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EDITORIAL

ECHOES ANSWER, “WHERE?”

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THE New York *Evening Post* of the 27th instant performs the following piece:

“At the French Socialist Congress recently sitting at Bordeaux, the question arose of expelling M. Millerand, the Parliamentary Socialist. As Minister of Public Works under Waldeck-Rousseau, and subsequently as a private citizen, he has steadfastly insisted that Socialism must seek its ends not by revolution but by gaining control of the regular machinery of Government. Those who believed with him in the theory of gradual reform were contemptuously called ‘the yellows’ by the revolutionary Socialists—who are ‘the reds.’ His vindication by the representatives of Socialists of all degrees can only mean that in France Socialism is taking its place among the Liberal parties, and is ceasing to be a subversive force. The same process has gone much further in Italy and Germany, where the Socialist parties work regularly with the other parliamentary groups, and base their hope of supremacy not in fomenting the war of classes, but in dealing with things as they are. This tendency of Socialism to convert itself into the ordinary forms of Radicalism is a very hopeful sign of the times. It shows that, confronted with the practical work of legislation, the wildest theories yield to common sense; and some day the United States is likely to have more than an observer’s interest in this matter, for it is wholly unlikely that the labor movement in this country will end short of some form of political Socialism.”

It matters not that the above bunch of misstatements of fact and resulting false conclusions is meant to make the Wall street rat-pit clientele of the *Evening Post* feel easy, and that *The People* neither could, if it would, nor would, if it could, care to straighten out the kinks in the head of that crew. The fact remains, nevertheless, that, as Calderon said of secrets committed to paper, such bits of false information are like a stone that is thrown: there is no telling before whose eyes they may land, and in whose head take lodgment. For this reason a rectification of the above is here undertaken, all the more readily, seeing that, like school-books of defective spelling and syntax,

expressly gotten up to teach these very things, the above passage from the *Evening Post* lends itself peculiarly to the elucidation of the "lay of the land" on the Socialist Movement.

In the first place, it is not true that "representatives of Socialists of all degrees" met at the said congress of Bordeaux, and there "vindicated Millerand."—There are in France two distinct and sharply contrasted bodies that are called Socialist. The point of divergence between the two is "Opportunism." One set believes in accepting jobs from the capitalist Government; talking, probably aspiring at, Socialism, yet aiding Capitalism, but only of the radical type: what that comes to everybody knows; and everybody also understands the psychological source of this vagary. The other set wholly denies "Opportunism" as a tactical manoeuvre, that, applicable tho' it may be in Reform Movements, has, in the very nature of things, no place in a movement that is essentially revolutionary. There was no "Opportunism" possible, nor none found, in the Movement that, in England, for instance, cut off the head of feudalism, along with that of its official exponent, Charles I, or that, in America, sent George III packing, and uprooted chattel slavery. These two hostile Socialist bodies of France poll large votes, and are distinguished by the names of the leading figures in each. The anti-Opportunist body is called the "Guesdist," from Jules Guesde; the Opportunist body is called—what?—why, it is called the "Millerandist," from this very Millerand, who accepted a cabinet position from a capitalist President, and who, while he truly resisted "clericalism," "militarism" and all the other anti-feudal principles tabooed by radical bourgeois programs, countenanced the military butcheries of workingmen in Chalon and Martinique. The recent congress of Bordeaux was a congress of the Millerandist group. Accordingly, instead of "representatives of Socialists of all degrees" having there "vindicated Millerand," what happened was that the "Millerandists" endorsed themselves,—the Dutch captured Holland! That much for that much.

In the second place, it is true—but the truth is of that partial nature that amounts to the suggestion of a robust falsehood—that in Italy and Germany the Socialist parties are moving along the grooves of reform. Revolution is predicated upon the ripeness of the times. Times, ripe for a revolution, implies the complete accomplishment of some other, necessary, and necessarily preceding, revolution. The Socialist Revolution is the first in

line of succession to the Capitalist Revolution. Not until the latter is achieved, and achieved fully in a country, has the hour sounded for the former to start on its course. Obviously to the careful student of social evolution, the Capitalist Revolution has been achieved neither in Germany nor Italy. Capitalist production very materially lacerated the feudal rule, but feudalism is not yet wholly overthrown in either of those countries. In both, huge boulders of feudalism still lie about, unblasted, blocking the way. It follows that however distinct the outlines of the Socialist Republic may be to the vision of the leading minds in such countries, even to them it can only be an aspiration. Immediate, preparatory work becomes imperative. That work is to complete what the preceding capitalist revolution left uncompleted. It goes without saying that no revolution can keep its course when it has to first turn its attention to such work. It has to go side-ways, this way, and that. Its course may be termed "compromise," "reform," "dealing with things as they are," "practical work," etc., etc., anything you please,—but such course is dictated by the exceptional circumstances of the locality. In view of this, the Socialist parties of Italy and Germany are forced to the course that so pleases the *Evening Post*, and that it so ill understands. But the very reason of their present tactics—to say nothing of the revolutionary segmentation, that is even now taking shape in their midst,—is an earnest that there also the Socialist Movement will, must eventually enter upon its revolutionary storm-step.

In view of all this, where is the Wall street rat-pit clientele of the *Evening Post*—the American capitalist class in general—to draw comfort from? If the situation in Italy and Germany is such that, what seems to be a deviation from, is but an all the more certain preparation for, Revolutionary Socialism in those lands; if, in politically more advanced France, the revolutionary segmentation has already taken place, with the "Millerandist" navel-string of general European backwardness already cut off from the advance guard, the real body;—if that is the case in Europe, behind what crazy bush can the American capitalist class hope for shelter from the shot and shell of the Socialist Movement of the land, "dealing with things as they are" here in America,—the country in which the Capitalist Revolution has made "tabula rasa" of feudalism, and broken wide open, and paved smooth the road for Revolutionary Socialism?

Echoes answer, "where?"—and in the hollowness of the answer the pulse of the

approaching Revolution beats higher.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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