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EDITORIAL

INDUSTRIALISM IN FRANCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THAT the Labor or Socialist Movement of France—the country which may be expected to be the first to scale the ramparts of Capitalism in Europe—is successfully grappling with the vital Question of Industrialism, such is the salient point in an extensive article from France, published elsewhere in this issue, and in which interesting data are furnished.¹

That French Unionism has worked itself out of the ruts of pure and simpledom is obvious,—the General Confederation of Labor recognizes the political mission of the Union, the mission to overthrow the capitalist system.

That French Unionism has evolved beyond even that point seems also clear,—the General Confederation of Labor realizes that an abstract principle, however sound, needs the proper organic structure for its enforcement. It organizes on the Industrial plan, and, at its convention in Amiens, decided no longer to accept craft organizations, these must merge in their respective Industrial Unions. The Union is the germ of future Government. In the Parliament of the Socialist Republic, the unit of representation is the Industry, not the Craft.

That, however, the vision of French Unionism is still obfuscated by the misdemeanors of parliamentary Socialism appears from the stand taken by the General Confederation of Labor towards political action—it ignores, aye, it rejects the necessity of Working Class unity on the political as well as on the economic field.

This fact is nothing strange: it marks a stage of the Movement—a stage that the I.W.W. has behind it in America, nevertheless a stage to which full justice must be done. That stage is a protest against that ugly stumbling block to the triumph of

¹ [To be appended at a future date.—R.B.]

the Working Class—pure and simple political Socialism, with its long and inevitable train of hollow oratorical display, corruption, cowardice and treason, in short, of parliamentarism. It is a contrast that serves the purpose of holding the mirror up to the extreme of pure and simple political delusion, and showing to this the features of its counterpart, that other and equally untenable opposite extreme. It needs no strong effort for us in America to figure to ourselves the frame of mind that the Millerands and Vivianis are bound to throw the French Working Class into. We here also have had an ample experience, and fresh events are keeping the memory of the experience green. With the turpitude of a Hillquit Congressional campaign, seeking to wed Socialist ballots with Republican and with Democratic ballots this very year; with a “Socialist” Carey, a few years ago, sitting limp in the Legislature of Massachusetts, when the State House should have been made to rock with his demand for the impeachment of the perjured Judge who hurled his privately-made law upon the heads of the teamsters on strike; and, still more recently, with the Milwaukee saloon-keeping Socialist party Councilman Buech spending his time in such bourgeois measures as to make the passing of worthless cheques among the bourgeois a felony;—with such and numerous other such evidences of what pure and simple political Socialism is, ’tis not hard to understand how some men’s minds may fly to the opposite extreme.

Having so far picked their way safely, it is not to be expected that the French Working Class will fail to perceive the difference there is between “participation in political campaigns” and “parliamentarism,” and, perceiving the difference, repudiate the latter, while utilizing to its fullest extent the former.

Indispensable to the organization of that army which will “take and hold” the plants of industry is the tactics that places and keeps the rising organization in line with the methods of peace—so long as peaceful methods are available.

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

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