

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 119.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

SANDGREN LEARNING.

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THE brilliant report from Los Angeles of the meeting held in that city by one of the delegates of the general strike in Sweden, published elsewhere in this issue under the above title,¹ is charming, not only for what it says, but also for the thoughts it suggests.

Three years ago a discussion took place in these columns between adversaries of political action, on the one hand, and the *Daily People*, on the other, upholding the Socialist Labor Party and I.W.W. position regarding the necessity of uniting the workers of the land on the political as well as on the industrial field. That discussion forms the contents of a 78-page pamphlet entitled *As to Politics*, issued two years ago, and that goes thoroughly over the field—pro and con. As appears from that interesting pamphlet, the initiator of the discussion was none other than John Sandgren, the estimable comrade, who, at the time, was in the West, and now has come from Sweden in behalf of the monumental move of the proletariat of his own country. A comparison of the language held by Sandgren three years ago, in the two letters with which he opposed political action, and the language he is now reported to hold shows some progress.

In the letter in which Sandgren initiated the discussion on Politics, and in the sixth letter, with which he returned to the charge, he held that the issue was “the most important one confronting the working class to-day”; that political action “deceived” and “confused” the workers; that the “capitalist class could want no better snap” than to have the workers continue to put faith in political action. Etc., etc. In view whereof, Sandgren not only objected to political action, but initiated a propaganda to tear the workers away from their supposed illusion—hence the discussion that arose in *The People*. To-day, being asked at the Los Angeles meeting

¹ [To be appended.—R.B.]

concerning political action Sandgren's answer was: "As voting was a custom of the people in Sweden and also in America it didn't do any particular harm, and he would consider it time wasted to put up a propaganda to convert them away from the habit."—That is progress. It is considerable progress from the position of three years ago which considered so important the causing of the workers to drop political action that a propaganda was immediately initiated by Sandgren to that end.

Nevertheless, considerable tho' the progress is, there is much more to be made by our esteemed friend, as appears from his statement that "the workers had never gained anything by voting." Such an error of fact, uttered by almost anyone else, at this season, could be dismissed without notice. Coming however from the delegate of the Swedish general strike—coming, in other words, from one whose very mission to America is proof positive of a state of things in Sweden that positively proves the inestimable value of revolutionary political action conducted by the workers—coming from such a source, the statement of such an error gives an idea of how difficult is the unrooting of a rooted prejudgment. It was behind the shield, certainly under cover of the cannonade of the revolutionary propoganda, continuously fired by the Socialist political party of Sweden, with which the Swedish economic movement has been in close connection, that the forces of the latter could be recruited and drilled, and a public opinion molded to make possible the grandiose spectacle of the Swedish General Strike. Without that revolutionary cannonade, long conducted upon the civilized field of political action in Sweden, the spectacle of the General Strike—orderly, systematic, clean, self-restrained—would have been unimaginable.

We join the hope expressed by our Los Angeles correspondent that Sandgren's trip to America will cause him to learn more and more of the Labor Movement. He will then finally disengage himself from the shackles of the notion that political action begins and ends with the casting of the ballot. He will realize that the ballot is preceded by the really constructive force of political action. He will understand that a revolution, whatever difficulties it may encounter when preached on the political field, can overcome these, whereas, if it is preached in negation of the civilized method implied in political action, forthwith strangles itself. Finally—watching the course of the individuals who, once in the I.W.W., renounced political

action, and then forthwith degenerated into slummists, preaching theft and “Harassing,” and displaying the moral lack of self-restraint and the physical cowardice of veiled and unveiled dynamiters—Sandgren’s eyes will then be opened to the fact that the issue of the “ballot” is not one for abstract theory, but one of practical bearings; his eyes will be opened to all that revolutionary political action has done for the workers of Sweden, and to all that political action, hand-in-hand with the economic organization, preserves the Labor or Socialist Movement from.

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Uploaded December 2010

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