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EDITORIAL

UP AGAINST IT.

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THE turmoil raised over the Millerand question in France has hidden under a bushel another vital question, whose active principle is nevertheless a potent factor in the destructive and constructive process now going on there. It is not amiss for us in America to take cognizance thereof.

The Millerand question is a question of principle. It involves nothing short of the application of the vital theory of the class struggle. Once granted that political office, a position in one of the fastnesses of capitalist government, may be accepted by militant Socialism as a gift of the foe, the Socialist Movement is stripped of all virility, even vitality: its principles become lip-service: the doors are opened for corruption. No wonder that such a question becomes the storm-center of discussion, and its settlement is forced into first place in all "order of business" that looks to harmonizing Socialist forces. Nevertheless, pre-eminent as this question is, there is another of first magnitude also, in that, unless it is settled correctly, however correctly the first one is settled, a smash-up is certain to follow. This other important question, that has been latent in the French turmoil is a question of organization.

Representative government is the necessary outcome of numbers, too numerous to meet and intelligently pass upon matters of common concern. From this necessity flow a number of principles and measures that are essential to the preservation of the very representative character of representative government. One of these principles and measures is the bona fides of the bodies represented, and the means to ascertain such bona fides. Conventions are of the nature of representative governmental bodies. Every member of (delegate to) a convention must be truly representative: he must be a condensed impersonation of a fact and not a fiction: he must enjoy equality with all others: and lastly, he must be enabled to establish the fact of the right of his fellows. Not unless a delegate to a body actually represents a bona fide constituency can his vote or voice be representative; not unless he is the representative of such a fact, and not of a fiction, can there be equality in the body;

finally, not without there is some organism with power and facility to inquire and establish these facts can the feeling of equality, without which representative bodies are misnomers, prevail among the gathering. All this comes under the head of "Organization." And this is the latent question that the Socialist Movement of France is up against.

At the late harmony convention in Lyons, the same as at last year's in Wagram Hall, Paris, there turned up shoals of "delegates" who robbed the body of all representative character. In some cases they represented fictitious bodies; in others, the bodies were in existence, but greatly smaller than others with no larger representation; yet, again, in others, the numerical strength was purely fictitious. What self-respecting body could sit alongside of such "delegates"? What body with a Cause to serve, and a Principle at stake could remain in a convention, and thus establish organic unity, under a system that leaves the doors open for the foe to walk in whenever he pleases, dominate the situation and bag the Movement? Surely none.

The looseness observed at last year's Wagram Hall convention in the matter of the admission of delegates, the actual participation of a mob that had evidently been hired for packing purposes, and the obviously corrupt aim of such methods—the upholding of the bankers-backed Millerand—, had for its immediate result the withdrawal of the Parti Ouvrier Français (French S.L.P.). The less clear-sighted but bona fide Socialist organizations that remained, set up, however, the immediate demand for a system and basis of representation that should obviate such evils, and placed the demand as a condition precedent for affiliation. The demand was irrational. It recalls the request to the executioner by the man about to be hanged, not to pull the rope too tight. Looseness of representation was the very noose by the means of which the Millerandists expected to throttle the Socialist Movement of France. To grant the demand would be equivalent to throwing Millerand and his bankers pack over-board; on the other hand, for the bona fide Socialist organizations to waive the point, would be equivalent to keep Millerandism in, or remain perpetually exposed to its re-entry, irrespective of any resolution adopted against it at Lyons. The inevitable occurred: FINAL RUPTURE.

Principle without organization is like steam outside of the boiler. There are minds so constituted who overlook the importance of organizing the steam; they even decry those who think otherwise: twit them with "tyranny," "narrowness," "bossism." No principle is known that did not require organized effort to establish.

WRONG stands flat-footed upon earth, and is organized, thoroughly organized and drilled; RIGHT can never prevail until it comes down from the clouds of ethereal aspirations, and buckles on the armor of terrestrial practical work, and requirements.

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