

EDITORIAL

CRAFT AUTONOMY, ETC.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE letter and enclosure from a Houston, Tex., correspondent, published elsewhere in this issue under the title “On Industrial Unionism,”¹ are something more than straws, they are beams, of the several now floating down the stream, that convey the welcome tidings of the healthy set of the stream of thought—and activity.

It is impossible to read the letter of our correspondent without the pleasurable conviction’s gaining strength that, whatever differences of opinion there may seem to be entertained among the honestly thinking and thoughtfully honest militants of the land, the difference is only in seeming, not in fact; and usually is only in the application of terminology—a thing quite natural at a time terms have not yet acquired that strictness of meaning that prevents loose use.

For instance—

Our correspondent holds that “local autonomy” is the “very essence of industrial unionism,” and he correctly holds that the “Socialist Labor Party is opposed to local autonomy in trades unions.” Reading no further one would suppose that in this matter “horns are locked” in irreconcilable opposition. Reading further the ground for the supposition sinks away. Our correspondent’s subsequent language, describing the structure of industrial unionism and its purpose, does not allow his terminology of “autonomy” to be interpreted in the sense that the S.L.P. does.

The idea of Industrialism, or Industrial Unionism, which reappears in our correspondent’s letter in the expression “One Big Union,” is essentially the thought of George Washington concerning the then emancipated colonies constituting One Great Nation—with this difference that Washington’s thought was planted, as it could not choose but be, upon the plane of political government, while Industrialism

¹ [To be appended.—*R.B.*]

is the ripened thought planted upon the ripened and more advanced plane of industrial government. The grasping of this parallel defines “autonomy.”

The Nation, in the shaping of which Washington was a leading factor, although consisting of thirteen entities termed “autonomous” or sovereign States, moved as ONE. Such ONENESS of motion would have been out of question if the “autonomy” of the thirteen entities was to be interpreted absolutely. The “autonomy” was within certain spheres only. Outside of those specified spheres there was no “autonomy.”

It is not imaginable that our correspondent’s “autonomy” includes freedom, on the industrial field, corresponding with the Calhoun South Carolina “nullification” theory. The fair interpretation of our correspondent’s “autonomy” is that any “nullification” attempt on the part of constituent Unions would be treated like the Calhoun “nullification” attempt was treated. Otherwise there could be no unity of action—no victory won against the foe, and no freedom maintained after the victory is won.

The “Denver Proposition,” together with the Houston endorsement, are earnest that the Social Revolution will not suffer shipwreck on the breakers of the petty interests, the breakers-scum of which are pure and simple bombism and pure and simple ballotism, with Civic-Federationized and Militia-of-Christized Mitchell-Gompersism as the sunken rocks and sand-banks at bottom of all the mischief.

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