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TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

LOOK AT THE OTHER SIDE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A CORRESPONDENT from Eureka, Cal., takes issue with the Socialist Labor Party position on the immigration question and invites us to “look at the other side.”¹ Our correspondent takes a straightforward position, thereby improving the chances for deliberation. He does not seek to blur the issue by the injection of the “Yellow Peril” outcry. He frankly opposes all immigration—whether from England or Japan. He reasons that, if England were to ship to America her surplus labor, the capitalists would be helped at both ends of the line—the relieving of the Labor Market in England would ease up things there for the capitalists, while the same men, coming to America, would have their eyes blinded by better wages, and thereby deaden the revolutionary pulse here. Our correspondent sums up his position well with this sentence: “We can hardly invite worse conditions for our own people, on the plea that we want to relieve suffering at other points. That would be humane impulses with eyes of guidance punched out.”

The abstract philosophic mold in which our correspondent’s argument is cast is to be applauded. Even reforms, much more so revolutionary Movements, have a tendency, if not to degenerate into, at any rate to attract sentimentalism. It is a serious danger that ever besets the aspiration after Progress. The heart is apt to run away with the head—“the eyes of guidance to be punched out” by the humane impulse, as our correspondent felicitously puts it. Our correspondent is not seized with the ailment. He understands that a swimmer, who would save a drowning non-swimmer, would be “punching out his eyes of guidance” were he not to look out for himself while at his humane endeavor—the drowning non-swimmer would otherwise drag him down with him. Upon this principle of conduct our

¹ [Appended at page 5, below.—R.B.]

correspondent and the S.L.P. are at one—no real benefit can accrue to our fellow-proletarians abroad, and positive injury would result to us in America, if an unguided humane sentiment were to dictate our course. Where our correspondent errs is in the belief that the S.L.P. position on the question of immigration is the dictation of sentiment. Where our correspondent errs is in failing to see that, intent though he be in allowing reason to guide, the fact is that he allows his own eyes of guidance to be darkened by appearances.

The principle,—“Proletarians of all countries, unite!”—is not the product of sentiment. It is the product of the numerous solid facts—theoretical and practical—which must be kept in mind.

First—The seemingly better wages and better conditions the immigrant finds in America do retard the progress of the Revolution. It follows that it would be desirable to avoid such retardation. But it does not follow that, because a thing is desirable, therefore it can be done, or that the attempt must be beneficial. The remedy may prove worse than the disease. This consideration leads to the next ones—

Second—Experience teaches that economic error is fortified by false political tactics. It is important to purge the proletariat from the economic errors that capitalism inoculates them with. These economic errors can only be fortified by an anti-immigration agitation. For one thing, such agitation fatedly rivets the proletariat to some party or other of capitalism. The proletarian, who is induced to strain against immigration, is thereby induced to vote for a party of capitalism that promises to restrict immigration. He will support such a party as the only practical thing to do, seeing that such a party has to-day a chance of election, while a party of Socialism has none. By so much a party of Revolution ham-strings its own and only mission—the agitation, education and organization for the Revolution, clip and clear, without any of the temporary demands which properly belong to the economic Movement, however revolutionary the same may be.

Third—A further evil result of anti-immigration agitation is the fomenting of the sufficiently deep-rooted racial prejudices. For every ounce of benefit that would accrue from a really successful anti-immigration agitation ten pounds, at least, of injury would be done on this head.

Fourth—As a consequence of the Second consideration, anti-immigration agitation must have for its fatedly fatal effect the prolongation of the delusion that—in a country like America, where Capital and Labor face each other without, as in Europe, the lingering remnants of feudalism—there is anything of practical consequence to be squeezed for Labor from the capitalist political burg; and the equally, if not even more fatal delusion, that the emancipation of the proletariat can be the work of a political legislative act—a delusion that breeds the female centipede, the pure and simple “physical fordist,” or “direct actionist,” or autonomous dynamiter, as he variously styles himself.

