

EDITORIAL

ONE NAIL DRIVES OUT ANOTHER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

A MILWAUKEE correspondent writes and asks:

“I see in a last week’s copy of the *Daily People* praises bestowed on the Social Democratic Alderman Melms of this city for threatening the judges with decapitation if they dared to issue injunctions against the garment workers who were on strike. I see nothing to admire, to wonder at, or to praise in Melms’ conduct. The Garment Workers are a craft Union, pure and simple. The organization is affiliated with the A.F. of L., and it is run on strict ‘labor dislocating’ principles. It is conducted, through its admission fees and other methods, including ‘contracts,’ upon the ‘Job Trust’ theory of the A.F. of L. It keeps out a lot of men and compels them to remain unorganized, and it has no more sense of international working class solidarity than tom cats of one country have for tom cats of another country. I remember how it was {with} this same Garment Workers who got ahead of all their fellow craft Unions in offering their services to Cleveland when it looked like war with England. As they were then they are now. That the Social Democrat Melms should want to protect such a body looks natural to me. All the Social Democrats at the A.F. of L. convention in St. Louis stood by Gompers, the Big Indian of this sort of Unionism. By shielding the Garment Workers Melms only shielded that ‘Job Trust.’ He did not mean to shield the garment working proletariat, only those in the ‘Job Trust.’ To shield the ‘Job Trust’ is to bolt the doors tighter against the rest of the proletariat. Melms did no more than any other capitalist politician who threatens a Judge with decapitation if he renders decisions that are harmful to such politician’s partner in business. The only difference is that such a politician usually makes his threat in secret, and Melms threatened openly.”

Our correspondent’s point is only half well taken. All he says, down to and exclusive of the last sentence, is correctly “to the point”; the last sentence overthrows “the point.” It is just because Alderman Melms did openly, what is otherwise done secretly in the interest of reaction, that his conduct lends help to the Socialist Movement.

The “Direct Action Only” microbe is as reactionary in its ultimate as the “Job Trust” microbe is in its immediate effects. The usefulness of political action, concealed by the Top-Capitalist, was uncovered by the Alderman. It matters not that his purpose was to protect a “Job Trust,” not the proletariat. His services in the premises were valuable in the mere fact of uncovering. It was an act that is bound to rebound against the “Job Trust” itself. By knocking out “Direct Action Only,” “Job Trustism” eventually knocks out itself. It is a case of one nail driving out another—and itself through the concussion.

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