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EDITORIAL

NO SWERVING.

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AS an answering echo to the Anti-politics sentiment which has for the last year been trying to invade the American Socialist and Labor Movement, comes news from Japan that a few members of the Japanese Socialist Party, discouraged that their noble efforts and sacrifices have not brought larger and quicker results, are turning Anarchists, and advocating “direct action” as their only tactics.

That the same impatient manifestation should break out in two countries so widely separated by distance and by political tradition as are the United States and Japan, points to and calls attention to the seriousness of the case. If the mistaken notion of the proper form of revolutionary activity be allowed to gather head, the fate of the Movement may at any time be put in jeopardy. Napoleon was wont to say he feared one newspaper more than 10,000 troops. The capitalist class certainly fears one self-poised, collected revolutionist more than it does 10,000 semi-visioned, one-sided advocates of impossible physical force methods of emancipating labor. The latter can quickly enough be clapped in jail as enemies of the country; the former must be met on their own ground of intelligent discussion and argument.

The opposition to the ballot can be traced to two misconceptions—one, that it is too slow, and, second, that it is hopelessly corrupt. It takes too long, according to the first idea, to gather and drill an army that will vote correctly; and, according to the second, even if you have your army, and it votes right, the vote will not be counted anyway.

Only in the measure that the working class is able to see the flaws in the above two arguments, and guide itself accordingly, will its posture on the revolutionary field be a winning one. The ballot is not too slow. Slow it may be, and certainly is. But before it can be termed “too” slow, it must first be proven that something else

would do the same work and do it quicker—otherwise, slow means as it is, it remains the best, and must be utilized. No such something exists. Whatever action is to be taken to effect the revolution, it must be preceded by a long and arduous course of education. To vote right requires but the knowledge of what one wants and the ability to raise a hand or mark a ballot. Compared with the military and strategic efficiency implied in the physical force program of the Anarchist, voting is simplicity itself. The education as to what one wants is equally required in both cases. That must be done, come what will. How, then, can the plea be made that the education of a voter is a longer or more difficult task than the education of a physical forcist? On the face of it, it is easier to teach men to vote than to shoot; and a man who can not be taught to vote right, could certainly never be depended upon to shoot right.

The idea of the hopeless corruption of the ballot is likewise at fault. The corruption of the present day political ballot is granted beforehand by every revolutionist. But there is no necessity compelling the working class to deposit but one ballot only, and that in the box controlled by the henchmen of the capitalist class. Organized as a unit in its industrial organization, the working class can there also cast its ballot, have it counted by its own tellers, and there determine, even in the face of the counting out of the capitalist politicians, the strength of the sentiment for revolution. And of him who declares that even here corruption will creep in and defeat the purpose of the count, it may be asked: in what way will this danger be obviated in a physical force program? Can not ward heelers {who} transform themselves into false guides and political bosses grow into military traitors? The chances of corruption are not decreased by the physical force program, while its disastrous consequences are a hundredfold multiplied. The probability is vastly in favor of the count conducted by an industrially organized and schooled working class being a clean one; but even if it were not, he who would seek to escape its uncleanness by fleeing to physical force instead, only invites a greater catastrophe.

To sum the matter up, the propaganda of Anarchy, or physical force only, can be productive of no good. It must be carried on in secret gatherings, it can not appeal to the mass of the people, and it is vitally at fault in that it possesses no

constructive force. Its watchword is Disorganization, Headlessness.

At the same time the revolutionary working class must not rush to the opposite extreme, and lay all its hope on the ballot. The unified industrial organization to count the ballot and to assume control if the ballot results favorably, is just as important as the political act of casting the ballot. Straight as a runner to his goal must the working class guide itself between the two dangers of ballot only and physical force only. Straight is the path—let there be no swerving.

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