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EDITORIAL

Significant

By DANIEL DE LEON

We recently gave an account of the late municipal elections in France, and pointed with joy to the growth of Socialism in the sister republic as indicated by the increased number of seats we have conquered, and the increased vote we have polled even there where our candidates went down before a coalition of all the adverse forces. All this indicated growth from without, and was in itself significant enough. More significant yet is the evidence of growth from within which the late elections reveal.

As the new-born baby brings into the world within it foetal matter that, necessary or inevitable as it once was, becomes later harmful to life and must be ejected, so does the Labor Movement make its first appearance laden with scoriae, dregs and scourings, that are inseparable from its early birth, but that, unless speedily worked out, render growth difficult and prolonged life impossible. These scoriae or foetal matter of the Labor Movement consist in the notion that it is, not the movement of a class—the proletariat, but the movement of a fraction of a class—the “horny-handed” alone. The notion is easily explained, and the reason for the error is light to account for. It is so natural that even those with better opportunities for information than the hard-taxed manual workers have often made themselves its exponents, and in manifold ways clung to it. Yet, natural as the notion was, it was naturally an error, an error that threatened the very existence of the movement, if persisted in, as completely as the foetal matter would threaten the baby’s life if not expelled betimes. The indirectly productive are as essential to collective production as the directly productive; nor can the line be easily drawn between those who preponderatingly, by brain work, are indirectly productive—teachers, physicians, etc.—and those whose share of brain work seems smaller and whose share of physical work is larger. Man lives not by bread alone. The movement that carries in its womb that exalted ideal of the Co-operative Commonwealth has not only feet on which to stand firmly, but also a collective head that soars high, and a collective heart that beats responsive to the noblest sentiments. The Labor Movement is planted upon the class interests of the

whole proletariat—the “intellectual,” so-called, as well as the “unintellectual,” so-called.

The denial of this principle found its representatives in France as well as everywhere else, and the group of those who there held to the notion of the “horny-handed” movement exclusively, gathered around J. Alleman, from whom it derives its name—the Allemanist group. Strictly speaking, the Allemanists formed a division of the French Labor Movement; it was loud-mouthed, obscene, ignorant; frequently its poise was one of greater hostility to the candidates of the French Socialist Labor party than to those of any of the capitalist political divisions. Its existence, as stated, was natural at first; the continuance thereof became by the year more fraught with danger. Was the French Labor Movement able to work this foetal matter out of its bowels? This question was certainly put by critical observers. The result of the late municipal elections gives the answer in gladsome accents:

“The Allemanists are broken up. Hitherto they held 4 municipal seats, now they only hold 1. Two of their former municipal representatives—Faillet and Berthaut—withdraw from the Allemanist group and ranked themselves with the broad movement under the banner of the Socialist Labor party. Alleman himself ran against Faillet, polling only 273 votes to Faillet’s 4,618, while the other seceder, Berthaut, polled 5,730 to 454 given to his Allemanist opponent.”

The substantial ejection of the notion of the “horny-handed” fractional class movement in France by the virtual extinction of the Allemanist group is one of the significant and cheering signs of progress in France as revealed by the returns of the late municipal elections.

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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