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EDITORIAL

WORD FROM SUGAR PINE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A CORRESPONDENT from Sugar Pine, Cal., describes in this issue of *The People* the struggle for light going on in his region.¹ The argumentative part of the letter—the need of the political, besides the economic action—needs no further discussion in these columns. The recent debate “As to Politics,” since published in pamphlet form, throws upon the subject all the light needed. No sane man if he is honest, would deny the futility of the revolutionary ballot without the backing of the requisite organized physical force. Nor will any sober man imagine possible a military form of physical force organizable by the working class for its emancipation. Good, sober sense, instructed by the knowledge which the facts convey, points to the integrally organized Industrial organization of the working class as the one, the all-powerful and all-sufficient Might that social evolution itself is driving us to. All this is perfectly plain. Equally plain is the other side of the medal—the wrong-headedness of the supposition that the citizen of the Twentieth Century could with impunity place himself outside of the pale of civilization; deny the theoretical possibility of a peaceful solution of the Social Question; repudiate the means to such peaceful solution, to wit, the opportunity afforded by the political field; and begin with an appeal to physical force, “direct action” so-called. Recognizing, on the one hand, the impotence of Right without Might, and on the other the fatalness of exclusive “direct action” agitation, the well balanced element, around which the Revolution is organizing, firmly couples political agitation with economic organization, and utterly repudiates both the freak-fraudulency of the pure and simple political Socialist, and the cart-before-the-horse clamor of the “direct actionist.” All this is fundamental. All the same, the rag-

¹ [To be appended at a later date.—R.B.]

chewing still going on in Sugar Pine has thrown up a statement, which, however fallacious, is useful to examine.

Not all error is barren. Some errors wonderfully help to illumine things. Of this nature is the claim reported from Sugar Pine as set up by the “direct action” advocates—“political parties render impossible the unification of the working class.” The Sugar Pine “direct actionists” err; nevertheless, credit should be given to them for drawing attention to a pregnant fact—a fact that might as well be faced and dealt with promptly. The fact is that the existence of two rival parties of Socialism does to-day balk the path of Labor-unification. The error of these “direct actionists” is not an uncommon one. It consists in defective analysis—“water and arsenic kills, therefore water and arsenic are poison”; “drunkards inhale air while they imbibe rum, therefore air and rum are intoxicants.” The reasoning is obviously false; its falseness results from failure to consider qualities. The “S.P. together with the S.L.P.” unquestionably injects in Labor’s ranks a rancor that disrupts instead of unifying. Analysis reveals the fact that the S.P. is an inoculator of A.F. of Hellism, whereas the very breath of the S.L.P. is I.W.W.-ism. Analysis teaches that, no more than water should be discarded because, together with arsenic, it kills, should the S.L.P. be put under one category with the S.P.—while the former must operate as a disrupter, the latter cannot choose but operate as a uniter. Analysis points to the fact that it is not as a “political party” that the S.P. disrupts, but that it disrupts as an exhalation of the false social conception which lies at the bottom of A.F. of Hellism—the social conception which ignores the revolutionary and permanent mission of Unionism. Analysis, accordingly, points, as the only correct conclusion from the premises, to the conclusion that it is the duty of the I.W.W. to pull by the root from its soil every vestige of A.F. of Hellish conception of Unionism.

That done, the various false political reflexes—Republican protectionism, Democratic free-tradism, S.P. pure and simple political Socialism—will no longer inject into Labor’s camp the rancor-breeding slanders against the S.L.P. that are intended to disrupt the Labor Movement.

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