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EDITORIAL

FRANCE AND AMERICA.

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GUSTAVE HERVE'S rebuke—recorded a few weeks ago in these columns—to those Anarchist members of syndicalist Unionism who “violate the Union's principles of political neutrality with constant, vicious and outrageous attacks” against the French political party of Socialism, together with his recognition of the justice of the party's conduct in defending itself against such assaults, is a torch by which to read intelligently the conduct of the Haywood-St. John Anarchists who here call themselves “syndicalists,” and the corresponding conduct of the Socialist Labor Party.

When the I.W.W. was organized in 1905 there were, as there continue to be, two political parties flying the colors of Socialism—the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist party. Being launched with the full experience of the Labor or Socialist Movement behind it, the I.W.W. recognized the necessity of Working Class unity on the political as well as on the industrial field, and so expressed itself, distinctly in its Preamble. What the nature of such a political field had to be was obvious—the Socialist political field. Furthermore, facing the fact of two rival parties of Socialism in the field, the I.W.W. was confronted in 1905, not with a theory but a condition. The Preamble of the I.W.W. met the condition by inserting in that same Preamble a clause proclaiming that the new body stood unaffiliated with any political party,—in other words, that it stood upon the principle of political neutrality.

The latter clause was obviously a temporary declaration, made necessary by a condition that the I.W.W. had, in 1905, just reason to expect was likewise temporary. The I.W.W. had furnished the basis for Socialist political unity; it, therefore, was justified to expect such unity. The expectation was all the more justifiable seeing that representative men in both the S.L.P. and the S.P. had fraternized at the I.W.W. 1905 convention, and had combined to raise the structure.

The events of the two following years dissipated the expectation of Socialist unity. Obedient to, and with the aid of, its A.F. of L. affiliations, the S.P. made so bitter a war upon the I.W.W. that, conditions favoring, already at the second convention of the I.W.W. (1906), the S.P. membership was conspicuous by its absence. The conspicuous absence of these rendered all the more conspicuous the presence of the S.L.P. members, who had remained loyal to the I.W.W. This circumstance furnished the Anarchists, who had until then been kept under, with their opportunity. The S.P. had itself thrown itself out; the S.L.P. being no longer balanced by the S.P., the cry of "Politician!", distant mumblings of which had been heard from the start, now became loud, and the loudness was intensified by the circumstance that there remained only one party of Socialism represented in the membership of the I.W.W.—the S.L.P. Thus the early cry of "Politician!" became the concentrated cry of "S.L.P.!" And thus, before its split in 1908, the spectacle was seen of people who claimed loyalty to an economic organization whose Preamble stood for the principle of political neutrality, making war upon the S.L.P. their specialty.

The traveler from Mars would have to be very little versed in the affairs of men, not to know in advance that people, proceeding along the lines of the Anarchist element above referred to, would seek to cloak their devious course by blaming others for what they were, themselves, and themselves only, guilty of. The Anarchists who, in the language of Herve, exactly applicable to the case in America, "violated the principle of political neutrality with constant, vicious and outrageous attacks" against the Socialist Labor Party, pretended that the S.L.P. was trying to "dictate" to the I.W.W., was trying to "run" it, and was trying to make the I.W.W. a tail to the S.L.P. kite,—and they deported themselves in keeping with their false accusations: They, pretentious paladins of "free speech," expelled *The People* from their Spokane headquarters; their emissaries in the city of New York sneaked under a variety of disguises to the S.L.P. public platform, and from there proclaimed the dogma that the S.L.P. should disband; others conspired to take physical possession of the *Daily People* plant as their legitimate inheritance; and through the columns of their Chicago then national organ they opened fire upon the Party.

Again, in the language of Herve, again exactly applicable to the case in America, the S.L.P. justly defended itself. Too well posted upon the difference in the two

fields of operation by an economic and a political body, the S.L.P. never sought to trespass upon the domain of the I.W.W.; too well realizing that the economic body had to paddle its own canoe, or the canoe would not be worth paddling, the S.L.P. carefully abstained from doing any “dictating,” “running,” or “tying as tail to its kite.” The evidence thereof is so conclusive that, despite their torrential vilifications of the S.L.P., the Anarchists have never been able to produce one scrap of paper or other evidence in support of their charges. It was all vilification—of the style signally indulged in by Wm. D. Haywood in his March 7 speech at Paterson where he sought to emulate John Golden against the leader of the Paterson I.W.W. workers on strike.

Being a fighting organization, the S.L.P., like all truly good fighters, avoided the fight that was being forced upon it—avoided it so long as it could—and defended itself. When, however, the fight was unavoidable; when the foe threw off the mask, and its features were perceived to be the features of the arch enemy, the traditional enemy of the Labor or Socialist Movement—Anarchy, rigged in all its panoply of theft, violence, “Direct Action,” dynamite{,} “strike at the ballot box with an axe,” and the rest of its program of insanity and turpitude—then the S.L.P. turned around, and fought, and fights, as the great Cause that it serves compels it—as the Party in France does—as militant Socialism everywhere does—drawing to its side the noble spirits that might at first have been confused by the clatter, as Herve was drawn to its side,—and bound to triumph.

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