

EDITORIAL

## WILSON AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**R**EPRESENTATIVE government is nothing more nor less than an effort to give voice to this great body [the unthinking mixed with the wise, the reckless with the prudent, the unscrupulous with the fair and honest] through spokesmen chosen out of every grade and class”—such is the understanding and explanation of representative government by the Democratic standard bearer.

Few of the political utterances of Woodrow Wilson give as clear an insight, as does this one, into the shallow nature of bourgeois schooling, or illustrates the blasting effect of such schooling, even upon so brilliant all intellect as that of the ex-president of Princeton College, and probable next President of the United States.

The word “representative” in the term “representative government” has to the Woodrow Wilsons only a dictionary, not the technical meaning it has in political science.

“Representative” government is the opposite of “direct” government. It does not mean a government in which the wise and the foolish, the honest and the dishonest of all grades are represented. These are represented in all governments—the “direct” as well as the indirect, technically termed “representative.”

Original government is direct. It is “original,” because the original community is small; it is “direct” because all the governed participated in the decisions arrived at; and they did so because they could; and they could because they were few.

“Direct” government turns into “indirect” when the community grows. A hundred, or perhaps, a thousand people or so may meet jointly; jointly debate and jointly arrive at a collective decision. The thing becomes impossible when the community or the governed, become too numerous to meet. From that instant either, as

in antiquity, the community splits up into two, or more independent ones, each governed directly; or the members stick together, and then, being too numerous to meet, divide into integral parts who elect a representative. The several representatives then meet and decide, either absolutely or subject to the veto of their constituents.

The choice between splitting up, or sticking together, was not arbitrary. Economic conditions determined the same. To make a long story short, under a system of production that increasingly pushes in the direction of co-operative labor, sticking together becomes more and more imperatively necessary. The United States offers the best illustration of the culmination. No section of the land can endure without the others. Petty nations like Holland and Belgium are vestiges of the past.

“Representative Government” arose under class rule. The philosophic Anarchist concludes from this that the abolition of Representative Government will be necessary for freedom. Representative Government is a condition precedent for co-operative labor. What economic freedom or Socialism will abolish is, not Representative Government, but the class interests that Representative Government now safeguards.

When Woodrow Wilson pursues the representative government that he has in mind, he gets lost in the wilderness—far from the road that leads to the Industrial Government, the government that represents, not the good and the bad individuals, but all the useful occupations of the land.

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