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EDITORIAL

A WORD FOR THE ANARCHIST.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE PEOPLE needs not apologize for the above heading. Its posture towards Anarchy is established, and amply known.

Anarchy, as a theory, is unresponsive to economic facts and social development. The economic law of civilization pushes towards the production of wealth in such abundance and with such ease that man shall be freed of the animal burden of excessive toil for the necessaries of life, along with the harrowing specter of want. Abundant production compels co-operation on a large scale. Large scale co-operation compels organization. Organization compels headship, or be it central directing authority. The conception of An-Archy is at discord with facts.

In accord with this discord, and, consequently, even more irrational, is Anarchy in point of tactics. Deafness and blindness to the dictates of the requirements of organization leads to scattered individual action in the exercise of the Might requisite to enforce the Right of Mankind. By an inevitable chain of causes and effect, Anarchy drives to autonomous bomb-throwing—a phenomenon likewise unresponsive to facts.

Anarchy, accordingly, is at war with reason.—So that switch is locked.

One more preliminary observation—

There are two categories of people who call themselves “Anarchists,” but who are eliminated from this article:

The first is the reptile element, of whom the police-spy and agent-provocateur are sub-species. These are the “Anarchists for revenue only,” and may be dismissed.

The second is an element that might find fault with being at all mentioned together with the first. No stigma is meant to be put upon them. This element, with fully a score of whose members this office is personally acquainted, are, in point of character, the most lovable of men and women. Honor is their badge. An unclean act

is not imaginable from them. Due, however, to some unexplainable kink in their minds, “Anarchy” to them is neither a social or economic theory, nor yet a theory of tactics. With them “Anarchy” is a code of abstract ethics—just that and nothing more—and, stranger yet, that code is fully subscribed to by Socialism, is as old as the hills, and is in no way a product of Anarchy.

These two categories of Anarchists are not under consideration.

The Anarchist here under consideration is only the species which ignores the dictates of economic and social facts, the species which, instead of adapting its aspirations to facts; seeks to mold facts into agreement with its aspirations; in short, the species which, sincerely aspiring after and laboring for an An-Archistic state of things, will listen only to the “bomb argument” and repudiates political action, with its consequence of “parliamentarism.”

Strange as it may seem at first blush there IS a word to be said for these erring men—the Anarchist, proper.

The Anarchist, proper, is not wholly the product of his own mistaken premises. The Anarchist, proper, is partly the product of a certain Socialist element, hard to distinguish from the capitalists whom Edward Bellamy pictures comfortably sitting in a coach and critically discussing the condition of the people who are harnessed thereto, and drag it with the sweat of their brow and their lives, besides. Two letters received in this office will illustrate the point.

Our two correspondents admit the inferiority, intellectual and otherwise, of Mr. Morris Hillquit to cope with the capitalists in Congress; but, they say, “Hillquit’s suave manners would make him friends in Congress, where others might make enemies”; and one of them adds: “His [Hillquit’s] financially easy circumstances would put him on a level with the other Congressmen.”

It is just such notions, entertained by Socialists, that, falling upon the ears of a class-conscious workingman, will, unless he is otherwise well balanced, cause him to wash out the bath with the baby—angrily discard political action, and as angrily fall into the ways of the Anarchist proper. It is a case of healthy instinct instinctively rebelling against Error, but carried to false conclusions by the very shock that the Error gives.

“Bravery,” so runs the Spanish proverb, “does not exclude courtesy.” But

courtesy is one thing, smirking another. A Socialist has no business to “make friends” with the foe. The foe can never be converted. All that a Socialist should earn from the foe is his respect and fear—his friendship is but a bribe, a narcotic at best. The bane of parliamentarism is the temptation to ingratiate. To the temptation even a sturdy man may succumb—the smirker has succumbed in advance. The boldest warriors are the most courteous; the suave are the weakest, if they are not downright cravens.

The Anarchist, proper, consciously or unconsciously realizes the insidious poison that parliamentarism infiltrates its members with. The Anarchist, proper, wrongly mistrusts even his own power, let alone others, to remain immune in such an atmosphere. The Anarchist, proper, is confirmed in his mistaken views by such Socialists’ utterances as quoted above, backed as they are by such Socialists’ conduct as the American Movement already has furnished in Haverhill¹ and in the Massachusetts Legislature, and as it is furnishing now in Wisconsin.

It is this healthy instinct of the Anarchist, proper, that deserves a word in his behalf. It is the instinct that keeps Socialism hale—and warns it against “suavity.”

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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¹ [In 1897, James Carey, a member of the Socialist Labor Party, was elected to the city council of Haverhill, Mass. When local capitalists demanded construction of an armory from which state militia could be dispatched to break strikes, Carey voted in favor of a motion to build it with city funds. Section Haverhill, SLP, promptly demanded Carey’s resignation from office. Carey refused and was promptly expelled from the SLP. He immediately attached himself to the “kangaroo” element that split the SLP in 1899. That element merged with the Debs “Social Democracy” to form the Socialist Party in 1901.—R.B.]