

EDITORIAL

BARNES AT MONTMARTRE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WHEN Mr. J. Mahlon Barnes—anxious to make up for the loss of his office as National Secretary of the Socialist party—snapped at the opportunity to secure a “vindication” by running for the National Executive Committee, the gentleman issued his manifesto. It contained this plank on the burning question of Unionism that is burning the fingers and tongues of pure-and-simple politicianism:

“I emphatically oppose rendering any ‘first aid’ to the bosses by creating divisions on the economic field.”

Those who are familiar with Eugene Sue’s historic novel *The Pocket Bible* will remember the scene in which Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, gathered his disciples in the grotto of Montmartre, and calling them up, one by one, put them through their paces. J. Mahlon Barnes was not there. Had he been there Loyola would have addressed him:

“And you J. Mahlon Barnes—suppose I am an officer in the A.F. of L. I come to you and say: I get a rake-off through my connection with the Civic Federation. I’m paid to keep the several crafts in a factory apart from each other. I do so by binding them down with contracts which expire at different dates. In that manner I make them think that it is dishonest to strike hands and support one another when any of them is in trouble. By this and other methods for which I get well paid I cut up the workers into a whole lot of divisions—first I keep out of the Union all those for whom the Union can not find jobs: that creates the main division;—secondly, by the contracts aforementioned, I create a number of inner divisions so that one international Union scabs upon the other, and one Union of the same international Union scabs upon the others, and even the members of the same Union quietly scab upon the other members through Wahnetas and other contrivances. I do all that on the quiet.

Now there comes a workingman to me. He does not know that I am a labor-lieutenant of the capitalist class. I always use big words in favor of the Union and unity. He believes I am an honest man. He tells me: ‘The A.F. of L. is a bulwark of the capitalist class; it keeps the workers divided on the economic field; it is led by the apron-strings of the A.F. of L. and now it has also put its neck into the yoke of the Militia of Christ. All this is harmful to the workers. Will you help me to set up a new economic organization of the workers free from capitalist economic domination and free also from the domination of capitalist politics ambushed behind religion? What would you do and say to me?’

“I would say to you,” disciple J. Mahlon Barnes would answer, “‘My son, tell that workingman you are emphatically opposed to render “first aid” to the bosses by creating divisions on the economic field. A new organization would only create division. We must be united,’” and he would thrust his tongue into his cheek.

Whereupon Loyola, leaning upon his staff, would have nodded approval and made this entry in his memorandum book: “Pity the fellow is no longer National Secretary of the S.P.”

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2013

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