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ONE CENT.

CORRESPONDENCE

AS TO POLITICS.

I.

By G.F. Spettel, St. Paul, Minn.

IN your answer to Arturo Giovannitti you say “Accordingly, the civilized revolutionary organization proclaims the Right, demands it, argues for it, and willingly submits to the civilized method of polling the votes. And it organizes itself with the requisite physical force in case its defeated adversary should resort to the barbarous way of enforcing his will.”

Now my question is: How is the organization to know when its adversary is defeated? Is there any probability that the political machine that counts the votes will become good or terror-stricken, and honestly count the votes, and thereby proclaiming the defeat of the idle class by the working class?

Yours for success,
Geo. F. Spettel.

[A political movement knows from a thousand and one sources whether its numerical forces are strong or weak. In this city, for instance, Hearst was elected Mayor two years ago. Everybody knows that. The reason he is not in the City Hall to-day is that he was not equipped with the physical force to enforce his victory. The counting out of Hearst deceived nobody.

The above answer is on the supposition that the political movement of Labor would triumph, and the Capitalist Class then attempt the trick played on Hearst. The chances are against such a contingency. The chances are as stated several weeks ago in the answer to Hoffman. Some capitalist outrage on the economic field will precipitate war. In that case the issue will depend upon the degree of integrally industrial organization that the proletariat may find itself in.

If they should find themselves in so weak a degree of integrally industrial

organization as they now are in, or in a stronger one, yet not possessed of the minimum of strength needed for resistance, cohesion and attraction, then the armed force of the capitalist class will mop the earth with them. Then there will be born an "Underground America," as there has long been an "Underground Russia." The handful of revolutionists will be forced into surreptitious propaganda, and the Revolution will have to raise itself above ground by its own bootstraps.

If, however, the proletariat should at such a time, find themselves organized to such a degree of integral industrialism (and the more strongly the better) that sufficient resistance could be offered to the capitalist, and sufficient attraction could be exercised upon the rest and not yet organized workers,—then the proletariat would mop the earth with the capitalist class. It would be able to do so because its industrial form of organization would not only furnish it the required physical force, but would also enable it forthwith to conduct production. But—

But that possibility, or eventuality, is out of all question if the industrial organization were to start upon the theory that there is ACTUAL WAR NOW. If it did, it would be throttled in short order. Only by recognizing the civilized method of peaceful trial of strength, implied in political action, will the proletariat be able to recruit the physical force (industrially organized workers) with the aid of which, under the first supposition, it will be in position to enforce its political triumph; or with the aid of which it may be able, under the second supposition, to meet successfully capitalist brutality.

Thus, in either case, political action is as necessary as industrial organization is indispensable.—ED. THE PEOPLE.]

II.

By O. Eherich, Oakland, Cal.

(January 31, 1907.)

SINCE the controversy as to politics has tapered down to this point, I feel constrained to ask the question of the Editor: "Have the workers in reality the choice left as to effective tactics?"

Granted the validity of the assertion by the Editor, that without open political agitation the working class movement will narrow down to conspiracy, is it not

being driven that way by the tactics of the ruling class? And must not the ruled class adopt the same methods if it wishes to meet and vanquish the opponents? Was it any more or less than a “conspiracy” that the mine-owners resorted to in the war in Colorado? Did it not burst through the thin veneer of constitutionality and brag of it in words? Did not the men in Colorado express their political will in regards to an 8-hour law by a majority vote of 47,000, for a constitutional amendment? If all the laborers in that state had been organized in as sound and solid an organization as the W.F.M., could they not have born the brunt of the battle without the political movement? Could an utterly irresponsible autocratic power in Russia have gone any further after the same amount of provocation? Could these things not happen in any other State than Colorado, after the late Supreme Court decision? Let us not deceive ourselves, but do we really live in a constitutional country or is it only an illusion? The powers in Colorado were only provoked to the extent of being compelled to employ three shifts of men instead of two, yet when they could not starve the men into submission, did they not play their last trump? Could they have done any worse in the face of an existing conspiracy on the part of the miners? Is it not a merit for the W.F.M. to have unmasked the law and order brigands by tearing the mummery of hypocrisy from the faces of the plutes and showing the working class with what kind of an enemy they must reckon? Is there a possibility of emancipation by peaceful methods after these experiences? Will not the ruling class provoke {provoke?} violence if the demands for better conditions of the workers threaten the profits of the former? Has the working class really a choice left as to tactics, or is not the manner of resistance determined by the method of oppression?

