

EDITORIAL

THE “INDUSTRIAL LEAGUE.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT would be a pity if the Philadelphia news item, published in another column of this issue, about the newly organized “Industrial League,” together with its ambitious aims, were dismissed with a smile, an altogether likely treatment at the hand of those who are personally acquainted with the impulsive youth, George P.S. Bonner, the “League’s” enthusiastic promoter.

While there is such a thing as “the insolence of youth”—a frequently irritating quality that arises from the combination of brightness and imperfect information—the self same “insolence” often has the charming quality of helping to shed light. Error is not always opaque. It sometimes emits rays of light. It is so in this instance.

The Labor or Socialist Movement begins with violence; blind violence. It inherits this feature from its long line of ancestral revolutionary Movements.—That is the Anarchist, or pure and simple Bomb stage.

The next stage, or manifestation, of the Socialist or Labor Movement is exactly the opposite. Its toes having been seriously stumped in the course of its experience in the first stage, the Movement flies to the opposite extreme. It denies absolutely the function of Force; if at all it refers thereto, that is done declamatorily only, with a hollowness that tells quite positively that the declaimer’s knees would be seen knocking against each other in terror were he to be taken seriously.—That is the pure and simple Political or Ballot stage, the stage designated by Marx as “idiotic.”

Its pendulum swinging between these two extremes, the Socialist or Labor Movement presently reaches a third stage. Extracting from the chaff of the two previous manifestations the grain of sense in each, it combines the two, and places them in proper perspective. The result is the recognition of peaceful Political Action as a necessary agitational, educational and organizing element, and the recognition

of Force as a necessary element to carry out the program of the peaceful action. That stage drills the Movement along two lines—the political party line, and the economic or industrial line,—which two lines, although necessarily separate, are linked together by a common purpose, the overthrow of capitalism.—This stage has for its manifestation the Socialist Labor Party.

One should think that these would be stages enough, each manifestation throwing upon the other two all the light necessary to understand the Movement that gave birth to them, and, thereby, to condemn or commend themselves, as the case may be. But no. There is still a fourth manifestation in the Movement. Of this manifestation Mr. Bonner is the midwife.

The “Industrial League” is miles ahead of the pure and simple Bomb stage; it likewise is clean ahead of the pure and simple political Socialist stage. It is an effort to improve upon the Socialist Labor Party stage. The S.L.P. stage, while recognizing the necessity of both the political party and the revolutionary economic organization, or Union, keeps the two separate. The “Industrial League” imagines possible the merging of the two lines into one.

Those who smile at the notion and dismiss it can not be blamed overmuch. The field for the operation of the political party is the political territory. The field for the operation of the Union is the industrial field. For either to operate upon the other’s field is not to “unite forces,” but to cause them to fall foul of each other. Nevertheless, the effort to perform the miracle is welcome. Its very absurdity and fated failure is a complainant to and confirmation of the S.L.P. position.

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