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EDITORIAL

THE I.W.W.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is as easy as rolling off a log to answer this New York correspondent:

“I notice your decided preference for the Detroit I.W.W. I can not blame you for that. What I do blame you for is to act as if there is only one I.W.W., and the Chicago I.W.W. did not exist. Even Debs recognizes that there are two in his article ‘Sound Socialist Tactics’ in the *International Review* of this month [February]. How can you shut your eyes to the fact that there are two I.W.W.’s?”

Very simply. There is only one I.W.W.

These are the facts, indisputable being official:—

1. Among the ills, enumerated in the Manifesto of 1905, which called for a convention to set up a new organization of Labor, was that the workers were divided upon the political field. That convention launched the new labor organization, and gave it the name “Industrial Workers of the World.”

2. While the debates in the Committee on Preamble and Constitution have not been preserved officially, the debate on the floor of the convention, upon the committee’s report of a Preamble, has been preserved officially and stenographically. The debate establishes that, in keeping with the Manifesto, a Preamble was adopted calling upon the workers to unite “upon the political as well as the industrial field.”

3. The official and stenographic reports of the second (1906) and third (1907) conventions of the I.W.W. record the efforts of avowed Anarchists—one of them Axelsson of Minneapolis, another Camanita of Paterson, N.J., who, having since advocated black upon white in his paper the “starting of the revolution” by setting one end of Paterson on fire, and, the police being drawn to that section of the City, seize upon the rest of the city, was prosecuted and escaped to parts unknown—to strike

out the above cited clause regarding unity “upon the political as well as the economic field,” and thereby rely only upon “physical force” or “direct action”; and that they failed in their efforts to turn the I.W.W. into an Anarchist body.

4. The typewritten report of the fourth convention of the I.W.W. (1908) issued by the then National Secretary Trautmann, and the subsequent issues of the *Bulletin* containing the said report, sets forth that the above political clause was struck out upon motion of the above named Axelson with express denunciations of the ballot.

5. Many members, a majority, in fact, of the I.W.W., declared that they refused to hold communion with the element typified by Axelson; they set up their headquarters at Detroit; they issued a paper entitled *Industrial Union News* as “the organ of the I.W.W.”; and they continue to adhere to the name “I.W.W.” besides the principles under which the I.W.W. was born.

6. The element typified by Axelson are not certain about their name. Often they call themselves “Syndicalists.”

7. Their organs preach “striking at the ballot box with an ax” and have ribald jokes only for political action. They are Anarchists.

From these facts it follows that, altho’ the Chicago, or Axelson element call themselves “I.W.W.” the name is a misnomer on their lips. If all that there was left of the I.W.W. was they, then there would be no I.W.W. whatever. The name of I.W.W. used by the Axelson element is “false colors.” The Axelson element is Anarchist, the I.W.W. is not. The I.W.W. colors must fit I.W.W. principles. A jackass is not a lion because he puts on a lion’s skin, nor are there two lions because, besides the genuine lion, there is a lion-skin-rigged jackass braying. There are not, there can not be two I.W.W.’s. One, or none. The organization with headquarters at Detroit, being one that goes by no name other than “Industrial Unionist,” adheres to the principles and tactics of the I.W.W., and is directly descendant from the I.W.W. of 1905 and the Manifesto that called it forth, is the one I.W.W. in the land.

Mr. Debs, to judge from the article referred to by our correspondent, does not “recognize that there are two” I.W.W.’s. The only passage, in that otherwise admirable article, which mentions “I.W.W.” is the passage: “Its tactics alone have prevented the growth of the Industrial Workers of the World. Its principles of indus-

trial unionism are sound, but its tactics are not. Sabotage repels the American worker. He is ready for the industrial union, but he is opposed to the ‘propaganda of the deed,’ and as long as the I.W.W. adheres to its present tactics and ignores political action, or treats it with contempt by advising the workers to ‘strike at the ballot box with an ax’ they will regard it as an Anarchist organization.”

Obviously Mr. Debs is as much at fault as we are in so far as he, like us, knows but one I.W.W.

Which of the two does our correspondent think has the righter sow by the ear—he who says there is but one I.W.W., the organization that is sound on industrial unionism and tactics? or he who says there is but one I.W.W., the organization that, according to himself preaches Anarchy?

The Chicago, or Axelson element, cut themselves off the I.W.W. when they set up Anarchy.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org