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CORRESPONDENCE

AS TO POLITICS.

[By V.H. Kopald, New York.]

AT the time comrade Sandgren started the discussion as to politics, I was in complete accord with the Editor. Since, I have gone over to the other side, and I wish to give a few reasons, why.

In actual fact we live now in a state of war, a war of classes. It was always a maxim of war: Do what the enemy does not want you to. The capitalist class let you do all the political agitation you want, but use all obstacles possible, even force and gallows against economic agitation.

No matter what anybody thinks the end of all political agitation must be the ballot; and the ballot and election is one of the principal assets of capitalism. After every election the whole capitalist class is elated, the proletarian is depressed. Naturally so. The sight of even a would-be people's tribune, like Hearst, getting "defeated" by a majority of 75,000 makes comrade Sandgren argue that the capitalists are more numerous than the proletarians, and makes thousands of proletarians think, Socialism is hundreds of years away. It puts at the disposal of the capitalist the unanswerable argument, We'll give in to Socialism, whenever the majority of people want Socialism. As to civilized argument and agitation.

What is "civilized agitation"? Are we in state of war, or not? If we are in state of war, then war is hell and civilization is impossible. We have only one object in view: emancipation of the working class. Civilized agitation between bandits and victims! Nonsense!

With all my means in my power I shall still support *The People* as *The People* is more industrial than political. But I shall support no political party. The little energy I could give to the former before I shall now turn to the I.W.W.

V.H. Kopald.

[The distinguishing feature of this week's contribution against the position of the I.W.W., whose preamble proposes the unification of the working class "on the political as well as on the industrial field;" or the correlative position of the S.L.P., whose literature announces that, without the economic organization the day of the political victory of Socialism would be the day of its defeat, and that, without political action, which places the Social Revolution in America upon the civilized plane of endeavoring to reach a peaceful trial of strength, the emancipation of the workers would be indefinitely postponed, and could then be reached only by wading through a massacre, both the delay and the then assuredly vast amount of bloodshed being brought on and rendered necessary by the workers themselves; in short, the distinguishing feature of this week's contribution against all political action and in favor of physical force only—that distinguishing feature lies in that this week's contribution indulges in no feints. Kopald wastes no time upon the corruption that politics engender; he consumes no space with recitals of the dangers that beset politics; he resorts to no needless quotations concerning the revolutionary character of the Labor movement; he leaves alone all attempts at statistical display; he gives a wide berth to phrases and to controversial finessings;—he says plump and plain what he means. What he means is that there is ACTUAL WAR TO-DAY. If all the previous contributors against politics, and in favor of physical force only had been as clear in their minds upon the thought that was working upon them, then they would have taken less space; they would have saved us much work; and the question—how are the ranks of the I.W.W., of the economic revolutionary army intended to "take and hold" the means of production, etc., to recruit the necessary forces in America for that eventful and final act of the revolution, if the I.W.W. were to start by rejecting the civilized method for settling social disputes, the method of a peaceful trial of strength, offered by political action, and plant itself, instead, upon the principle of physical force only?—this question, put by *The People* at the inception of the discussion, and left unanswered up to date, would not have been put. It would have been unnecessary. The question could be met only in one of two ways—either by answering it straight forwardly, or by pronouncing it preposterous. Kopald is the only contributor who can not be charged with having evaded the question. His contribution amounts to pronouncing the question preposterous. From

his premises he is right. But his premises are wrong.

Of course, if indeed our present state were one of ACTUAL WAR, then a question that proceeds from the premises of there being ACTUAL PEACE, would be preposterous. Of course, if actual war had already broken out, then none but a lunatic would strike the posture of a possible “peaceful trial of strength.” Such a posture would not rest upon the elevation of civilization; it would be a mockery of civilization. Such a posture would rest upon the depths of stupidity. With bullets flying around, and the “dead line” established by pickets, there is nothing left but force. Woe would be to the proletariat of America, woe to the emancipation of the proletariat of (the) world, whose emancipation depends upon that of their American fellow wage slave, if the outbreak of actual war found the working class of America as disorganized as now they are. Were that to happen, then that which *The People* has been warning against, as the inevitable result of a system of organization that started with the rejection of the civilized method of striving for a peaceful trial of strength, which political action alone offers—then, that result would not be questioned by our opponents. The movement of the American working class would find itself dwarfed into a conspiracy; and they could see their actions reflected in the actions of the Russian revolutionists: compelled to move about in disguise, creeping stealthily at night to place bombs in the chimneys of the residents of the American Wittes, the heroines among their women sacrificing their chastity upon the altars of Freedom as the only means to gain access to the soldiery of the Despot class in order to stir them to mutiny, as was done by several heroic Russian revolutionary women in the fortress of Kronstadt. We are confident in the belief that Kopald thanks his stars that actual war is not yet. The statement that the “Capitalist class use all obstacles, even force and gallows against economic agitation” is mere rhetoric. The issue in this discussion can not be settled by rhetoric. Obstacles? yes, many; force? yes, quite often; the gallows? that also, occasionally;—these and other devices does the capitalist class apply against the economic agitation—and it has applied them, though not yet the gallows, against revolutionary political agitation as well. It has done all that in the course of the CLASS WAR. But the “class war,” that socio-economic term, is not ACTUAL WAR.

