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EDITORIAL

SOCIALISM AND MCNAMARA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A PHILADELPHIA correspondent writes:—

“I notice the firm stand you are taking for McNamara. Are you not contradicting yourself? McNamara is a craft Union, A.F. of L., labor leader. Your policy all along has been to expose these people as ‘labor lieutenants’ of the capitalist class. What concern is it of Socialism if the capitalists fall out with their ‘labor lieutenants’ and railroad them to jail? To me it looks this way: If McNamara was a ‘labor lieutenant’ the capitalist would not persecute him, he would be one of their own.”

The above may be boiled down into two principles—

First, the relation of capitalist and “labor lieutenant” insures the latter from persecution by the former;

Second, the persecution of a “labor lieutenant” by the capitalist class is an event that should not concern Socialism.

Both principles are baseless.

Daily is the occurrence seen of one capitalist bringing suit against another. These suits are not always purely “civil.” Frequently they have a decidedly criminal flavor. The prosecutions instituted by one capitalist against another capitalist not infrequently land the defendant behind the bars—if he does not previously commit suicide. If none is landed under the gallows tree it is not that the wish to do so failed. In other words—notwithstanding capitalist and capitalist are bound together by closer bonds than capitalist and his “labor lieutenant,” the two are almost daily seen in each other’s hair. If these two actual class brothers can become foes, there is no process of reasoning by which to reach the conclusion that the weaker bonds which bind capitalist and his “labor lieutenant” may not crack—a happened in the instance of Messrs. Gompers, Mitchell and Morrison, on the one hand, and the Bucks Stove and Range Company on the other.

This much as a general proposition; moreover, a Craft Union officer who is a “labor lieutenant” need not be one for the whole capitalist class. He may be the “labor lieutenant” of one particular capitalist, in which case he is hired to operate against some other capitalist. Between the latter capitalist and the former’s “labor lieutenant” there is no bond whatever. The feuds between these two are too numerous to mention. Three-fourths of the prosecutions of Union leaders for “extortion” are instituted by capitalists against “labor lieutenants” in the employ of some competing capitalist.

Whichever way the first principle is considered it will not hold water.

As to our correspondent’s second principle, it proceeds from an error, rather common, of imagining social conditions to be subject to hard and fast rules.

However positive the brand of “labor lieutenant” may attach to a Craft Union leader, he is a member of the commonweal. Socialism is impossible without previous capitalism. This, in a great degree, implies that the path of Socialism, if not wholly blocked, is at least rendered vastly rougher in the absence of the civic and political “liberties” that it is the part-mission of bourgeois rule to introduce and establish. The mission of Socialism is to make Liberty complete. Thus the Socialist Movement must not only proclaim the supplements to Liberty, the requisites to make Liberty complete, it is bound also to be the trusty support of such “liberties” as previous civilization has conquered for the race. Even in the instance of a “labor lieutenant,” aye, even in the instance of a capitalist himself, if civic outrage is perpetrated upon him, the voice of Socialism should be the first, the loudest, the steadiest in his behalf. So far from such an outrage not “concerning Socialism,” it concerns Socialism intimately.

McNamara belongs to a bad “house”—the “house” of the Civic Federationized A.F. of L. As such he is an upholder of the absurd theory of the “Brotherhood of Capital and Labor.” As such the practical effect of his efforts has been in the interest of the capitalist class. That he labored deliberately in that capacity there is no evidence of. There is no evidence of his having reached the Gompers-Mitchell stature in Labor-betrayal. He may have acted in ignorance. He is entitled to the doubt. Nevertheless, even if it were Gompers, or Mitchell himself, a civic outrage perpetrated upon him is a challenge thrown in no one’s teeth more violently than in

the teeth of the Socialist.

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