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SECOND EDITORIAL

HARMONY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

LAST Sunday, the New York Central Labor Union issued an invitation for “Harmony” to the New York Central Labor Federation.

Is this event a significant and gratifying sign of the times, to be hailed with joy; or is it again a move to be parried off and looked upon with the just suspicion engendered by similar ones in previous years?

It is now about six years since these two organizations, formerly one, split up into their component elements, and have remained at odds.

One element looked upon the conflicts between Labor and Capital as unavoidable; it sought to establish a way of peaceful living between the two; and, proceeding upon that theory, it held that the trade union, i.e., the industrial organization, was sufficient to protect the workers. It did not wholly deny the potency of the ballot; but the “liberty of action” which is justly denied to the worker on the industrial field, and which it there branded as “scabbery,” it insisted in maintaining on the political field. Its units split at the polls, taking sides with whatever political party they saw fit. This element consisted of the Trade Unionists Pure and Simple.

The other element maintained and proved that Capital and Labor are irreconcilable enemies; that a way of peaceful living between the two is an impossibility; that the wage worker is a slave and must continue to be more and more enslaved under capitalism; and that the only solution to the problem is the overthrow of the capitalist system of production and its substitution by the Socialist or Co-operative Commonwealth, wherein the nation’s machinery of production is owned and operated by the whole people for public use and not, as now, for private

profit. It maintained and proved with cumulative evidence that the pure and simple industrial or economic organization of the workers was structurally and radically defective; that “politics” and “wages” were as closely bound together as one’s skin is to one’s body; and that the same sound reason that branded as a “scab” him who worked below union scales, should likewise brand as a scab him who voted any ticket other than that of Labor. This element maintained and proved that the political and the economic action of the working class should go hand in hand; that where it did not, the forces of Labor would be split up; the capitalist class would retain possession of the public powers; the ranks of the workers would be demoralized and corruption would break up {out?} among them. This element consists of the New Trade Unionist or Socialist forces.

More than once since the final separation of these two forces, the call for “Harmony” has issued from the pure and simple camp of the C.L.U. In each instance heretofore, the motives that prompted the call were not those of a ripened experience, but just the reverse, to such an extent that the call for “Harmony” from that quarter has fallen into bad odor. Nevertheless, time can not fail to teach. It is possible that the cumulated experience of the last years, culminating with this year’s mine workers’ and railroad strikes, has had its effect. The pure and simple trade union movement has suffered nothing but reverses, while the New Trade Unionist or Socialist movement has grown steadily apace, until with its 20,000 votes in New York, it is now the largest and most powerful labor organization in the state.

In responding to the call for “Harmony,” the C.L.F. has wisely shut its eyes to its sad experience in the past with similar calls from the C.L.U.; and it has justly calculated upon the effects of the lessons of the times. Whether its expectations were well or falsely founded will soon appear.

At any rate, the movement for emancipation may rest assured that its dignity is safe in the hands of the stalwart band of the C.L.F., which, firmly planted upon the rock of science, has held aloft among the trade organizations the motto:

“No compromise with Capital, either in the shop or at the hustings!”

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

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