

ARTICLE

SNAP-SHOTS OF THE I.W.W. CONVENTION, 1906.

VI.

“S.L.P.!” AND OTHER HOWLS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LASTLY there is one more thing that the I.W.W. convention accomplished. It turned the light upon certain howls, or false cries, and, with the light turned upon them, smote them in full view of the Labor movement of the land.

In my Minneapolis address on *The Preamble of the I.W.W.* I described very much in full the conduct of the labor-lieutenants of the capitalist class in the Unions. These watch-dogs of capitalism slumber peacefully so long as capitalist economics are preached in the organization; they growl, however, the moment labor economics are uttered; that moment they leap up and yell: “Politics!” “No politics in the Union!” The sight was shown to be proof positive that these protesters simply raise a false cry in order to conceal their real purpose. Their purpose being the promotion of capitalism, political as well as economic, they bristle up at the very first sound of tenets that threaten their capitalist objects. That the cry “S.L.P.!” “De Leonism!” etc., raised at and since the I.W.W. convention, is a cry identical with that raised by the labor-lieutenants of the capitalist class in the regulation pure and simple Union, was demonstrated at the I.W.W. convention.

McCabe made a faint attempt to deny that he had said it served the Chicago Anarchists right to be hanged. He made, however, not the slightest attempt to deny that he objected to the motto—“Labor is entitled to all it produces”—inscribed at the head of the I.W.W. constitution. Kirkpatrick, a Socialist party man, who pulled with

McCabe, was confronted with a Cincinnati member of the Metal and Machinery workers, Barshi, who, to his face, made good the statement that Kirkpatrick, being on a tour for his then department, had told him "What the S.L.P. men should do is to pull out of the S.L.P. and join the S.P." Sherman, who had recently joined the S.P., stated in his official report that "the ballot is a paper-wad." The series of facts need not be lengthened. These acts and facts from the McCabe-Sherman-Kirkpatrick trinity, who started the cry "S.L.P.!" "De Leonism!" "The S.L.P. has tried to dominate the convention!", furnish ample premises from which to reason—as the convention did.

Any and all utterance that squared with the principles of the I.W.W. grated, as it could not help but grate, harshly upon the ears of the reactionists. To admit that they were I.W.W. principles was as wholly out of question as would be the admission by the labor-lieutenants of the capitalist class, in the regulation pure and simple unions, that the tenets which they taboo as "Politics" are naught but labor economics and sociology. The admission could not be made; hence the false cry of "S.L.P.!" To dispute the principles advanced by the revolutionary element would have been equally compromising; hence the reactionists dodged, and substituted the cry of "De Leonism!" for argument. The experience, made at the convention by Delegate James M. Reid, who is not an S.L.P. man, and published some time ago in these columns, bears repetition at this point. Reid narrates as follows:

"McDonald, at the first Committee on Organization meeting, upon which I was, cast some aspersions upon the S.L.P. with the purpose of ire-raising for fun to himself. I said: 'The S.L.P. is all right.' He replied: 'Of course it is, you belong to it.' I replied: 'No, I do not,' which is true. He persisted in his assertion, and being denied, said: 'Well, I heard you making an S.L.P. speech upon the soap-box.' From that soap-box I had addressed one of the I.W.W. public meetings held during the convention. I asked him whether he had heard me mention 'S.L.P.' during my talk. He replied: 'No, but it was an S.L.P. speech.' 'Well,' I said, 'if S.L.P. and the truth are synonymous I am satisfied with your contention.' He shut up and vamoosed. He appeared no more upon that committee. How quickly even a great ignoramus can discern the difference between adulterated mental food and pure mental food."

The incident squares with all the facts in the case. The S.L.P. man would be as dear to the reactionist as any A.F. of L. member of the S.P., were the former to

conduct himself like the latter, that is, talk an “Industrialism” that is undistinguishable from, and is merely a counterfeit of the Gompers article. But the moment anyone, whether he actually be an S.L.P. man or not, utters the soundly poised revolutionary principles of the I.W.W., that instant the howl of “S.L.P.!” “De Leonism!” “Bossism!” is raised against him—to his honor. The cry is a confession of bankruptcy—there is nothing so bossy to nonsense and to crookedness than the Truth, intrepidly uttered. And when that Truth has the Might to enforce itself with, as it has in the I.W.W. and had at the convention, then there is no excess of ribaldry to which reaction will not go in its denunciation of its conqueror.

The men, whom the swirl of the American Labor Movement is drawing in, are generally too busy to post themselves accurately upon past events, however important these be, or always to inquire minutely into the past charges brought against the revolutionists. The I.W.W. convention swept away like so many cobwebs, the tissues of falsehood that reaction and corruption had woven around the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance contingent in the I.W.W. The convention rendered minute inquiry into past events unnecessary, it rendered superfluous the examination of the cloud of calumnies that reaction had raised. The I.W.W. convention summed up the past, so to speak; presented it up to date, and did so upon a stage of national dimensions. Henceforth he who raises the old false cries,—now clothed in the up-to-date garb of the McCabes, Kirkpatrick and Shermans—can only be a laughing stock. Henceforth the false cries of old will serve as warning to all who hear them—a warning that the utterer is playing cuttlefish—a warning that it is the case of a thief seeking to escape detection by throwing suspicion upon his captor—a warning that where the cry goes up it betrays a hidden nest, or masked battery, of interests and purposes, dear to the capitalist class, but so deadly to the working class that the nest must be exterminated and the battery spiked.

[The End.]

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