

EDITORIAL

AT THE BRICKLAYERS' CONVENTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE printed report of the "First day, morning session, of the Third Biennial and Forty-Third Convention of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' International Union of America," assembled at St. Joseph, Mo., on January 8 of this year, contains a condensation of the address with which the Mayor of St. Joseph, the Hon. A.P. Clayton, welcomed the delegates.

The condensation sets forth that Mayor Clayton said in part: "I want to extend a welcome to you, gentlemen delegates of the forty-third convention, not only in the name of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' Union of the city of St. Joseph, but in the name of the ladies, the business men, the professional men, the clergy and in fact every citizen of St. Joseph."

The report closes with the statement that President Bowen of the International Union responded to the address of welcome.

At that point, just where the report promised to become interesting, it suddenly breaks off. The International President's address is not given.

St. Joseph ranks among "industrial centers." According to the latest available computations the St. Joseph wage workers engaged in industrial and mechanical pursuits are spread upon anything but a bed of roses. Their earnings barely average \$418 a year. This state of pauperism is reflected in the large number of families who do not own their homes, 13,000 in round numbers, while of those who are entered as owning their homes, 4,000 in round figures, a goodly number are only technically "owners," the mortgagee being the landlord de facto.

To bricklayers, masons and plasterers, they being house builders, these figures are of special interest. The weaver in Lawrence, Mass., may never see the clothing made of his particular fabric, or the person who wears the same; the shoemaker in Rochester, N.Y., may never know the individual who prances in his handiwork; the

hatter of Danbury, Conn., may never delight in the sight of his work on the head of the consumer. It is so with almost all the workingman's products: turned out in one place, the products are spread over thousands of miles, and are "consumed" by "consumers" never seen or heard of by the producer. Among the few exceptions to this rule houses rank in front rank, especially the brick, mason and plaster work thereof. Where the house is built, there is it "consumed." Differently from his fellow wage-slaves in most other industries, the nature of whose product conceals from his eyes the fact that he produces and another enjoys, with the bricklayer, mason and plasterer the fact is kept standing, monumentally, before his eyes. It preaches to him daily the sermon of capitalist economics—the apportionment of functions— toil for most, fruition for a few, the "most" being the worker, the "few" being the idler, the "business men," "professional men," the "politicians," etc., in the name of the St. Joseph representatives of which several social elements his Honor Mayor Clayton welcomed the delegates to the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers' Convention.

Did the International President Bowen, in responding to the Mayor's sweet words, hint at the experience that sweet words butter no parsnips?

The report sayeth not.

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