant fact: The books of the Labor News Co. show that Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut buy, comparatively, the largest amount of its literature. In these states the vote of the party has advanced during the last few years with a steadiness and a vigor that is amazing to old party politicians. May not the two facts have some relation to each other?

Advisory Board, L.N. Co.

†- Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England: A Plain Exposition of Socialism, What It Is and What It Is Not*. First published in England in 1894. Editions published in New York by the Commonwealth Co. and Humboldt Publishing Co. in 1895.

‡- The four Kautsky titles, all "translated and adapted for America by Daniel DeLeon," were: *The Capitalist Class*, *The Co-operative Commonwealth*, *The Proletariat*, and *The Class Struggle*.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.

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