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EDITORIAL

EVENTS THAT ARE APPROACHING.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON this first column, front page, of this issue an article will be found entitled “Preliminary Explosion,” or “Volcanic Rumbings Coming to a Head.”¹ The article is a report from the Socialist Labor Party’s and the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance’s national organizer, Frank Bohn, now on a Western tour in behalf of both organizations. The article merits careful reading and re-reading. It merits study. The event therein reported may mark an epoch in the Labor Movement of America. It may be the harbinger of that long looked-for event, certain sooner or later to happen,—the arrival of the re-inforcements that will insure victory to the Cause that the fort of the Socialist Labor Party, besieged and proof against all the violent assaults directed against it during the last eight and nine years, has vindicated and upheld. The manifesto referred to in Bohn’s report, about to be issued from the headquarters of the American Labor Union in Chicago, and bearing his own signature, along with the signatures of others who are not members of the S.L.P., has not yet arrived. Until its arrival no accurate opinion can be formed. Surmise alone is possible until then. In the surmise, however, a number of facts may help in forming an approximate opinion; these facts may, at least, outline that for which there is just ground for expectation.

The Cause whose colors the Socialist Labor Party has nailed to its flagstaff is the unconditional surrender of the Capitalist Class, the absolute emancipation of the Working Class. Free from the illusions that flow but too naturally from the inevitable political aspect of the issue, the Socialist Labor Party planted itself squarely upon the economic, or Trades Union organization of the American proletariat. Whatever other course European, or conditions elsewhere permitted,

¹ [See page 4 for text.]

American conditions dictated none other. To sum up the conclusions led to by the several links of the Party's reasoning, the Party held that the day of the political victory of Socialism in America would be the day of its defeat, if on that day the Working Class of the land was not found solidly organized on the industrial field, ready, integrally, to carry on the Nation's production. The Party's reasoning predicated, on the one hand, industrial directness of motion upon the political principle, and, on the other, the political unity requisite for effective political victory, upon industrial solidarity. The Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance sprang from that perception.

The birth of the S.T. & L.A., together with the pointed S.L.P. and S.T. & L.A. agitation that followed, wrought a revolution, with a consequent complete realignment of forces. Only then did the lines begin to be drawn, on either side of which were to be finally marshalled the destined combatants in the great historic drama of our generation that is to be enacted on American soil—the battle for the emancipation of Labor. The realignment affected the tactics of the Movement all along the line of economic as well as of political propaganda. All the forces that make for Capitalism, or for the only alternative, the Cooliefication of the American people, set in motion. One touch of the right tactics, finally struck, made them all kin. The combined standards of the S.L.P. and the S.T. & L.A., whose device was the solidification of Labor on the industrial field, ranked its few supporters on one side of the line; on the other side stood the hosts whose practice, whatever their piebald professions, kept Labor dismembered. The ensign of these was the obscene labarum of Gompers' A.F. of L. Every year, thereafter, marked wider and deeper the line of cleavage. Nor was there any doubt, despite deceiving appearances, that, despite the disparity of initial numbers and material resources between the two, the correct principle of the S.T. & L.A., coupled to the strength that Right ever imparts, restored the equilibrium of forces. Vehement was the struggle, and continues to be. The very vehemence aided clarification, and counteracted the dense cloud of calumny that Wrong sought to hide under. Right steadily made inroad upon Wrong. The standard of the A.F. of L. now droops visibly, despite its now unconcealed Civic Federation and other capitalist props: the standard of the S.T. & L.A. flutters ever more defiant, conscious of ascendancy.

These are facts. When to them is coupled the fact that the language and posture of the *American Labor Union Journal* has for now nearly a year leaned nearer and nearer towards the attitude of the S.T. & L.A.; the further fact that volcanic rumblings have recently increased in frequency and vehemence in the camp of the “Socialist” party, which, at its last national convention all but endorsed the Labor-disrupting A.F. of L. by name, and certainly endorsed its practises; the further fact that Frank Bohn is a trusty national organizer of the S.L.P. and of the S.T. & L.A., well grounded in the principles of both;—when these and many more facts of kindred nature are considered, then, indeed, the passages in Bohn’s report—“He (Trautmann, of the International Union Brewery Workmen, and one of the conferees) added: ‘It will be said that we are practically accepting the principles of the S.T. & L.A. Yes, we are. We must come to that. They are the right principles;’” and “A leading member of the A.L.U. stated to me in private conversation: ‘It is plain that the fight which De Leon and the S.L.P. have been making all these years is the right fight to make’”—then, indeed, these passages sound not only natural, they sound not only gladsome, but they justify their being considered as torches by which to read not only the report that Bohn sends, not only the manifesto that his report preludes, but also the lettering on the wall of events that are approaching.

PRELIMINARY EXPLOSION, OR VOLCANIC RUMBLINGS COMING TO A HEAD

(Special to the *Daily* and *Weekly People* from Frank Bohn, National Organizer of the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance.)

