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EDITORIAL

WHO CAN TELL?

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THE Republican, Democratic and otherwise bourgeois press of this city are growing either very sleepy, or very wide-awake. Which of the two theories explains the silence of that press upon the alleged Spokane “Free Speech Fight,” that the Socialist, party press is trying to raise so much dust about?

The Socialist party being from the start a Disjointed Impossibility, the interests of the International Socialist Movement demanded that the fatal defects of the conglomerate formation should ripen to a head and reveal themselves as fully and speedily as possible. To promote the consummation was an obvious task before the Socialist Labor Party. Now that the leading light of the concern, Mr. A.M. Simons himself, has been discovered to admit his party’s disjointed impossibilism, it will be readily perceived that, a steady policy being excluded by the very spirit and structure of the S.P., it was no difficult matter for the S.L.P. to fulfil the particular task, which consisted in promoting the exposure of the S.P. Indeed, the S.L.P. all along has obviously played upon the S.P. as upon a flute. The chapter on the Amsterdam Resolution in *The Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress* enumerated, as long as five years ago, a number of instances in which the S.L.P. dictated the S.P. policy. Spokane furnishes the latest, perhaps the most striking, instance in point.

In Spokane there were gathered about two years ago in a lodging house a number of men and women from the mass of unemployed who roam the West. These people, although not bearing the remotest semblance of a Union, were organized into a “Local of the I.W.W.” Whatever prospect there was of drilling these raw recruits into useful members in the revolutionary army of the proletariat was speedily destroyed by their organizer, one J.H. Walsh, whose supporters publicly boasted of his having served his term in the Walla Walla penitentiary for theft. The measure of Walsh’s incubatees may be taken and their level gauged by the following

enumeration of authentic facts:

First. Under the name of the “Overalls Brigade” and headed by Walsh, a delegation of the lodging house traveled from Spokane to the Chicago convention of the I.W.W., supporting themselves on the way by begging and stealing.

Second. In Chicago, led by an avowed and feather-brained Anarchist of the usual type from Minneapolis, Axelson by name, who declared: “Show me where political action has accrued to the benefit and where it can benefit the working class,” the “delegation” struck from their Preamble the clause that urged the proletariat to unite upon the political as well as the industrial field.

Third. In Chicago—where they were joined by Mrs. Elizabeth Flynn-Jones of New York, whose husband had inaugurated the convention by, jointly with St. John and Heslewood, slugging a delegate—they were transported with delight when the lady accused Delegate Francis of New York of guilt for having exposed a loafer in the New York organization who peddled a contrivance by which one capitalist could cheat another. When the lady, speaking on this subject, and with characteristic logic, morality and grasp of the Labor Movement, defended the fraud explaining: “Think of it; we want to ‘take and hold’ the whole plant of capitalist production, and shall we play the police spy for the capitalist when a workingman appropriates a few cents from the capitalist’s hoard!” she became from that instant the “Joan of Arc” of the Spokane element, with whom she has since figured.

Fourth. Returned to Spokane, the “delegation” set up a paper of their own—the *Industrial Worker*, which, with admirable frankness, came out for just what its constituents stood. It sneered and jeered at the ballot, which it repudiated as an unclean thing, a “concession of the bourgeois”; it preached physical force, “direct action” only; and, logically enough from its premises, it urged theft as a means of proletarian re-expropriation—Anarchy, in short and at all points.

Fifth. The first “practical work” of the Spokane lodging house organization was to initiate a war against the Employment Agencies, by breaking the windows and otherwise wrecking, not the large Employment Agencies, but, very much to the satisfaction and the profit of these, by wrecking their small fry competitors in the business.

Sixth. This episode over, and there being no more “worlds to conquer,” the

Spokane lodging house concern began to violate the municipal ordinances in the matter of open air speaking; and, instead of making a test case and by orderly methods of procedure seek to improve the ordinances, the concern took to rioting in “direct action” fashion, whereupon the dupes were successively arrested, and finally the ringleaders also; and this performance they called a “Free Speech Fight.”

Even Anarchists, whether of the duper or the duped brand, have rights. But these rights, each of them a conquest of civilization, can not be protected by justifying methods that civilization rejects, and which are born of morals that civilization spurns. The International Socialist Movement repudiates slummery as baneful to the proletariat. Even but to be silent on the Spokane rowdyism would have been disloyalty to the International Socialist Movement. The Spokane rowdyism demanded prompt reprobation. Duty to the proletariat demanded the exposure of the semi-ignorant{,} semi-vicious Spokane manifestation, all the more seeing that the voluble Anarchist phraseology ever is of a nature to entrap the unguarded by captivating their sentiment. Accordingly, the S.L.P. press promptly published the facts, and drew the conclusions that flowed therefrom. In doing so a few periodical and well-directed shots at the Spokane “direct actionists” would have sufficed. The conditions, however, called for more than that. They demanded the killing of two flies with one clap.

When the I.W.W. was originally organized, calling upon the proletariat in the language of International Socialism, to unite upon the political as well as the economic field, the Socialist party viciously assaulted the new body. The S.P. thereby exposed one of its constitutional and fatal defects. Theoretically, now that a body which repudiated the ballot; which insanely sought to gather the workers into an organization for “direct action” by the methods of the Spokane “I.W.W.”; and which, of course, could find no favor with the Socialist Labor Party;—theoretically, under such circumstances, the S.P. was likely to fraternize with the preposterous concern. The matter could not be left to theory. Certainty was necessary. If the S.P. was what all previous symptoms indicated it was, then it was of importance to the International Movement in general, to the Movement in America, in particular, to cause the fact to stand out clearly. An army on the march, and flanked by bushes behind which foes may skulk, throws a few shots in that direction. The shots draw

the enemy's fire and thereby unmask it. Obedient to this principle of military tactics the S.L.P.'s cannonade against the Spokane caricature called "Free Speech Fight" was re-doubled, and made to sweep the whole horizon. The tactics were eminently successful. The S.P. was forced more and more from cover, until it came out in full and unqualified support of the Spokane disgracers of the Labor Movement—its press running over with hysterical whoops for the Spokane slummists; its agencies cataleptically calling "indignation meetings" in their behalf, and, above all, pulling all the underground wires that connect them with the bourgeois press, and which hitherto they have been successfully able to pull in order to boom themselves.

Now, the question with which this article started forces itself upon the mind—

Is the silence of the metropolitan bourgeois press on the Spokane disturbances an evidence that the bourgeois press is asleep, and has forgotten its cue to boom the S.P. and its boomees in the hope of causing the S.L.P. to be blanketed?

Or has the bourgeois press at last awakened to the reality that, at all critical moments, S.P. manoeuvres are dictated by the S.L.P., and, consequently, that to yield to these manoeuvres only redounds in the interest of the S.L.P. and International Socialism?

Which of the two theories is the correct one?

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