

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 148.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A QUESTION LEFT UNANSWERED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is now about a year ago since Mr. Louis Duchez, who introduces himself to the reading public as an Ohio miner who has worked at his trade since early childhood and now toils his nine hours a day underground, made his appearance in the Socialist party press, and has, with admirable zeal, been delivering his message in the columns of that party's papers, magazines and dailies. It must also be said that Mr. Duchez has not labored in vain. Probably consciously, he fulfilled one half his errand; the other half of his errand he fulfilled equally well, but probably unconsciously.

That half of the errand that the Ohio miner fulfilled, probably consciously, is the demonstration of the utter prospectlessness of the Socialist party. Following closely the lines along which the Socialist Labor Party has been hewing, and with arguments which, tho' constantly used by the S.L.P., can be used none too often, or driven in none too forcibly, the Ohio miner rakes the S.P. fore and aft. Of course, a party that ignores the essentially important mission of Unionism in the Social Revolution; a party that acts as candle-bearer for A.F. of Hellism; a party that follows the will-o'-the-wisp of votes as the all-sufficient revolutionary agency; a party that, as a consequence, hoists its gaff topsail and balloon jib to catch stray winds of discontent, and that aggravates the folly of trimming these sails to bourgeois radical breezes,—of course such a party is marked Ichabod. It may skim along over the waves for a spell, but is bound to turn turtle, or go under, soon as caught by the first, however slight a cat's-paw of the storm which it fatuously thought to breast. That part of his errand Mr. Duchez fulfilled consciously, with directness and precision. Pure and simple politicianism is prospectless for good.

That other half of his errand which our Ohio miner has also fulfilled, but probably unconsciously, unintentionally, is the equally utter prospectlessness of

pure and simple physical force by Unionism. The equally utter prospectlessness of “direct action” Mr. Duchez proves indirectly; he proves it indirectly by the methods he pursues to advocate the policy.

Nearly three years ago, the *Daily People*, expressing the views at once of the S.L.P. and the I.W.W.,—the bona fide I.W.W., not the bogus concern known as the I-am-a-bums, and which masquerades as {the} I.W.W.; that concern did not then exist—propounded this question: “How is an economic organization, that preaches a revolution, to recruit and drill its forces if it starts by rejecting political action as a matter of principle?” Many a pure and simple forcist has tried his teeth on that file—only to break them, as shown by themselves in the S.L.P. pamphlet *As to Politics*. The question has since remained untackled all these years. It remains untackled by Mr. Duchez. The person who proposes to construct a floating raft out of pig iron, and eschews answering how he will prevent the thing from sinking; the person who proposes to construct a diver’s contrivance out of cork, and gives a wide berth to the question how he will prevent the thing from floating—such a person, the more space and time he takes in advocating the thing, all the more does he demonstrate the thing’s impracticability. Intentionally, or unintentionally, that has been the second half of Mr. Duchez’s errand.

An economic organization, whose program is to establish a “working order” between capitalist and proletarian, can safely ignore political action, and can safely rest upon “direct action,” as the Gompers-Mitchell concerns do. They do not preach a revolution: they preach the continuance of the existing order: whatever acts of violence they may resort to, as they frequently and regularly do, falls, at worst, under the category of “disorderly conduct,” of “revolutionary conduct” never. Contrariwise with an economic organization whose program is Revolution.

Men are not roped, or wheedled, into a revolutionary organization. Those so recruited will desert at the first pinch. A social revolution can not, in our generation, be insinuated, or preached by indirection. The recruits to a revolutionary body must know just what they are there for. Moreover, the Social Revolution of our generation can not be carried out by a “conspiracy.” The Social Revolution demands the masses—too numerous a body for the conspiracy idea. How to recruit the revolutionists, in numbers sufficient, into a revolutionary Union?

Through a revolutionary political party.

Social revolutions are no bolts from clear skies. They are essentially evolutionary manifestations. The Present intimately connects with and flows into the Future, as it is intimately connected with, and flowed from the Past. The work of the American Revolutionary Fathers did not end in 1776: it is of practical use today. Washington's utterance, repeated by the leading American jurists, that the amendment clause in the American Constitution is unique in that it establishes the principle of revolution by providing the method, establishes a progressive Theory, which, whatever be the practical outcome, one can reject only at one's own peril—even if one be the most self-sufficient of miners, working nine hours underground. The "divide" of the historic mountain-range, known as the American Revolution, consists in that, whereas, formerly, Revolution had no choice but to start with bloodshed, thenceforth, theoretically at least, a more civilized field of battle is provided for—political agitation. Only upon the political field can a revolution now be preached; hence, only through political action can the requisite physical force for Revolution be gathered.

The long and short of the story is that a revolutionary economic organization is bound to endeavor to unify the proletariat on the political, as well as the industrial field, *and loudly to proclaim the endeavor*, regardless of how events might finally shape the practical outcome. Without the shield of such a proclamation the economic organization that aims at revolution throttles itself instantly, by reading itself off the floor of civilized conflict, while the individual promoter of such a notion will gather no laurels but such as come to Anarchist eccentricity.

Eloquently does Mr. Duchez fulfill the first part of his errand—against pure and simple politicianism; with the even greater eloquence of silence, the silence with which he leaves unanswered the S.L.P. and I.W.W. question, does the gentleman fulfill the second part of his errand—against pure and simple physical forcism.

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Uploaded January 2011

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