

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 7, NO. 242.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1907.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## SUPPLEMENTARY

By DANIEL DE LEON

**S**INCE the closing of the discussion “As to Politics” was announced in these columns a correspondent, who prefers not to have his name published, sent in this question:

“I’m no ‘pure and simple political Socialist,’ as you will see; and I am no ‘pure and simple physical forcist,’ as you will also see. I believe with you that political action is necessary. The Labor Movement may not step down from the plane of civilized methods. If it did, none would be better suited than our capitalist masters. I hope I’ve set myself clear on that score. I also believe with you that the ballot is just so much paper thrown away, without the physical force to back it up, or, as you have neatly said, “to enforce the Right that the ballot proclaims.” I’ve set myself clear on that score also, I hope.

“Now, what I want to know is this: Does it follow, as you seem to think, that we must have the I.W.W., I mean an industrial Union, to supplement the ballot? I think not. I think we should concentrate our efforts, instead of dividing them. Why should we divide our efforts, and our money, and our time between a political and an economic organization? I’ll watch the Letter Box.”

The answer merits more thorough than off-hand treatment in the Letter Box. Both the question and the answer will fitly supplement the discussion which closes in this issue with the answers to Rice’s questions.

What our correspondent desires is to avoid a division of energy. A wise desire. Does his plan answer his desire? Evidently he fails to see that it does not. The only interpretation his plan admits of is the organizing of a military, of an armed force to back up the revolutionary ballot. The division of energy is not avoided. It is only transferred to an armed, instead of to an economic organization.

Seeing that, in either case, the evil of divided energies is incurred, and cannot be escaped, the question resolves itself into this—which of the two organizations is

it preferable to divide energies with, the economic or the military?

A military organization implies no one, or two, it implies a number of things. Bombs, explosives, generally, may be left out of the reckoning. They may be of incidental, but not of exclusive use by an organized force.

First of all powder is needed. The best of powder needs bullets and balls to do the business. The best of powder, bullets and balls are useless without guns. Nor are inferior guns of much avail when pitted against the up-to-date guns at the command of the capitalist class. The military organization of the revolutionary proletariat will need the most effective weapons. The question has often been asked from capitalist sources, Where will you get the money from to buy the railroads and the other capitalist plants? The question is silly. No one proposes, nor will there be any occasion, to “buy” those things. Not silly, however, but extremely pertinent, is the question, Where will the proletariat get the billions needed to purchase such a military equipment?

Suppose the billions be forthcoming. Weapons, in the hands of men unskilled in their use, are dangerous, primarily, to those who hold them. Numbers, undrilled in military evolutions, only stand in one another’s way. Where and how could these numbers practice in the use of their arms, and in the military drill? Where and how could they do the two things in secret? In public, of course, it would be out of question.

Suppose finally, that the problem of the billions were solved, and the still more insuperable problem of exercise and drill be overcome. Suppose the military organization of the proletariat took the field and triumphed. And then—it would immediately have to dissolve. Not only will it not have been able to afford the incidental protection that the revolutionary Union could afford to the proletariat while getting ready, but all its implements, all the money that it did cost, all the tricks it will have learned, and the time consumed in learning them, will be absolutely lost. Its swords will have to be turned into pruning hooks, its guns into plough-shares; its knowledge to be unlearned.

How would things stand with the integrally organized Industrial Union?

First, its cost is trifling, positively within reach;

Secondly, every scrap of information it gathers while organizing, is of

permanent value;

Thirdly, it will be able to offer resistance to capitalist encroachments, and thereby to act as a breast-work for its members, while getting ready;

Fourthly, and most significant and determining of all, the day of its triumph will be the beginning of the full exercise of its functions—the administration of the productive forces of the Nation.

The fourth consideration is significant and determining. It is the consideration that Social Evolution points the finger to, dictating the course that the proletariat must take;—dictating its goal;—dictating its methods;—dictating its MEANS. The proletariat, whose economic badge is poverty; the proletariat, whose badge, the first of all revolutionary classes, is economic impotence;—for the benefit of that class, apparently treated so stepmotherly by Social Evolution, Social Evolution has wrought as it has wrought for none other. It has builded the smithy of capitalist Industrial concentration; and, in keeping with the lofty mission of the Working Class to abolish class rule on earth. Social Evolution has gathered ready for the fashioning, not the implements of destruction, but the implements of future peace, withal the most potent weapon to clear the field of the capitalist despot—the INDUSTRIALLY RANKED toilers. The integrally organized Industrial Union is the weapon that Social Evolution places within the grasp of the proletariat as the means for their emancipation.

Division of energy being unavoidable, can there be any doubt what organization should divide the energies of the proletariat with their political organization—the military or the Industrial?

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

Uploaded August 2009

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