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EDITORIAL

A DUTY OF UNIONISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE interesting features of the "[Eighth Explosion—More to Come](#)," published in this issue, are, like the features of the whole serial of Explosions, obvious enough to require no comment. Surely no comment is needed upon a performance that tells so well how like a strange cat in a garret Mr. "A.M. Simons, Editor," must have felt at the conference that was convoked to issue the Chicago Manifesto, or that reveals the seething condition of the Movement so perfectly that the gentleman, one of the signers of the Manifesto, is so quickly constrained to stultify his own signature, take backwater, expose the "Intellectual's" incapacity to grasp the question of Unionism, and seek to straddle. On all such matters the Explosion is clear enough—indeed, a delectable "Explosion."

But apart from all that, the document furnishes an instance of a certain category of duties that a bona fide and serious economic organization will have to buckle to, before progress can be safely made. Seeing that the approach of the convention called to meet in Chicago on the 27th of next June is bringing up for consideration the thousand and one questions connected with so important a matter as the economic organization of the Working Class, the document can be turned to even better use than an "Explosion."

The following passages occur in the document:

"We believe, that its (the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance) unsavory name has been deserved and is not due to its Socialistic character, but to the personal make-up of those in control and the methods which it has pursued."

Again:

"The Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance has never proved itself anything

but a nauseous nuisance in the labor Movement. As a labor organization, it has never been in existence; as a convenient annex to De Leon's work in the Socialist Labor Party it has played a part, and by no means admirable one, in Socialist and trade union discussion."

Here are two bunches of nothing but conclusions. Whether they are scanned from above down, or from below up, or are held diagonally under the light, or the whole document is held up to the light—whichever way the document is handled, not a semblance, or vestige will be found of an allegation of fact upon which the conclusions are supposedly based. There is not an allegation of fact for the conclusion that the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance has "an unsavory name," least of all are some of the persons mentioned to whom the man is "unsavory"; not an allegation of fact appears upon which to draw the conclusion that the "methods" pursued by the Alliance were improper; vainly does one look for the remotest allegation of fact that the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance "has never been in existence" as an economic organization; look as one may, he will fail to detect the least allegation of fact for the alliterative conclusion that the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance was never anything but a "nauseous nuisance," or for the opinion that its part in the Socialist or trade union discussion was "by no means admirable," and least of all are the names of those mentioned upon whom the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance is claimed to have left this nauseating and disagreeable impression.—Not a single allegation of fact: all conclusions floating in the air.

Now, then, it is essential to the freedom of speech that a person be allowed full scope in the drawing of his conclusions: any retrenchment upon that is a retrenchment of free speech; but it is likewise essential to intelligent discussion that the drawer of conclusions furnish his audience with the facts, or allegations of fact, from which he draws his conclusions. By so doing the audience is enabled to do its own thinking; by neglecting that duty the audience is disabled from thinking. When allegations of fact are furnished, the audience can verify them for itself; if it finds them to be false, then it knows what kind of a hair-pin addressed it, and it has by so far been clarified: if it finds the allegations of fact to be true, then it is in a condition to judge for itself whether the conclusions are warranted. To fling about conclusions without first furnishing the allegations of fact on which the conclusions are based is

to assume dictatorial functions, it is a presumption of infallibility. No sane man if he is decent, no decent man if he is sane strikes such a posture. He who does insults his audience, and insults the Cause that he handles.

Whether an individual who indulges in such practices does so because of a mental and moral make-up that disqualifies him from the proprieties of civilized discussion; or whether it is the instincts of a Gompers, perchance, of an “Intellectual” that sway him—whatever the reason, one thing is certain, to wit, that no juncture can be imagined, least of all at critical periods of a Movement, when such practices can be conducive of anything but evil.

Serious questions are now up in the Socialist or Labor Movement; many more will arise; they will keep on arising up to the last moment; and along with them, there will be serious differences of opinion. A strict attention to allegations of fact in discussions is a guarantee of order; the neglect of the observance is an invitation to wrangling and confusion. It is to the interest of the exploiting class to keep the Labor Movement with its hands in its own hair. The recent ribald attitude of the capitalist press of this city, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* included, towards the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance in this body’s dauntless endeavor to shield and save the striking workingmen of the Interborough Company from absolute annihilation by their American Federation of Labor and other national officers, is an instance in point. Individuals there will be plenty, as are to-day cropping up among the “Intellectuals” in the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership party, who, no longer able to buckle their distempered cause within the belt of rule, will allow their thwarted private malevolence to lash them into seconding the capitalist’s interests in creating confusion. Accordingly, it falls within the category of the duties of a healthy and strong economic organization of the Working Class to hold discussers, above all those who presume to teach, to a strict account in the proprieties of discussion, and to take drastic measures against all those who, by slinging about conclusions without furnishing the allegations of fact upon which these are based, throw the apple of discord, and inextricable turmoil into the ranks of Labor.

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REPRINT

EIGHTH EXPLOSION—MORE TO COME.

[untitled editorial, *Socialist International Review*, March 1905]

By A.M. Simons

IN the very excellent survey of French Socialist unity by Comrade La Monte which appears elsewhere in this issue, there is one sentiment expressed with which we wish most emphatically to disagree. This is the proposal for unity with the S.L.P. based on the supposed identity of the proposed industrial organization, the manifesto of which appeared last month [sic], and the Socialist Trades [sic] & Labor Alliance. We have no desire to enter into a detailed discussion of the demerits of the latter organization. We believe, however, that its unsavory name has been deserved and is not due to its socialistic character, but to the personal make-up of those in control and the methods which it has pursued. Nothing would more thoroughly damn the work of the conference which meets in Chicago next June than the prevalence of the idea that it was an attempt to revive the S.T. & L.A. That conference is not called for the purpose of inviting labor men, either in or outside of existing unions, to unite with some already existing organization. It is for the purpose of founding a new industrial organization. Those who have issued the call will be nothing more or less than members of the conference once it has been called to order. The conference is not for the purpose of uniting the A.L.U. to the S.T. & L.A. and then asking the rest of the trade union world to accept the domination of these now in control of these organizations. If this were the purpose there would be no need of such a conference. The A.L.U. has certainly played a valuable part in the trade union movement, but it was because it was felt that it was inadequate for the work before it that the conference was proposed. The S.T. & L.A. has never proved itself anything but a nauseous nuisance in the labor movement. As a labor organization, it has never had any existence; as a convenient annex to De Leon's work in the S.L.P. it has played a part, and by no means an admirable one, in socialist and trade union discussion. Nothing shows the correctness of our position on this point more fully than the eagerness with which every enemy of the proposed industrial organization has circulated the statement, as evolved by the capitalist press, that the object of the Chicago conference was to organize a socialist trade union to fight the existing unions, and that it was to be simply another S.T. & L.A.

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

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