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EDITORIAL

“THE INTELLECTUAL.”

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EVERYWHERE, the serious Socialists in the world are engaged in the effort to extricate the Movement from the meshes of the “Intellectual,” and to set up barriers against his approach, or at least dams against his pernicious influence. Nowhere, however, are conditions so favorable as in America for the detection of the microbe. American conditions furnish an easy test to tell the “Intellectual” by. The test is his attitude on the Trades Union, meaning thereby the economic organization of the working class.

The general feature of the “Intellectual” is superficiality, coupled, of course, with the usual accompaniment of vanity and conceit—the features that the sage had in mind when he declared that “a little learning puffeth up.” Unschooled in the prime requirement for knowledge—the art of thinking—the “Intellectual” equips himself with scraps of learning, and, decked with these ill-fitting feathers, he forthwith sets himself up as a perambulating lump of wisdom. Of course, he is twisted on every important practical question and revels only in abstractions; of course he bumps up at every step against facts that, “intellectual” though he calls himself, he lacks the intellect to comprehend; and, as a natural consequence of all this, he slowly acquires an instinctive, if not involuntary aversion for whatever requires exact knowledge, and a malignant hatred for those before whom, being of superior caliber than himself, his “genius” feels rebuked. The general principles of Socialism are so obvious that the “Intellectual” is fascinated by them. He drifts into the Socialist Movement as straws drift into a vortex. He comes there to shine, generally also to gather coppers; and he flutters his loose-hanging feathers. As a rule he considers himself a God-ordained Editor, and forthwith proceeds to throw upon others the blame for his utter failure, being wholly unable to detect the cause in his own shortcomings, and thus to improve. The “Intellectual,” named so in

mockery, is incapable of learning; and, seeing that he joins the Movement, not for the Movement's sake, but for his own, at all critical moments he is found utterly oblivious of the Movement's interests, ready to sacrifice these interests to his own crossed malevolence. Words and sound being the "Intellectual's" realm, he is ever found an adept in the tricks of the juggling fiends who palter with words in a double sense. He will say anything; he will sign anything; and, just as soon as the maggot bites him, wriggle out of it. Of course, the "Intellectual" is found out, eventually—if not later. There is the rub! His meretricious glitter often deceives the expertest eyes and ears. Often he has done incalculable harm before he is "got on to." Now, then, everywhere, outside of America, and the English speaking world in general, the microbe of the "Intellectual" must be given time to develop before it is dealt with and stamped out. In America it is not necessary to give the evil rope before checking it. The conditions in the English speaking world, in America especially where capitalism is fullest-orbed, furnish the test by which the nuisance can be immediately detected, and, withal, furnish the means to abate it instantly.

Socialism, it has been well said, can spring only out of the lap of capitalism. But capitalism, together with all its necessary appurtenances, is not equally in evidence in all countries. In America it is. Prominent among these appurtenances, and important in connection with the subject under consideration, are three circumstances:

First:—The total absence of the last vestige of feudalism, including therein the sense of honor in the ruling class;

Second:—As an immediate consequence of the first, a corrupt and elaborate electoral machinery through which none but capitalist principles will be allowed to filter to triumph; and

Third:—As a consequence of the second, the sense of the unquestioned necessity of a bona-fide and powerful economic organization of the Working Class.

It follows from this sequence that here in America the Union, the economic organization of Labor leaps to the transcendent importance that Marx's genius dimly descried in the distance, and that it has or can have nowhere outside of the English speaking world. The proper economic organization of Labor, the Union, in short, is indispensable in America for the emancipation of the Working Class. No

Union, no Socialist Republic. The political arm of the Movement will be worn away useless without the economic arm ready to second, to supplement, and, at the critical moment, to substitute it. Nay, it may happen worse. Without the regiments of the class-conscious Union step close upon the heels of their vanguard, of the political wedge, the "carefully selected" Socialists whom the electoral machinery of the capitalist class may allow to filter through to "victory" will ten to one lose whatever honor they had: they will become what we have seen the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party's successful candidates, without exception, become,—fakirs, that is, traitors in disguise; and what that means to the Movement it is needless to explain.

Accordingly, the Union that is a "Brotherhood of Capital and Labor" concern is a capitalist brigade; accordingly, only the class-conscious Union stands within the pale of the Labor Movement; accordingly, the question of Unionism is of prime importance to the Socialist Movement; and, finally, and capping the climax of sequences, the Socialist, whose opportunities for education raise him in letters above the rank and file of the wage slave, but who considers the Union a "passing affair," who does not give it as much thought as he does to the political movement, and who sees in it only a quarry for votes—such a Socialist lacks the grasp of the Movement, he can be safely put down from the start as an "Intellectual," and looked out for. It is an unerring test. Needless to wait until he betray(s) the Cause later: He is betraying it now.

Every cause has its effect, and every effect re-acts back upon its cause, and, in turn, itself turns into cause. It was the Socialist Labor Party, a political and not an economic organization, that flashed across the path of the American Labor Movement the needed light upon Unionism. The education that the Party spread about called forth from the ranks of fully 15,000 workingmen—the initial membership of the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance—the demand for the organization of that body. What it meant was speedily recognized by kindred spirits of evil. The Gomperses, whose occupation would be gone, and the "Intellectuals," whose heels felt giped in advance by the prospect of an economic body that would compel them to walk straight, struck hands. With slander and other such means they fought the new body. But all their efforts were of no avail. The Truth, that they

were periodically pronouncing “dead,” kept them hopping; and, to-day, the event in the Labor Movement of America is the call that proceeded last January from a conference in Chicago, of which, in his report published in *The People*, Frank Bohn said that its members “were practically unanimous in unqualified ratification of class-conscious, industrial Unionism as advocated by the S.T. & L.A.” The call summons the working class of America to a convention to place the Economic Movement of the land upon a plane that befits the country. The applause with which the call has been received justifies the expectation that a new, large and class-conscious Union will be born in June. Thus the expectation is justified that what was at first effect will now be powerful enough to re-act back upon the cause—that the economic movement will take and be powerful enough to enforce a stand, which, among other virtues, will have the virtue of smoking the “Intellectuals” out of their last haven of refuge—the so-called Socialist party, whither they fled out of the S.L.P. when the S.T. & L.A. was established—and thus purge and solidify the political Movement of the American Working Class.

The “Intellectual” cannot grasp the importance of Unionism. It is a case of material interests and moral and mental make-up combining. For bona-fide Unionism the “Intellectual” has the feeling that a scalded cat has for water; to bogus Unionism he takes like a duck does to a mill pond;—in short, the question of Unionism is a test that assays the “Intellectual” and proves him dross.

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