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EDITORIAL

“BRILLIANT BEYOND THE DREAM OF POETRY.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN his address delivered before the Central Labor Union last Sunday, and reported in another column, [John Swinton](#) touched upon the European outlook for labor, and with characteristic felicitousness said: “It is brilliant, it is magnificent, it is beyond the dream of poetry; in France, in Germany, in England, in Italy, there reigns an enthusiasm, a unity of purpose, a conception of rights among the working people, in comparison to which the American labor movement is as nothing.”

What is this wonderful difference to be ascribed to between the status of the labor movement in Europe and that in America? Whence that unity of purpose among the workers on the other side of the waters, with its resulting enthusiasm, and brilliancy beyond the dream of poetry; and whence is just the reverse of all this noticeable in America?

Set a platoon firing at a target; which will be the bullets that hit bulls-eye; which will be the bullets that come close together; which, in a word, will be the “united” ones? Those aimed correctly; those whose course is determined by the steadiest hands, the sharpest eye, the best marksmanship. All others will fall wide apart. There is but one bulls-eye—one correct aim; there is all the immensity of space for stray shots.

In Europe, all the efforts of the working people concentrate upon THE bulls-eye; upon the oneness of the economic and the political struggle of labor; upon the reacquisition by the working class of its machinery of production; upon the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth; in other words, upon the full Socialist programme, both as to means and as to tactics. There, the “pure and simple” school of visionaries has no standing; phrase-bolstered economic panaceas receive no

hearing; siren songs from capitalist quarters fall upon deaf ears; suspicion, well-grounded suspicion, attaches immediately to the would-be leader who should say: “I am a Socialist, but object to Socialist tactics”, and the backs of the people are promptly turned upon the knave or fool who would hold such deceptive language. There, in short, guided by correct marksmanship, every shot fired by the proletariat speeds along a correct course, hits the correct mark and accordingly moves in unison. Hence that brilliant, that magnificent status of the European labor movement, that is indeed beyond the dream of poetry. The brain and the brawn of Europe move in one accord, and the harmony they emit produces the enthusiasm that strikes the observer, that appalls the exploiters, and that holds out the promise of speedy redemption to the proletariat.

By parity of reason the labor movement in America “is as nothing” compared to that of Europe. The crudest notions still prevail here; unity is attempted upon a basis that cannot but disunite; bulls-eye is aimed at by holding the guns with their muzzles turned upon the breasts of the shooters themselves; a morbid anxiety for speedy success promotes the most erroneous tactics; a timidity born of ignorance causes the word “Socialism” to be generally avoided and, if handled at all, to be frequently disowned in some of its most important features—its tactics, among others, of uncompromising independent political action by the working class, upon an out and out workingmen’s platform. Whereas in Europe, the labor movement is squarely based upon Socialism, and is Socialist from top to bottom, and therefore united, here the bulk of it still seeks all manner of short cuts and by-ways, and, in its vain attempt to escape Socialism, deprives itself of the only possible basis for unity.

The experience of Europe will, however, still illumine the path of the American labor movement. The day cannot be distant when here too the lesson will be learned that unity is the result of truth; that in error there can only be disunion; that the union in Europe is, and must be, the result of correct aims and tactics; that those aims and tactics are embodied only in the programme of the Socialist Labor party; that, as an evidence of this, this party is the only growing body in our midst, whereas all others are falling to pieces; and that to hasten the day of our own emancipation, the brain and the brawn of our progressive elements must hasten to boldly take their stand upon the platform of Socialism, and under the folds of the Socialist banner.

When that day shall come, as the signs are numerous of its approach, but not before, will America also present to the enraptured gaze of the progressive proletariat of other civilized lands a picture of unity of purpose and of enthusiasm, whose brilliancy and magnificence will be beyond the dreams of poetry.

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