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EDITORIAL

MOUNT MARX.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“There’s Mount De Leon. From it I am told, the economic organization of the proletariat seems the only real thing that is worth much effort, while the political movement is only a vague shadow. From the plains where I live, things look different. . . . To me it looks as tho’ it were nearly impossible to build up a real revolutionary economic organization UNTIL we have a formidable political organization to protect it from annihilation by the powers of Government.”—ROBERT RIVES LA MONT, in THE WORKER of December 28, 1907.

IN a country called the Labor Movement—a country which, like so many others, has a second or special name, the special name in this instance being Socialism—there rises a broad-based and towering mountain. Its peak is lost in the clouds, its base broad-rooted on earth. The very appearance of the Mount seems symbolic of the quartz philosophy of its composition—the principle that lofty aspirations must have solid bases, and vice versa, that only broad, solid bases can tower into loftiness that will not crumble. The name of the Mount is Marx.

It is not Mount Sinai alone that issued from its electric summit certain commandments, or principles, for man’s guidance. So did Mount Marx also. The difference between the two Mount-utterances is that the former were principles of abstract morals, the second are principles of social mechanics, so to speak, that are essential for the construction of that social order in which the morality of Sinai would have a chance to be something more than an aspiration, and become a reality. The principles uttered by Mount Sinai are pretty well known; those uttered by Mount Marx are not yet so generally diffused. Among these is the principle wrapped up in the message: “Only the economic organization can set on foot the true political party of Labor.”

It has happened to Mount Marx what happened to Mount Sinai. The worship of

the Golden Calf, long imbibed in Egypt by those who lived on the plains, prevented the eyes of their consciences from seeing things in the light of Mount Sinai. The long-nursed habits of thought, acquired in the Egypt of bourgeois society, act like scales before the eyes of the plain-dwellers at the foot of Mount Marx, incapacitating them from perceiving things as they are, and so disturbing their vision that they see things upside down.

Thus it happens that many a dweller on the plains of the Labor Movement devoutly clings to the Golden Calf of bourgeois society concerning the mission or efficacy of the political State. Thus it happens that, despite daily experience, they insist in the theory that political power is a primary essential to the economic organization. Thus it happens that they give the go-by to the question, How do you expect to secure the counting of your ballots without you first organize the physical power that will insure their counting? And thus it happens that, by attaching the greatest importance to ELECTION (a secondary question with the revolutionary ballot), they dwarf the real importance of the revolutionary ballot (the civilized method of preaching a revolution—POLITICAL AGITATION), and by such grotesque, anti-Mount Marx presentation of the mission of a political party, promote the wild-eyed “direct actionist” or dynamiter.

Up the slopes of Mount Sinai many dwellers on the plains have tried to climb, but slipped. Up the slopes of Mount Marx we see to-day inspired dwellers on the plain seeking to climb, but somehow slip back again, unable to keep their footing.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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