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EDITORIAL

THEIR ONE PRACTICAL ACT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHOEVER lets one eye roam over the critical political and economic situation of the land, together with all the dangers it threatens and opportunities it offers, and focuses the other eye upon the late national convention of the Socialist party, held in Chicago, must come to the conclusion that the dominant element at the convention acted like a lot of Indians who had found a watch—except in one respect where they acted with a practical sense of THEIR OWN particular needs.

What was the exception? The attitude of the convention on Industrialism.

The light, flashed upon the field of economic organization by the launching of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905, was so strong that it dazed the spokesmen and beneficiaries of Craft Unionism; it made them stagger. So strong and clinching was the indictment of the Labor-dislocating system of Craft Unionism, that not a voice rose from that camp in denunciation of Industrialism. The nearest they came to an attack was the sneer of the Mitchells that “Industrialism meant the millennium”—a plea of confession and avoidance, of the nature of the capitalist objection to Socialism as “too good.” As to the direct and indirect beneficiaries of Craft Unionism in the high and understrapping places of the S.P., they fell over one another in protestations of love, affection and esteem for Industrialism—“but,” so ran the slogan at the time, and continued down to this Chicago convention, “why start a new and rival organization to the A.F. of L.? The A.F. of L. is itself slowly, but steadily re-organizing industrially!” The allegation of A.F. of L. drift towards Industrialism was false, and the proofs, here and there adduced in substantiation of the falsity, only accentuated the falseness. Nevertheless, the allegations were advanced and accompanied with plaudits, for the alleged Industrialist trend in the A.F. of L. Such was the state of affairs until recently. At the convention a Black Crook stagic transformation took place. Even a meek and mild declaration gently suggesting to the workers that “the industrial form of organization had been found more effective in increasing working class

solidarity,” was, to use the emphatic language of the Chicago *Socialist* itself, “killed.” The vote against it was 138 to 45.

This was “practical” work. All the previous declarations of love and affection for Industrialism were “unofficial”; they served well enough the temporary purpose of deceiving the unwary. Then, also, they had been uttered in fear. Since then the S.P. Craft Unionists had been at work. Their clumsy hand was seen at the Sherman episode; their clumsy hand can be seen at work to-day. The danger is over, they imagine. Now they could come out in their true colors—and they did. The convention being a place, not for “unofficial,” but for “official” action, the crack of the A.F. of L whip was heard, and Industrialism, even a remote suggestion thereof, was trampled under foot.

Indians may be tickled at the mechanism of a watch, and cut crazy pranks of delight thereat. The veriest Indian will instantly sober down and be intensely practical at the sight of the trail of a foe. The “self-hypnotized visionaries,” as the *Daily People* reporter of the convention well characterized the bulk of the convention delegates, sobered down instantly at the mere suggestion of “Industrialism.” The business interests of the privately owned papers, that would forfeit the support of the Labor-dislocating Craft Unions, and thereby lose the cash brought in by their capitalist advertisements, justly feared for their lives; the other and more direct (even through death benefits) beneficiaries of a Civic Federationized Union system that breeds and compels scabbery, and thus ruptures the Working Class, even among the ranks of the organized, justly felt an instinctive shiver run down their spines; the stage-strutters, to whom the Socialist Movement furnishes cheap notoriety—and incidental lecture tour engagements—and who want nothing less than to handle any thorny question, they rightly underwent a sensation of stomachic disgust at the mention of the word “Industrialism”;—all bristled up, instantly dropped the ticking watch of Socialism, and became “practical.”

In the interest—of?

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