Fully realizing the importance of keeping the proletarians from indulging in a headlong reckless, unheeded rush, can the class-conscious workers be trusted enough to learn from past experiences and shape their course accordingly? Have we any choice?

Yours for the revolution,
O. Eherich.

[Boiled down to their substance, the above questions proceed from the error of holding that ACTUAL WAR exists now. In last week’s answer to Kopald the error

was exposed. Eherich himself would recognize his error if he allowed his eyes a wider sweep of the horizon.

It is true that the Capitalist Class has violated the Constitution in the instance of the Colorado men. But that is not evidence enough of the existence of actual war. The rest of us are doing what Haywood was kidnapped for, and yet we are at large. The kidnapping and other outrages had taken place, and yet the convention of the I.W.W. met and worked in peace, although the capitalists aimed at its destruction, and evidently had their agents there to do their bidding.

Of identical nature is the error implied in the question whether the workers should not "adopt the same methods" as the capitalists. In this, as in the instance just touched on above, Eherich just sees one thing, but overlooks other things that are necessary for a correct conclusion. Eherich correctly points out the barbaric methods resorted to by the capitalists. He overlooks another thing that these self-same capitalists resort to, and without which their barbaric methods would not work in the manner they do. That other thing that capitalists resort to is external homage to the ways of civilization, external homage to the Genius of the Age. He who says, the workers should adapt themselves to the methods of capitalism and cites their barbarism may not exclude their external homage to civilization. Adaptation in this instance would consist in a hypocritical posture towards political action, plus preparation for the means of barbarism. Adaptation, accordingly, would reject Eherich's suggested repudiation of political action. The bona fide Movement of Labor may not "adopt" the methods of the Capitalist Class in the class war. The Labor Movement must, on the contrary, place itself upon the highest plane civilization has reached. It must insist upon the enforcement of civilized methods, and it must do so in the way that civilized man does. Civilized man acts equipped with experience. Experience teaches that Right is a toy unless backed by Might; experience teaches also that the Capitalist Class is a brigand class bearing the mask of civilization, and that it is helped in the cheat by the undoubted circumstance that it has been a promoter of civilization. Equipped with this experience and knowledge, the civilized man will take up political action as the only means that, theoretically, promises a peaceful trial of strength; and he will simultaneously organize the integrally industrial Union as the only available and

the all-sufficient Might to enforce the Right that his ballot proclaims.

As to the question, whether or not the capitalist does not now “conspire and (“)act in secret,” and whether the worker should not adopt that method also—that question, partly answered above, deserves special treatment. NO; SECRECY IS THE BANE OF THE UNION GENERALLY; IT WOULD BE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY UNION! The Mahoneys and Shermans wanted secrecy. The widest publicity is essential to safety. Secrecy leaves the majorities in the Unions in ignorance of what happens at Union meetings; secrecy promotes the trade of the police spy, the “agents provocateurs,” those raw-boned “anti-political revolutionists,” like MacParland, in the pay of the capitalist politicians. Left in ignorance of what happens in the Union, the majority of the membership is ever dependent upon private information; the informant may be honorable, he may also be dishonorable; the revolution must not be exposed to trip upon misinformation. On the other hand, the “agent provocateur” will find his occupation gone if publicity is enforced: the blood and thunder ranter, knowing HIS words would be published as coming from HIM will love his neck too well to indulge in crime-promoting declamation. Secrecy is DEATH; publicity, LIFE.