All reasoning, proceeding from the premises that there is ACTUAL WAR now,

proceeds from incomplete premises; being incomplete the reasoning is immature; such reasoning can not choose but be false in consequence, and, by every operation, multiplying into wider error.

There is no ACTUAL WAR now. The question put by *The People* at the incipience of the discussion stands.

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We rely upon it that the sense of right on the part of our opponents will do us the justice to admit their side has been treated with fairness. The contributors have not been limited in space; their contributions have not been mutilated; the subject has during these months been thoroughly and courteously ventilated; an impartial and thoughtful audience, bent upon ascertaining the best in behalf of our common Cause, will have read and reflected. Further discussion on the subject should now be unnecessary. There must be an end even to the best of things. Moreover, there are imperative calls upon the limited space of the *Weekly People* for other matters.

Accordingly the DISCUSSION is closed with this issue. We say the DISCUSSION. The columns of *The People* will remain open under the head "As to Politics" to any reader who will furnish a direct answer to the question that *The People* has propounded, and which has been repeated above; what that question purports, the discussion has made clear. None but DIRECT ANSWERS will be accepted; such answers, if forthcoming, need occupy but little space. If the question is answerable, the movement is entitled to it. The S.L.P. is not nailed to any special "means;" it is bent upon a "goal." The S.L.P. will hail any "means" that will stand the test of reason and experience, and would give justifiable promise of reaching the goal more swiftly than the means of combined political and economic action, to which the Party now holds.

There still remain unpublished five communications. Four of them—George F. Spettel's of St. Paul, Minn.; O. Eherich's of Oakland, Cal.; Charles Rice's of New York; and Julius Kiefe's of Cincinnati, O.—will be successively published in the course of the next two weeks. With the exception of Kiefe's these communications contain bona fide questions exclusively. Under ordinary circumstances they would have been answered in the Letter Box. It is, however, preferable in this instance to publish the questions themselves. They will appear under the head "As to Politics,"

with the answers attached. Kiefe's communication, while embodying questions, might be justly excluded seeing that it trends on the controversial, and also wanders from the question. Nevertheless its shortness assists in giving it the benefit of being considered as bona fide questions only. It will go in.

The fifth communication, from Goldie Karnoil, St. Louis, Mo., is barred by the decision to close the DISCUSSION. It is a lengthy, eleven-page closely written and merely controversial production, that merely repeats past assertions made by the lady's side of the issue, and that, although it is the last one received, having come in only last week, again evades the question put by *The People*. Phrases like these—"every lost strike is a lesson;" "since our planet revolves through space nothing of lasting value for the working class has ever been accomplished through preaching;" etc., etc.;—are no answer to the question. Of course, every event is a lesson: even the Thaw trial is a lesson. Of course, preaching alone is worthless: "aims" without "organization" to carry them out is, as *The People* has shown before, just so much hot air. Still less are phrases of which the following is a type—"once class-conscious and organized, there is no power on earth to keep the working class from taking over production"—an answer to the question. That is a begging of the question. Finally, and least of all, is the repetition of the statement that the I.W.W. (with its present preamble proclaiming the necessity of working class unity "on the POLITICAL, as well as on the INDUSTRIAL field) is organizing grandly—least of all is that an answer to the question, especially when the "answer" comes from those who wish to remove the political clause from the I.W.W. preamble. It does not follow that because a man, in possession of both his legs, walks steadily, THEREFORE one of his legs being sawed off he will be able to keep from hobbling and falling. Reason dictates an opposite conclusion. The DISCUSSION is closed.—ED. THE PEOPLE.]

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