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EDITORIAL

THAT HAYWOOD SPEECH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

COMBINED, the three correspondents who have reported in these columns the Haywood speech, delivered at Cooper Union on December 21, present a reliable and full picture of the event. It is an instructive picture. It is a warning picture.

As in all good pictures, the “details” that typify and are, so to speak, the keynote to the picture in question are numerous. We shall pick out one—Haywood’s estimate of Socialism as a “conspiracy” and of Socialists ~~or~~ {sic} as “conspirators” on the ground that their aim is the overthrow of the existing system of government.

“Conspiracy” and “conspirators” are words of no new coinage. Their mintage is old. Their history reaches away back. They have an accepted and generally, and uniformly understood meaning.

Whether one consult an ordinary dictionary, or some cyclopedia of language, or some reference book on derivations—the word “conspiracy” everywhere conveys the idea of secrecy; the word “conspirator” everywhere conveys the idea of a person working in secret. The purpose of the conspiracy may be evil, its purpose may be good. But, whatever the purpose, the method of the conspirator is clandestine, compulsorily so. The circumstances that compel the secrecy of method may be sufficient to condemn the purpose of the conspiracy, as has often been the case in history; or, the circumstances may be a positive justification of conspiracy, as happens in Russia. Whatever the angle of view from which “conspiracies” and “conspirators” are looked at, invariably they are secret plottings and plotters.

Can the Socialist or Labor Movement be a “conspiracy”?

Socialism, another word for the emancipation of the Working Class, is a Movement that concerns the overwhelming majority of a country’s people. It is a Movement planted upon the class interests of that majority. What is more, it is a Move-

ment aiming at a goal that is impossible of being reached without the intentional and active co-operation of that very mass. A mass-conspiracy is a contradiction in terms. The very ethnic facts in the Sicilian Vespers and similar events, seemingly mass-conspiracies, exclude the idea of mass-conspiracy in our American population, or the population of any of the civilized nations. The two concepts, “Socialism,” or “The Emancipation of the Working Class,” on the one hand, and “Conspiracy,” on the other, exclude the one the other.

If Haywood is in a conspiracy, as, mayhap, he is, then he is not engaged in Socialism; if he is engaged in Socialism, then the term “conspiracy” is the one least applicable to his efforts. Socialism—that ripest child of social evolution that is born equipped with all the experience, and is animated with the sum of all the loftiest motives of all the Ages—plants itself in the open under the beaming sun, and on that platform that is the most advanced of all social proclamations, the Constitution of the United States, the first to legalize the overthrow of governments.

Haywood has the right, when he is eating a ham sandwich, to say: “I am riding a camel.” It is his privilege to call “eating” “riding,” and a “ham sandwich” a “camel.” It is not his privilege, at any rate it is not the privilege that any man with a decent respect for his fellow men will exercise, to take words known only in one sense, and use them in a sense known to himself only—to say “I am riding a camel” when he means he is eating a ham sandwich. The exercise of such a freedom is a breath of the corrosive egotism of Anarchy.

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