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EDITORIAL

UNIONISM AND POLITICS.

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OF this year's spring crop of municipal platforms there is none that can compare with the one adopted by the so-called Socialist party of St. Louis, Mo. The Chicago municipal platform of the same party is a curio; that party's Milwaukee productions in that line are poems issued from a tumbling clown's head. The St. Louis article, however, is in itself a whole collection of curios. It is a gem of gems, the best of the lot—in the sense that the best boil is the one that has come to a head. Nothing better than this St. Louis "Socialist" municipal platform could be wished to illustrate certain principles that have become cardinal in the political and trades union Movement of the American Working Class.

A superstition—started and watered, as all superstitions are, by the dupers in search of dupes—is still quite widely prevalent that politics have nothing to do with unionism. On a previous occasion, recently, we advanced the maxim that a bona fide party of Socialism is the focused rays radiated by a class-conscious or bona fide trades union Movement. The actual and intimate relations, implied in the maxim, as bound to exist between the political and the economic organization actually or supposedly of the Working Class, receive exceptional confirmation from the St. Louis production. The St. Louis production confirms the maxim by displaying the obverse, to wit, that the rays of a guild or capitalist form of unionism, if the thing can be really called unionism, will be found focused in the political organization that, on the political field, stands on the identical plane that the economic organization, from which it derives its soul, stands on the economic field.

The maxim—a bona fide party of Socialism is the focused rays radiated by a class-conscious economic organization—points to a test that will unerringly reveal the nature of either an alleged economic or an alleged political organization of the Working Class. It is this: The Unionism behind and under a political party, said to

be Socialist, can be accurately arrived at by the declarations and conduct of the said political body; and vice versa, the Socialism of the political party in front of and above an economic organization, said to be of the Working Class, can be accurately gauged by the principles and conduct of the said Union. Given the one, the other can be ascertained to {a} tittle.

If the test is correct, it will be found that a political party of Socialism that unswervingly preaches the class struggle; that as unswervingly preaches the conclusion that flows from the principle of the class struggle, to wit, the solidarity of labor; that, hewing close to these lines, never indulges in bourgeois demands, but ever insists upon Working Class demands, exclusively, and unflinchingly combats all other demands and methods, whether the same be proposed openly by the bourgeois elements, or whether they be masked by the mask of "Unionism";—it will be found that such a party always has behind it and for its foundation an economic organization that scorns the base role of a caricature of capitalism; that preaches the principle of the solidarity of the Working Class, not as a false pretence under which to violate the principle itself by the untold chicaneries that keep down the membership and its class divided, but as a cardinal article of faith, by the plumb-line of which it rears its structure, and by the rule of which it guides its every act.—And obversely, it will be found that the economic organization builded on this plan, and steering its course by this compass, will ever have for its political expression, and be intimately related with, and closely preceded by a party of Socialism whose sword has but one edge for the capitalist in the field-marshal's tent of capitalism, and for his labor-lieutenant in the guild counterscarps in front.

On the other hand, it will be found, if the test is correct, that a political party which flies the colors of Socialism, but that, though mouthing some of the slogans of Socialism, indulges in bourgeois demands and bourgeois methods, is intimately affiliated with and draws its sap from an economic system of organization that is but a caricature of capitalism; an economic organization, that, like capitalism, is reared on the principle of competition, and that, behind the mask of "Organized Labor" actually keeps the bulk of Labor disorganized and disgraces the word "Unionism", as much as its political exponent disgraces the word "Socialism."—And obversely, again, it will be found that the economic organization that is reared upon

this plan and conducts itself by such a rule, has for its political exhalation the only exhalation that can possibly proceed from such a mephitic stomach—a “Socialist” party of broken sword, at whose councils the capitalist in the field-marshal’s tent of capitalism is represented by his labor-lieutenants, drilled in his interest in his guild counterscarps in front.

Let’s now bring the test to the touch-stone of the St. Louis so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party, municipal platform. One of its planks will do for all the rest. It reads:

“No persons shall be employed on any street railway within the city of St. Louis who have not been resident citizens for at least one year prior to the time of their employment.”

The plank was admirably punctured, as a political declaration, by the Helena, Mont., *News*, who, alluding to the pretences of “International Socialism” set up in the platform, points to the contradiction of “capitalist citizenship,” advocated in the said plank. Of course, “capitalist citizenship” is a thought at fisticuffs with Socialism; it is of a piece with the proposition from the same quarter, introduced at Amsterdam and pronouncing against “inferior races,” but howled down there. The plank, however, goes a step further. “Inferior”, or “superior” races, none shall work on the St. Louis city railways, who is not a “citizen,” besides a resident of at least two years. The bare thought ruptures the solidarity of Labor; it is the spawn of bourgeois conceptions; it is to Socialism what Hell is to Paradise. What, according to the test under consideration, must be found as the controlling and inspiring material foundation for such “ideality?” Nothing but a system of economic organization that mimics capitalism, and that is all the more obscene because of its being an imitation. Does the test stand the test? To perfection. The material basis for, or economic organization of which the St. Louis so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party municipal platform is the political whiff—is the Gompers misnomer of A.F. of L. “Unionism.”

The test will be found true wherever applied, and the opportunities to apply it are not a few. Conspicuous, latest and mutually supplementary opportunities were offered in May and in July of last year when the so-called Socialist, alias Social

Democratic, alias Public Ownership party met in national convention, adopted a political declaration redolent of bourgeois single-taxism, and, obedient to the labor lieutenants of capitalism at that national convention, shielded the Gompers monstrosity from harm, while two months later the Socialist Labor Party, in national convention assembled, adopted a platform that was the political reflex of the bona fide Trades Union system of economic organization, upon which it rests, and whose principles it boldly declared.

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