Fifth—Anti-immigration agitation rivets proletarian ignorance upon the vital fact that, the wage slave being a merchandise, his price is bound to be regulated by a World’s Market—just like leather or wheat.

Sixth—The day of Chinese Walls is gone by. The world is man’s. No attempt to raise barriers against the stream can be of real benefit for the Working Class—the make-believe barriers result beneficially only for the Oscar Strauses, who earn distinction by showing how the barrier can be flanked, and for the Sargents, who serve as the Labor-Mask for the Strauses to have a free hand, and who receive little jobs for their work of treachery.

Accordingly—without enumerating any more reasons, though many more can be cited—even if the agitation be successful it can be successful only in appearance, while in point of fact the success is purchased at too dear a price. It is like swallowing a cat so that she may swallow the mouse that got into a man’s stomach.

The human race is one. This is not sentiment it is a robust fact that none may ignore. In point of biology, environment is the determining factor. Heredity, so-called, is but transmitted environment, that subsequent environment can modify, alter and wipe out. In point of sociology, the best way to help ourselves is to help others, less happily environed than ourselves, by improving their environment. If we do not, they will drag down ours, whether we keep them at home or not. Enlightened selfishness is humanity with guiding eyes unpunished. Thus the Marxian device—“Proletarians of all countries, unite!”—is planted upon biologic truth, and upon sociologic wisdom.

“Unrestricted immigration,” while accompanied with temporary depressing

effects, is the only safe principle—it is a necessary beacon for lasting improvement and social emancipation.

Our correspondent's article will be found elsewhere in this issue.²

CORRESPONDENCE

LOOK AT THE OTHER SIDE!

By Frank Reed, Eureka, Cal.

THE fact was brought out at the Stuttgart Congress (I get my information from the pages of *The People*) that immigration of laborers to any country would have a tendency to intensify the sufferings of the laboring class of that country. No one rose to dispute this declaration, so far as my memory serves me, and even though some delegate may have done so, he could not have succeeded in making it plain that laboring men coming from other countries to this, at this time, do not make it harder for those already here. If other countries can ship all laborers not needed in their own countries over to us, how long will it take those countries to see the necessity of establishing the co-operative commonwealth? John Burns, in the House of Commons, a year or so back, declared that forty thousand pounds expended in sending wage slaves out of the country was more effective than three times the amount expended in any other manner. But John Burns was by this action seeking to ship a problem to other countries, for these countries to solve, that should have been solved in England. From the capitalists' point of view, John Burns was offering a very easy way out of a difficulty, but from the Socialists' point of view it could hardly appear in the light of a good remedy, since the same men left at home might have become agitators and workers for the overthrow of a system that makes helpless wage slaves out of them. In the countries to which they are sent, better wages may blind their eyes to actual conditions, while at the same time this stream of immigration into these other countries must tend to force down the standard of living, and thus add to the sufferings of those already in such country, besides making it harder to establish the co-operative commonwealth.

We can hardly invite worse conditions for our own people, on the plea that we want to relieve suffering at other points. That would be humane impulses with the eyes of guidance punched out. We can hardly suppose that the immigrants coming to our country are all Socialists, or even any very large percentage of them. If they are Socialists, then they are needed more at home than here. If not Socialists, and few of them are, they are more likely to be against us for the first few years after coming here, than for us. One does not need to be a prophet to see that great trouble must come between capital and labor soon in this country, and who knows but what we are inviting men here from other countries to a bloody slaughter in which they are likely to get the worst of it? Look at Rocksprings, Wyoming, and to Vancouver, as well as to many other slaughters and riots. It appears to

me that each nation has a problem of its own on its hands, without John Burns' shipments of more and worse problems. Should this country seek a foreign market for its laborers, those who cry out against Haywood would be the very first men to protest with those other countries to which these wage-slaves were being sent. More capital than truth may grow out of a contention, but the truth is the best in the end.

[This article is answered editorially in this issue, under the same title.—Ed. *The People*.]

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