

EDITORIAL

THE CONVICTION OF QUINLAN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

NOW that ultra capitalist papers are through tumbling their somersaults of joy over the “vindication of Law and Order” by the conviction of Patrick L. Quinlan in Paterson; and reform papers of all shades of yellow, down to the chloride of the privately owned Socialist party press, have howled their hysterical howls over “capitalist class justice”;—the sober word of Marxism is in season.

Whether Quinlan “has had a fair and impartial trial” we know not; nor do we know whether he was actually guilty of having uttered the words that he was charged with. But a thing or two, a thing or two very much to the point, we do know.

In the first place we know that, whether Quinlan is an Anarchist or not, the magistracy that superintended the chap’s arrest, indictment, trial and conviction is a worse bunch of Anarchists than Quinlan and associates have ever dreamed of being, or, ever dared to exhibit themselves. The roughshod manner in which the said magistracy rode over all law, human and divine, in the matter of the arrest of Rudolph Katz, the leader of the Detroit I.W.W. strike last year, the prosecution of whom they finally had to drop, proves the point beyond gainsay.

In the second place we know Quinlan to be just the sort of feather-weight to be easily thrown out of equilibrium, and just the rattle-brain to lose control over his tongue, enough to give a handle to the ever-on-the-alert lookers for pretexts to impute criminal intent to workers on strike. The consequence is that, however substanceless the sputterings of the tribe of the Quinlans are, and of necessity must be, the Labor Movement, in general is not benefited; the division of the Labor Movement that happens to be on the firing line, with Quinlans for spokesmen, suffers; and the Quinlans themselves are sacrificed—a sacrifice bootless to the proletariat.

There is in the Labor Movement, in and of itself, all the explosiveness that is needed for the successful carrying out of its redemptory program. The need of the hour is not sparks to set the powder-magazine on fire. The need of the hour is the “bullet of knowledge” to rescue the explosion from being a flash in the pan, and render it effective. The effort that is taken from the educational channel, and is bestowed upon the channel of flaming the spark of anger, is effort worse than wasted. It is harmful effort. It is harmful in many ways.

The effort is harmful to him whose weakness causes him to indulge it, in that such indulgence unnecessarily runs him to his own fruitless injury against the mailed hand of Capitalism.

It is harmful also and above all to the workers in that the effort acts, nine times out of ten, as an invitation to the agent provocateur, who immediately “gets busy,” and by his excesses brings discredit to the Movement, often even loss of life upon the gallows to innocent people.

Which is why we repeat, and our language is plain:—

The policy of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Chicago I.W.W. is one that marches on a route at the other end of which rise gallows for leaders, and at the feet of which gallows lie massacred masses of proletarians—masses and leaders the victims of conspiracies, the conspirators themselves enjoying in safety and in all walks of life the Judas penny-pay of their felony.

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