St. Louis, Mo., Jan. 13.—All readers of *The People* have, for some time, had their ears attuned to the music of “Volcanic Rumbings.” They have been aware that a storm of opposition to pure and simpledom in general and to the A.F. of L. in particular, has been gathering in the West. The utterly contemptible attitude assumed by the leaders of that once powerful body in these days of its hopeless degeneracy; the paralyzing effects of defeat after defeat sustained by it during the past few years; and the degradation of those “Socialists” whose A.F. of L. positions act as bribes, have called forth a vigorous protest from that portion of the S.P. who refuse to be longer unequally yoked together with criminals. The time being fully ripe for action, a conference of industrial unionists was lately called by a group of men prominently connected with the American Labor Union, the Western Federation of Miners, and revolutionary elements in the American Federation of Labor, notably the Brewery Workmen. While passing through Chicago I was invited to meet with this group and discuss the situation. This, after learning that the group were to meet as individuals, and not as delegates, I agreed to do. The conference took place during the first week in January. Among the twenty-five present were Haywood and Moyer of the Western Federation of Miners, Clarence Smith, Haggerty and Estes of the American Labor Union, Trautmann, Editor of the *Brauer Zeitung*. This conference issued the Manifesto to American Workingmen, which calls for a convention of all industrial, class conscious unionists, to be held in June. To this convention the S.T. & L.A. is expected to send delegates. Some knowledge of the character of this conference and its attitude on “The Burning Question,” may be helpful to members of the S.T. & L.A. in coming to a conclusion on the attitude to be taken by their organization with regard to the proposed

convention.

Trautmann, in stating the general purpose of the conference on behalf of the Committee of Seven, proclaimed clearly and firmly the old, old truths which we, of the S.L.P., have never ceased to emphasize during all these years of fighting. After proving the capitalist character of the A.F. of L. and showing its open follies and its hidden rottenness, he added:

“It will be said that we are practically accepting the principles of the S.T. & L.A. Yes, we are. We must come to that. They are the right principles.”

The fiercest attacks on pure and simpledom and on “boring from within” the A.F. of L. were made by those who have been the last to turn against that organization, such as Sherman of Texas, and other Western men whose names I have forgotten. The members of the conference were practically unanimous in unqualified ratification of class conscious, industrial unionism, as advocated by the S.T. & L.A. As a leading member of the A.L.U. stated to me in private conversation: “It is plain that the fight which De Leon and the S.L.P. have been making all these years is the right fight to make.”

Some members of the conference objected to the call for a convention and advocated the re-organization of all class conscious industrial unionists about an existing organization as a nucleus. But it was quickly pointed out that such action would have little influence further than to secure the adhesion of some members of the conference as individuals. The desired result could only be obtained through the action of a convention really representing organized bodies of workingmen.

Careful perusal of the contents of the Manifesto will make clear, better than anything else which might be said, what is working in the minds of these men. That the new organization IS TO BE AFFILIATED WITH NO POLITICAL PARTY, is a feature of the Manifesto most interesting to members of both the S.T. & L.A. and the S.L.P. With reference to this matter the S.T. & L.A. delegates, if any are sent, should have very definite opinions. This attitude on the political character of the proposed organization, prevailed with a majority of the members of the conference, because it was thought that attention should just now be riveted upon the subject of re-organization upon the industrial field. “Socialists” not interested in the subject of industrial unionism are supposed to remain away from the June convention. It is to

be hoped that the convention may accept all those principles which have made the S.T. & L.A. heretofore the only real Socialist labor union; and make provision for a clear-cut organization along the lines marked out by those principles. This will mean at once a powerful attack upon the A.F. of L. and all its defenders, including “Socialists” like Max Hayes, Berger and the *Volkszeitung* crew, as well as Gompers and Mitchell.

One more incident—it will be seen at once that the list of signatures to the Manifesto contains the names of some men who have been most bitter opponents of both the S.T. & L.A. and the S.L.P. Furthermore the names of some appear who were not present at the conference, notably those of Debs and Untermann, the latter of whom has been in the past a most strenuous advocate of “boring from within.” In all the discussion which is now to come, may principles and not individuals be considered as really important. The men made prominent by the Colorado struggle, Moyer and Haywood, Clarence Smith and Haggerty, have been the means of instituting the new movement. Lessons learned by them in the bitter school of experience have prompted this first step on their part. “The miners of Colorado,” said Haywood, permanent chairman of the conference, “fought alone the capitalist class of the United States. We don’t wish to fight that way again.” Never have a group of men more deeply impressed me as possessing those sterling qualities which make men worthy of fighting the great fight of the working class. For S.T. & L.A. delegates to meet such men can result in good alone to all concerned. If less worthy characters find their way to the convention there is all the more need of counteracting influences. Final action, it must not be forgotten by all concerned, rests with the membership of the various bodies represented on the floor of the convention.

FRANK BOHN.

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