

EDITORIAL

THE USES OF POLITICAL ACTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IT is gratifying to be able to pluck from the thorny stalk of the Milwaukee Social Democracy a flower the perfume of which should go far to disinfect the Labor Movement of a certain paralysis-producing microbe that the plutocratic regime breeds, and whose insidious approaches the plutocratic regime facilitates. That microbe is the microbe variously termed “Direct Action Only,” “Physical Force Only,” “Dynamite” veiled and unveiled—Anarchy, in short.

In the course of the strike of the David Adler & Sons Garment Workers in Milwaukee; at the familiar critical point reached by most all strikes when Exploiterdom, being de facto defeated, the scales are suddenly turned in its favor by the interposition of the “Injunction”; and when rumors grew rife that the judicial wing of the David Adler & Sons class was on the point of dropping the mask of neutrality and appearing in its true colors, the engine of Exploiterdom;—at that time and season the Social Democratic Alderman Melms, as reported elsewhere in this issue from Milwaukee,¹ announced: “If any Judge dares serve an injunction on the strikers, it will be his finish as a Judge, for the Socialists will see to it that he shall never again be elected judge.”

This was the right word. It was spoken at the right time. It settled the strike. The employer surrendered.

So long as the classes exist there exists a conflict between them. So long as this conflict lasts the several branches of the political government will necessarily be swayed by whichever class has the superior power. Economic power the proletariat has none. Economic power being in the long run the determining factor, the proletariat is bound, in the long run, to remain under dog,—in the long run, that is to say, until capitalism is overthrown and classes ended. Nevertheless, at periods

¹ [Not included here. To be appended.—R.B.]

and intervals, the proletariat can turn to use that in which it excels the capitalist. That is its numbers. The first field on which to assert this superiority is the field of Political Action. On that field many a skirmish can be won. In the dog eat dog social system of capitalism where class must hit class, the myriad proletarian ballot can at intervals match the myriad capitalist capital.

An ample experience establishes the theory. The Social Democratic Alderman Melms's words and their immediate effect confirm the theory. Political action is a weapon, a useful, an indispensable weapon in the arsenal of the Labor Movement. It is harmful only when held to be the only weapon. Then it is as harmful as that other and twin weapon—physical force, turned into “Physical Force Only.”

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