Has the Movement any choice? Certainly it has.—ED. THE PEOPLE.]

III.

By Julius Kiefe.

(February 7, 1907.)

THE S.L.P. members of the I.W.W. always claimed, that political (parliamentary) action is an absolute fluke; except, if it is backed up by economic organization on the lines of the Industrial Workers of the World. They also tell us in word and print, that people, believing in the economic organization to be the sole factor, by using the general strike tactics are just as wrong in their theory as the Socialists from the Socialist party who are of the opinion that the ballot will bring them economic and political liberty. Another argument we hear at present quite often and that is: How could we (non-parliamentary Socialists) organize the workers on general strike tactics without being jailed or hung at present? Indeed very easy to answer. We tell the working

class that the I.W.W. (and that is the reason we belong to it) is a revolutionary economic organization, whose ultimate object will be, that the workers, who are robbed under the capitalist system of exploitation in the production of wealth by not owning the necessary tools to produce commodities for themselves. For this reason the I.W.W. was organized and not like pure and simple unions a la A.F. of L. to get for the workers increase in wages and possibly a shortening of hours.—If the capitalist class fears this proposition so much, that it would not tolerate such an organization, because it trains their members for the Social Revolution, how is it, that it allows a political party such as the S.L.P. or even S.P. to make propaganda for Socialism. In my opinion this looks very funny indeed, or is it perhaps that the capitalist attorneys and the leaders of the different parliamentary Socialist parties have some kind of an agreement to blind the workers if you please, when the day of the social revolution arrives and is declared by the working class themselves by refusing to work any longer for the capitalist parasites? In fact Mr. Iglesias of Spain and also Mr. Vandervelde of Belgium, two of the prominent members of the international political Socialist parties blinded the workers of their respective countries, when they were in conflict several years ago, while the social general strike was tested there. (This information I received by reading a leaflet on the general strike by Walter Arnold about a year ago.) As far as the preamble of the I.W.W. in regards to organizing the workers on the political as well as on the economic field is at least said confusing and should be changed at our next convention to read: The workers should be organized on the economic field to overthrow the economic and the political state of capitalism.

Hoping you will publish this correspondence, I am, yours for the revolution,

Julius Kiefe.

Member of Local 6 (Cinn.), I.W.W.

[Upon a more careful reading of the above the impression that it asked some questions was found to be false. Had a first glance at the communication conveyed the correct impression, it would have been excluded by last week's decision to close the discussion. Kiefe's contribution not only evades the question repeatedly put by *The People* to the total opposers of political action, but it is cast in an unhappy

controversial mold, unhappy because in not a single instance are its premises correct, the whole thing reveals a woeful confusion of facts and rashness in arriving at a conclusion. The promise of an answer having been made last week, the promise will be kept.

When ten years hence—'tis to be hoped sooner—Kiefe, a member of last year's I.W.W. convention may happen to read his above argument, he will feel quite charitable toward those workers, who notwithstanding they have frequently heard his arguments against the A.F. of L. and the capitalist class in general, still keep coming back with reports that prove they still are muddled, still remain tangled in previous misconceptions, still continue stuffed with prejudices, and still have failed to learn the lesson that reckless accusation can only work against the unification of the working class.

If Kiefe can still use the term "parliamentary" action as identical with "political" action in this discussion; if he can still venture to insist that, without political action so as to recognize the civilized method of peaceful trial of strength, the WORKING CLASS (not a handful of men behind closed and barred doors) can organize itself for the revolution, and to insist by simply insisting; if he still does not see the difference between the power that a political body, (a body recognizing the peaceful method of trial of strength) enjoys, by the mere fact of its civilized posture, to force the capitalist class to draw in its horns against it, and the contrary power which a body, that preaches physical force only, does, by the mere fact of its own uncivilized posture, suicidally exert to furnish that same capitalist class a welcome excuse to draw out and sharpen its horns against it; if he still does not see that, and can only consider "funny" the arguments of those who do see, explain, and declare the difference; if he still is so confused on the subject at issue that he perceives not the radical difference between a "strike" and a "general strike"; if he still is so reckless as to repeat, wholly without verification of the charge, such slander against the integrity of Iglesias and Vandervelde, as he hurls at them and insinuates indiscriminately against all other Socialist political parties, is satisfied with merely stating the source from which he borrows his slanderous conclusion, is ready to appear as a swallower of the untested charge of somebody else, and ventures to make such a sequence the basis of his stand;—if notwithstanding his contribution is

