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EDITORIAL

ETTOR AND GIOVANNETTI.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A SPECIAL correspondent in the June 15 *Outlook* gives an interview that he recently had with Ettore as the two sat outside Ettore's cell in the Lawrence jail. Ettore is quoted as saying:

“They tell us to get what we want by the ballot. They want us to play the game according to the established rules. But the rules were made by the capitalists. They have laid down the laws of the game. They hold the pick of the cards. We never can win by political methods. The right of suffrage is the greatest hoax of history. Direct action is the only way. No class of people ever gave up the chair of privilege until somebody tipped the chair over.”

In the same Lawrence prison, and under the same charges, there is confined an associate of Ettore's—Arturo Giovannetti. In Giovannetti's contribution to the discussion regarding the usefulness of the ballot, found in the pamphlet *As to Politics*, this passage occurs as an argument against political action:

“Fifty vacant seats in Congress will frighten capitalism more than fifty ‘Honorable’ Socialists sitting there doing nothing, and if we must use the ballot for something let us use it for the sole purpose of emptying their ranks”—that is to say abstain from voting as a means of defeating present capitalist incumbents.

Ettore, the anti-ballot revolutionist, illumines his fellow anti-ballot revolutionist Giovannetti,—and vice versa.

What on earth can Ettore mean with the tenet: “The right of suffrage is the greatest hoax of history”? While we would not go to Ettore as a quarry of sound historic information, we do not hold the man to be an idiot.

The ballot a “hoax of history”?!

The ballot decreed the expulsion of King George's feudal rule in the Colonies. Before that, 'twas the ballot that repealed at the hustings the system under which

Charles I flourished. After that, none other than the ballot pronounced the doom of feudalism in France. Latest of all great historic instances, it was, again, the ballot that bade “Be gone!” to chattel slavery in the land. In all these leading instances the ballot pronounced sentence—and resistance by the historic criminal in the dock then, and not before, fetched down upon him the mailed hand of physical force, and despatched him.

Quite possible, the noise of the physical conflict that came to ratify and enforce the revolution which the ballot had recorded on each of these occasions—Yorktown in America, Marston Moor in England, the downfall of the Bastille in France, Appomattox again in America—quite possible that noise drowns the noiseless fall of the ballot to the ear of the Ettors. Nevertheless, to pronounce the ballot “a hoax,” a “great hoax of history,” the “greatest hoax of history,” that seems exorbitant! Can it be that Ettor knows no better? What then can he mean? Giovannetti answers the question.

According to Giovannetti, say, there is a Congress District with 1,000 capitalist votes and 49,000 workingmen votes, then, the way to use that 49,000 voting power is, not to plump it inside of the ballot box in favor of a Socialist-Labor candidate, but to plump it outside the ballot box. The effect of this manoeuvre would be to “leave a vacancy.” It does not occur to Giovannetti that the 1,000 capitalist votes will be cast for the capitalist anyhow, and that, instead of there being a vacancy, there will be a victorious capitalist candidate, with a grin from ear to ear, being elected unanimously in a district in which he feared to be, and should have been, snowed under. No doubt, such conception of balloting is a hoax, a great hoax, the greatest hoax—not of history but of Anarchist muddle-headedness.

That Ettor and Giovannetti are innocent of the heinous crime of being accessory before the fact to the murder of Anna Lopizzo, we know. We likewise know that both are guilty of a crime that is still more heinous—the crime of “practising upon the dog” of the Labor Movement with their kiddishly presumptuous ignorance. But in this crime, the youthfulness of the country is an accessory before the fact. In no other country would two such harum-skarum kid-intellec[t]s be the gravel in the shoe that these twain are to the Labor Movement of America.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org