

EDITORIAL

“THE FLAG,” IN UTAH.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A 13-YEAR-OLD girl pupil at the Franklin Grammar School of Salt Lake City, Lena Eyler, described by her Principal, F.N. Poulson, as a “wonderfully bright and remarkably precocious child,” has been suspended from school by the Superintendent until she is willing to conform to the school discipline which requires the children to salute the American flag by reciting aloud: “I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the republic for which it stands; one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” The girl refused to join the salute exercises, stating, according to the Salt Lake City *Evening Telegram* of November 2: “I owe nothing to the American flag. It no longer stands for the noble principles in which it was conceived. If I must salute a flag it will be the red flag of Socialism because I think it stands more truly for liberty and justice than the stars and stripes.”

Here is a manifestation that is typical of the social season our people are traversing. It presents a tangle at once of Reason and of Un-reason; of inspiring pathos and of alarming excess; of a thrilling human anticipation and of a recrudescence of fanaticism. Nor can it be said that the School Superintendent has contributed to un-tangling the tangle.

None can read little Lena Eyler’s deliberately intense and intensely deliberate confession of faith without its recalling to mind the similarly deliberate and intense confessions of faith made by early Christian martyrs when Christianity was shaping itself into a social and political power to supplant the political and social Rule of those days. Then, as is now done by little Lena Eyler, Christians—at times, even when in the ranks of the army as centurions—refused to pledge loyalty to the emblem of the Roman Empire. Nor can the closeness of the parallel fail simultaneously

to illustrate the glaring contrast—the Reason of then, the Un-Reason of the identical spectacle now.

When, within the last ten years, the questions of "militarism" and "patriotism" were being theoretically discussed in Europe, August Bebel—unquestionably the one living international central head of the Socialist World, and connecting link between the Marx that is gone and the Marxists that are now,—said: "If the fatherland is attacked, I shall shoulder a gun." Yet the German wing of Socialism as firmly contemplates the substitution of a new Social Order, for the existing one in the German Empire, as the Social Order of the Christian polity carried in its folds a determinedly revolutionary bolt against the polity of the Roman Empire. Obviously, Bebel's goal—the Social Order specifically symbolized by the Socialist Red Flag of Universal Brotherhood—is not incompatible with incidental loyalty to the flag of even a German Empire.

If the national flag of a mailed hand Empire, like the German, is entitled to the qualified loyalty of a Bebel, how much more so is not the American flag entitled to the love of our people—regardless of the misuse that the Ruling Class is putting the same to. Upon this particular subject *The People* had only recently occasion to express itself in extenso.

Some Anarchists having this year attempted to tear down the American flag at a Socialist May Day demonstration in this city, the *Daily People* of May 12 said:

"He who knows history knows also the history of flags. There is hardly a flag in Europe that was not born of rapine, and does not symbolize rapine. Whether it be the British flag, with its 'Three crosses quartered' symbolizing the practically forceful annexation of Scotland and Ireland to England; or whether it be the Austrian flag emblematic of the mailed hand that organized feudal disorder into an imperial system, and crushed down the peasantry; or whether it be the Russian flag, a testimony to the theory that bloody tyranny is of divine right, and, the bloodier, all the more divine; or whether it be the German flag, the insignia of militarism rampant; or whether it be the flag of Spain hearkening back to terrorism of body and mind;—whether it be the flag of any of these and most of the nations of Europe, their flags are living modern mementos of cruel oppression in the Past and reminders that their Past reaches into the Present. Even the flags

of Holland and Switzerland, born though they were of national aspirations for independence, are not free from the soilure that attaches to the others. Aye, even the Tricolor of bourgeois France is no exception. 'Twas not the Rights of Man alone that it proclaimed; it simultaneously proclaimed, by the early statute against the right of the French proletariat to organize itself economically, that the proletariat had no rights, and that, by Man, the bourgeois alone was meant.

"While all the European flags rose out of the fumes of human sighs, were planted upon the prostrate bodies of subjects, and were meant defiantly to proclaim the double wretchedness as a social principle, it was otherwise, it was the exact opposite, with the 'Stars and Stripes.'

"Apart from the circumstance that the American Flag was first raised by men, who, however, and pardonably, mistaken in their sociology and economics, did sincerely believe that the American Flag, raised over the boundless natural opportunities which the land offered to industry, would insure the citizen the power and responsibility of being the architect of his own fortune; apart from the circumstance that the American Flag was the first to wave over a Constitution that 'legalizes revolution';—apart from these and many other kindred circumstances, the historic fact that the scientist, the noble-minded, the venerable Franklin, when the scheme of the flag was presented to him, a blue field with a star for each State, expressed the hope that the day would dawn when every Nation in the world would be represented in that blue field with her own star,—that fact confers upon the American Flag the lofty distinction of being the first on earth to urge the Brotherhood of Nations; the first to herald the Solidarity of peoples; the first drapery-symbol of Peace on Earth;—that fact renders the American Flag the anticipation of the Red Flag of International Brotherhood, and endears it to the heart of civilized man."

Curious, yet instructive, coincidence that in a Grammar School, which bears the name of Franklin, a pupil, animated with the modern lofty aspirations that Franklin anticipated by a full hundred years, should be so ill schooled in history by her teachers as to believe she "owes nothing to the American flag"!—The bourgeois has lip-service only for the great men of the American bourgeois Revolution.

Striking contrast the contrast between the Franklin, after whom that Salt Lake City Grammar School is named and the School Superintendent who punished a child, for her shortcomings in history, shortcomings for which her school curriculum

itself is to blame,—punishing her by depriving her of school opportunities to correct her error!

What the bourgeois school of Salt Lake City deprives Lena Eyler of Socialist tuition must substitute. The scepter of Education is passing from the Bourgeois to the Proletariat. The pure flame that burns in that child's breast must not be suffered to consume itself. Fanned with the fan of Socialist fullness of information, that flame is rising, lambent through the length and breadth of the land.

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