dated, as late as February 7, months after the discussion started, and enjoying better opportunities than the average worker, whom he addresses in behalf of the I.W.W., Kiefe himself is found guilty of their foibles, himself comes back with retorts that prove he still is muddled, still remains tangled in previous misconceptions, still continues stuffed with prejudices, and still has failed to learn the lesson that reckless accusation unaccompanied with even a vestige of evidence, can only work against the unification of the working class—if this is thus, Kiefe should not despair of the “dullards.”

Taking up Kiefe’s statements seriatim we shall rapidly run through them:

“Parliamentary” action is not “political” action. With(out) “political action,” true enough, there could be no “parliamentary” action. But the latter need not follow the former. For instance. There was a campaigning and election for delegates to last year’s convention of the I.W.W. Some of the delegates tried to parliamentarize at the convention. Those were the ones who favored compromise with treason and corruption. The revolutionists refused to “parliamentarize.” They stood to their guns. They neither compromised nor bolted, and they triumphed.

Superfluous to heap up further proof that a body that organizes for war only can expect to remain unbattered by the capitalist, from above, or unscuttled by the MacParland “agent provocateurs,” or their kindred the Dumases and Petriellas, from below. The style of argument adopted by the woman who INSISTED against her husband that a knife was a pair of scissors, and who, when finally ducked under water, stuck out her arm, and with her fingers made the motion of scissors, will not stand in the discussions of the labor movement—least of all by folks who evade a direct answer to a pointed, legitimate and fair question.

If the ballot, an acquisition of civilization for peaceful trial of strength, is a concession from the capitalist class, then all other conquests of civilization are concessions, THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE ECONOMICALLY, INCLUDED. If it is “funny” to utilize the concession of political action; it must be side-splitting for any inflexible non-accepter of concessions to start Unions. Consequently, if “funny” is the claim that the capitalist class should “allow a political party such as the S.L.P.” but will not tolerate an organization that repudiates the civilized method of trial of strength, if that claim is “funny,” then roars-provoking must be the hint that the

S.L.P. and all Socialist political bodies indiscriminately are in the pay of the capitalist class.

The organizing for the ordinary strike is no social act; the organizing for the general uprising of the working class is an act of high social significance. The latter is a political act in that its purpose is the remodeling of society. Consequently, though “physical force,” after a fashion, rather than the “ballot,” is the means for the trial of strength in ordinary strikes, civilization does not condemn the Union that organizes for such “physical” demonstration. In the instance of the so-called “general strike” (a most infelicitous and contradictory term in the mouths of those who mean the dispossession of the capitalist class) the union that organizes for that to the tune of “down with political action!” would to-day, in America, tactlessly and uselessly bring down upon itself the condemnation of civilization.

Walter Arnold libeled Iglesias and Vandervelde. As to the latter, *The People* has more than once expressed its opposition to his methods. To suspect his integrity, however one may suspect his judgment, is gratuitous insult. As to Iglesias, the gratuitousness of the insult is still crasser. Spanish conditions are among the most backward. Difficult is there the part of the revolutionist. So difficult that suffering has bred unreasoning rage in many heads and breasts. Not even of these would it be fair to say they “blinded the workers” by “some kind of agreement,” although they have more than once led the workers to useless slaughter—and then themselves escaped over the mountains into France, or over the water to Italy. The charge that Iglesias “blinded the workers” by “some kind of agreement” is an unqualified libel.—ED. THE PEOPLE.]

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