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EDITORIAL

RACY MAY DAY DESPATCHES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE zest of the press despatches from Paris, to the effect that, “although the leaders of the General Federation of Labor, who are organizing a twenty-four hour strike for May 1, disclaim any violent or revolutionary intentions, the Government is taking elaborate preparations to preserve order on that day,”—the zest of all this is lost to those who are uninformed upon the transactions of the National Convention of the French Socialist party, held during the second week of April at the industrial town of St. Etienne. European exchanges, just arriving, are furnishing the needed information on the happenings at the Convention. Of these just two will suffice.

One was a short dialogue held between Herve and Guesde.

The debate was on whether the party should support the radical candidates at the secondary election, if the alternative was the success of a reactionist or a radical.

HERVE—“There was a time when I also supported the radicals. But there is a difference between Combes [the French Prime Minister at the time of vindication of Dreyfus] and Clemenceau” [the present incumbent.]

GUESDE—“It is the same personages—”

HERVE—“But not the same policies—”

GUESDE—“It is the identical bourgeois party, only fighting us with different weapons.”

HERVE—“No doubt, but the policies were so vastly different that even Guesde observed under Combes the republican discipline. [The “republican discipline” is the name given in France to the tactics of all republicans, whatever their faction, to stand together against monarchists and clericalists.] And for precisely the same reason have I also changed my weapons, and now recommend the insurrectionary method, which Guesde so eloquently defended at yesterday’s session.”

GUESDE—"Insurrection is not a method. It is a historic necessity. Insurrection is resorted to only after legal methods are exhausted. Revolutions are not made by the revolutionists. Revolutions are rather forced upon them. Minister Polignac [under Charles X in 1830] conjured up the revolution with his decrees as effectively as Louis Philippe urged it on with his refusal to grant universal suffrage. Similarly will the bourgeoisie, by the removal of a legal ground to stand upon, compel the Social Democracy to resort to revolution."

HERVE—"We do not propose to acquiesce abjectly in the forms of etiquette prescribed by our so-called Republic. What we must avoid is a cattle trade with the political parties of the bourgeoisie."—Stick a pin there.

The other happening is that the resolutions introduced against Herve and expressly censuring his conduct fared ill at the convention. Those that came to a vote were defeated, others were withdrawn, and Herve was elected on the National Committee.

The French bourgeois Government understands exactly what all this, besides many other and similar incidents, means. The French bourgeois Government realizes that the French Socialist Movement has got beyond the weak stage denoted by failure of the several wings of a Movement to appreciate one another's importance, and manifested by mutual expulsion. The French bourgeois Government feels it in its bones that the good there is in the Guesde element, the good there is in the Jaures element, the good there is in the Herve element are not henceforth to neutralize one another by kicking one another to pieces, but are now operating harmoniously, mutually supplementing one another's features for good. Understanding, realizing and feeling all this, the French Government is as well aware now as it will be later, that the Socialist forces of the land will choose their own time and place to act, and that act will not be a riot of dislocated efforts, but a battle of combined and decisive forces.

There is much zest in the despatches that pretend there is any need of "preserving order" on May Day. The Socialists will see to that. The Government will have only its own agent-provocateurs to hector on May Day.

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