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EDITORIAL

“POLITICS” AND “PARLIAMENTARISM”.¹

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is no special visitation, that which is afflicting the Labor or Socialist Movement of to-day, when terms are seen bandied about without reference to their actual or technical meaning, and with reference only to the whim of the superficial, or reckless user thereof. The same affliction falls to the lot of all Movements that cut a wide swath. Beacon-lights attract moths and kites; so do great Movements of men. The preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World seems to have set a number of these nocturnal creatures afluttering. The word “Anarchy” is the burthen of their screech and hum.

Vague as the tenets of Anarchy may be in the minds of many, the term is not responsible thereof. It is explicit enough—“an-arch,” no head. Anarchy, accordingly, is a denial of the sociologic principle that, where there is co-operation, there must also be a central directing organism; accordingly, it is a denial of the economic fact that production cannot be conducted on the large integral scale requisite for the yield of that abundance without which class rule is unavoidable, without organization and central directing authority. Anarchy is a negation of these well established principles, and of the several equally well established principles from which the former flow. To sum up, the central principle with Anarchy is the negation of organization. That is Anarchy proper. Of course, from such irrational premises nothing but irrational results will flow. In the Socialist Labor Party pamphlet *Socialism vs. Anarchy*, the leading outcrops from the Anarchy premises have been illustrated, especially one, the outcrop of physical force, but not organized physical might, which is not Anarchy at all, on the contrary, a denial of Anarchy, but disorganized, individual physical force, exercised against individuals, in other

¹ [This editorial reprinted on September 7 with this preliminary note:

[“[Owing to several ‘pi’s’ in this article when published in the *Daily People* of Aug. 29, and the importance of its argument, which makes it worthy of reproduction, it is again published, with corrections, in this issue.]”]

words, assassination. Somehow, and, it must be admitted, for reasons that the Anarchist must be held wholly guiltless of, the rational idea, taught by the whole course of civilization, that mightless Right is only a scarecrow for birds to hop and perch on, and the consequent rational purpose expressed by the I.W.W., of organizing Might so as to enforce Right, has come, preposterous as the fact is, to mean Anarchy with some, of course only the unthinking.

Organized Might, or the purpose of organizing Might is essentially anti-Anarchic. Nor may a contrary construction be placed upon Anarchy from the circumstance that some men, disgusted at the crazy, even corrupt political pranks of the officers and privately-owned press of the so-called Socialist or Social Democratic party, for a moment flew to the other extreme, or seemed to fly to it, and repudiated all political activity. Their conduct is explainable. The said so-called Socialist party agencies rendered Socialist politics doubly disgraceful; they rendered politics disgraceful by planting their party upon the Civic Federation Gompers body, in other words, upon a capitalist concern; they rendered Socialist politics disgraceful by the policy of parliamentarizing. Now, “parliamentarism” is not politics. “Parliamentarism” is on the political what Gompersism is on the economic field—log-rolling with, consequently, SELLING OUT TO THE CAPITALIST CLASS. Who would not be disgusted with such a monstrous travesty of politics?

The preamble and constitution of the I.W.W., adopted amid cheers, at the Chicago Convention, is planted squarely upon the principle that the Working Class must organize the Might that is requisite to the enforcement of their Right; it recognized the necessity of political action in order to dislodge the Capitalist Class from its political fastness; it declared the unification of the Working Class upon the political field to be one of the two twin requirements for the ending of the Class Struggle. By this stand the I.W.W. declared war both upon Gompersism and upon parliamentarism—upon economic and upon political chicanery. It unsheathed the double edged falchion of politics to decapitate Capitalism and of bona-fide Unionism to enforce the fiat of the decapitation.

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