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EDITORIAL

WISDOM, OF EXPERIENCE AND INEXPERIENCE.

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THE election news from abroad lights up the fact that wisdom not only comes of experience, but may also spring from inexperience.

In Russia the working class is reported to be profoundly indifferent to the election going on there under the supervision of the Czar. Dispatches from Odessa, for example, where there are 20,000 qualified voters, bear the news that, out of all those thousands, only forty-eight persons took the trouble to register.

From the Philippines comes news of very similar indifference on the part of the Filipinos toward the election that is there taking place under the guardianship of the rulers of the United States. The Filipinos are “refusing to learn the lesson of self-government” as the capitalist papers express it.

In Russia the workers spurn the ballot that is now offered them by the Czar. In the Philippines the subjects of the United States spurn the ballot that they are offered. The American working class will echo the capitalist criticism of the conduct of the Filipinos as evidence of stupidity; and yet no one could maintain for a moment that the conditions of either the Russian workers or the Filipinos could have been actually improved by it, however heartily they had engaged in these elections. On the contrary it must be admitted that the indifference of both confounds and disconcerts alike the rulers of Russia and the rulers of the United States.

Thus is lighted up the wisdom of inexperience and the delusion and mystification of misapplied experience. That light, however, by no means shows that the ballot should be ignored or abandoned.

America, by its experience, struggling for the ballot, has developed a working class who, as regards the ballot, have attained little wisdom but much delusion and mystification. Recount the struggles of the several colonies for representative

assemblies, and the war of the colonies jointly against taxation without REPRESENTATION. Recall the manner in which the workers were lured to the unbroken wilds of the west by the liberal franchise laws of the frontier states. Remember the Rhode Island rebellion in 1844 which arose in an attempt to secure the ballot to the propertiless. The result of this long struggle is that the American workers attach a false value to the ballot and forget its real value. They seem to think tyranny rests more softly and robbery is less objectionable, if they have a vote. The ballot itself, to them, is meat and balm. They do not realize that the ballot is merely an instrument with which the majority might establish correct economic relations, and that unless the ballot is put to that use it is as valueless as a violin which is not used to create music.

The Filipinos, innocent of any long struggle for the ballot, are not caught by the American political game of having two tickets put up by their capitalist masters, that they may cast their ballots, and take their choice. Wise in their simplicity, they spurn what the American working class are mystified by. Wise are the workers of Russia also who refuse to take part in an election under rules so revised and shaped that the Duma is sure to support the throne—wise they are to refuse to take part, as the Americans do, in sanctioning their own subjection. Weak, however, were the Russian workers in another respect. Under the previous election laws they twice defeated the Russian aristocracy in the elections of the first and second Dumas; but the mandate of their ballots was set aside—the Dumas were dissolved. Weak were the Russian workers in that they were not industrially organized with the power to enforce the mandate of their ballot.

Wiser than either Russian or Filipino will be the experienced American workers when they have awakened to the folly of voting to enthrone the capitalist class by voting a capitalist ticket; and yet do not deprecate the value of the ballot when cast for the interests of the working class—when cast to overthrow wage slavery and when backed by an industrial organization of the workers determined to take control of industry.

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