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EDITORIAL

“THE COMMON CAUSE”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THIS office has been favored with a prospectus by *The Common Cause*, a new magazine “devoted to the great social problems of the day” and edited by James J. Walsh, the well-known Dean of the Roman Catholic University of Fordham, Peter W. Collins of the Militia of Christ and International Secretary of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and other more or less leading personages in the Roman Catholic political and business movement.

Seeing the prospectus closes with information indicating that the new magazine has not yet obtained second-class postal privileges, because of its lacking the number of subscribers necessary therefor, the *Daily People*, in the interest of the freedom of the press, hereby submits to *The Common Cause* a few suggestions that may promote its subscription list, and thereby secure for it the privileges of second-class postage.

The first suggestion is that the prospectus amend the closing sentence of its first paragraph. The sentence says of Socialism that it “has for its basic principles the public ownership of land and capital and all the instruments of production and distribution.” The sentence should be amended by inserting a dot after the word “capital,” and striking out the remaining portion thereof.

That remaining portion is surplusage. The greater includes the lesser, the general the specific. “Land,” and especially “capital,” having been stated to be the things the public ownership of which Socialism demands, “instruments of production and distribution” are included. To specify these after the mention of “land and capital” suggests slovenliness and confusion of thought, both of which are serious disqualifications for the handling of “the great social problems of the day.”

The second suggestion is that the first sentence of the fourth paragraph—“It is the purpose of *The Common Cause* to tell the men and women of America what So-

cialism really is"—be amended so as to read: "It is the purpose of *The Common Cause* to direct men and women of America where they can get, and otherwise to facilitate their getting, the standard works and publications on and of Socialism, to the end that they may find out for themselves, and at first hand, what Socialism really is." As the sentence now stands in the prospectus it is open to manifold criticism. For instance:

Roman Catholic authorities, at this very time, are urging Roman Catholics not to buy the new *Cyclopedia Britannica*, and to be sure not to read its articles on Roman Catholic history and dogma, on the ground that these articles are written by enemies. Leaving aside the wisdom, or unwisdom, of advising people not to read "the other side," the warning that the articles in question are written by enemies is rational. No Roman Catholic wants his organization known only from what its foes say. It would be unfair to him. Fairness is even-handed. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. As the sentence now stands in the prospectus *The Common Cause* is open to the charge of being inclined to do unto others what it would not wish to be done by.

Then, also, as the sentence under consideration now stands, it invites the suspicion that *The Common Cause* is afraid to trust its subscribers to do their own thinking, and wishes to keep them under tutelage.

Neither of these two postures squares with the poise of him who would grapple with intellectual matters. The intellectual field is a republic—equal rights, and no tutelary apron strings.

The third suggestion is that the second sentence in the same fourth paragraph—"For years the Socialist propaganda has been permitted to do its deadly work practically unchecked"—should be stricken out entirely. For a Roman Catholic publication to say that the deadly propaganda of Socialism has for years been practically unchecked, notwithstanding the notorious fact of Roman Catholic Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, and Jesuit and other Fathers without number having been writing and speaking themselves to a bone for over fifteen years against Socialism, is an admission that might scare away subscribers. The admission might suggest the conclusion that the Roman Catholic intellectual armory has no weapons against Socialism. Who would patronize the pills of a druggist who admits that his pharma-

ceutical authorities have been impotent against the deadly effect of disease? Who would subscribe for an anti-Socialist lay Roman Catholic publication that as much as says that its infallible clergy have vainly sought to stem the onward march of Socialism? That sentence should certainly be expunged.

Likewise, and as a fourth suggestion, the closing words of the second sentence should be stricken out. In that sentence *The Common Cause* promises “to prick the bubble of Socialist tactics through which the leaders of this movement hope to incite strife and hatred.”

The last four words, “incite strife and hatred” are ill advised. They are bound to incite a contrast between the conduct, on the one hand, of the head itself of the Roman Catholic Church, who only recently blessed the arms of the Italian Government bent upon a war of conquest and rapine, and, on the other hand, the conduct of the Socialists, whose voice alone was raised against the homicidal and burglarious expedition. Those last four words can be stricken out none too soon. The sentence should close with the promise to prick the bubble of Socialist tactics—period, and break off right there. It is hard enough for a paper with an uphill and next to impossible mission before it to secure subscribers. Anything suggestive of the idea that such paper does not know enough to keep its foot out of its own mouth is apt to keep friend and foe alike from subscribing.

These suggestions the *Daily People* offers free, gratis and for nothing to *The Common Cause*, confident that, if *The Common Cause* take the hint, the rush of subscribers will be such that the paper will experience no difficulty in obtaining second-class postal privileges.

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