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REPORT

NOTES ON THE STUTTGART CONGRESS.

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IV.

Progress in Self-Reliance.

AT all the previous assemblies of the Int'l Congress, prior to Amsterdam, it was a sort of religious tradition, devoutly observed, to have a different chairman from a different nationality for each meeting. At Amsterdam the first deviation took place progressward, but it was only a slight deviation. The old habit was adhered to, and a different man, each time from a different country, was appointed for each sitting; he, nevertheless, was nominal chairman only. Above him, "in order to preserve continuity," Van Koll, who was of the Holland delegation, and had presided at the first meeting, was continued in actual chairmanship to the end. At Stuttgart a further step, the final one, was taken. The Amsterdam farce of nominal chairmen was discarded, and a chairman elected for the whole Congress. The Congress being in Germany, a German was chosen. The choice fell upon the veteran chairman of German national conventions, Paul Singer. There is more in this change than appears on the surface.

Undoubtedly, part of the reason for the former habit was the desire to allay national sensitivenesses, and to satisfy vanities. Old nativistic suspicions of nation against nation rendered one time desirable a "rotation of presidential honors"; moreover, human nature not being excluded from the Socialist camp, the weakness of self-exhibition crept in. To officiate on the international stage as the presiding officer of an international Socialist gathering, if but for one day, was gratifying to the vainglory of many a delegate. Many a bizarre manifestation of this childishness was noticeable at Zurich, in 1893, and at Amsterdam, in 1904. Without denying the power of these sentiments, they were neither the originators, leastwise the cause, of

the habit of changing presidents. The real cause lay deeper, and was even more discreditable. The practice was a concession to the demagogy of Anarchy.

The Socialist Government has not only to beat its way athwart the opposition of the capitalist class, it also has to disentangle itself from the fallacies that blind hatred for capitalist rule engenders among the unthinking. The child angrily strikes the table against which he bumped his head. The child-mind imputes to the executive head of a nation the evils that the social system inflicts. In my Boston address *Socialism vs. Anarchy*, the subject is treated extensively. As illustrated there by historic development, the day is gone by when a social revolution can be accomplished by the mere removal of the executive. Even the social revolution that ushered in capitalism was beyond that primitive stage. The impending social revolution, that is to usher in Socialism, or the Co-operative Commonwealth, is a whole social cycle still further away. The masses of the people have themselves stepped upon the stage of history, as stars, not “supes” in the performance. No longer is headship the source of social conditions. The center of gravity now rests with the people. Of all this An-archism knows nothing; its child-mind still lives in the past. The farrago of An-archism strikes at headship, unconscious of the fact that headship has changed in function, and that its present and future functions are not inevitable only, but useful and necessary. Co-operation implies organization; organization implies headship. He who says the first must imply the last; he who denies the last must deny the first.

It is the fate of all confusion of thought, or ignorance of facts, that the moment it comes face to face with practical problems it drops its false theory in practice. If the dropping were done absolutely, not much harm would come from the false theory. The fact, however, is that theories, wholly false, are never wholly dropped. The taint remains, and it manifests itself in a mischievous practice. It is so with An-archy. The absurdity, that is, irresponsiveness, of An-archist theory to facts, drives An-archy, the moment it faces practical work, into downright reaction. This curious mental phenomenon is strikingly illustrated in the An-archist practice regarding chairmanship. The leading An-archist intellectuality, so esteemed by An-archists themselves, is Josiah Warren. Warren’s parliamentary practice, extolled by An-archist luminaries, is a valuable contribution on the truth that false radicalism

breeds reaction. Man has experienced that there can be no gathering of men, to transact business, without a chairman. Unity of action, and order to bring that about, is impossible without a chairman. But civilized man—having passed the stage when headship meant mastership, and having reached the stage when mastership resides with the mass—reserves to himself, the mass, all the power necessarily implied in mastership. Accordingly, chairmanship, at a gathering of civilized men does not mean mastership. With the election of a chairman the mass is not stripped of its mastership. If the chairman comports himself in a way that any individual in the mass objects to, the objector can raise a “point of order” and the chairman’s decision is not final. If it runs counter to the objector he can “appeal to the house,” and the “house’s” decision is final. In other words, the “HOUSE” (the mass) is CHIEF. It is so with civilized man. Not so with An-archism. According to Josiah Warren, the decision of the chair on any point of order is final: no appeal is entertainable: the “house” (the mass) has nothing to say. Thus it is seen that An-archy, the moment it comes into practical operation, flies in the face of its own fundamental theory of “an-archy” (no-headship) by electing an “arch” (chairman); and, not satisfied with that, outstrips even capitalist tyranny by making its “arch” (chairman) an autocrat, in short, a dictator, which means REACTION—an inevitable consequence of the natal stain of confusion of thought.

However absurd, that is, irresponsible to social demands, An-archism is, and however glaring its inevitable contradictions, it enjoys a certain fascination—the fascination that usually attaches to demagoguery. When the language of the demagogue is spoken by earnest men, as not infrequently happens with An-archy, it is all the more “taking.” Against the flood-nonsense of Anarchy Socialism was constrained to raise high its dikes. It made one concession, however. It yielded in part to the an-arch, no-headship, clamor. To abolish headship wholly was so impracticable a vagary that the An-archist himself did not indulge in the whim. The whole vagary being out of all question, a portion was conceded. It is no uncommon thing to see Socialist conventions elect a chairman for each session, with the evil result of the confusion that flows from lack of continuity in methods. The evil practice was carried into the International Congresses. It was nothing but a concession to the demagoguery of An-archy.

To yield an inch to reaction on the part of Socialism is to invite disaster. The Int'l Congress of Stuttgart took back the inch yielded. The act denotes that poise that is born of conscious vigor, and conscious ascendancy. It was a gratifying evidence of progress in self-reliance.

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