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EDITORIAL

THE IRREDUCIBLE MINORITY.

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GREAT occasions bring out man's best.

The report, issued by the Albany Insurgent Democrats, of the defeat of the candidacy of William F. Sheehan for United States Senator of this State was such a great occasion. Of course, it was that mainly to the bourgeois elements whom the "insurgent" Democrats typified. Nevertheless, however foreign to the interests of the proletariat were the directly material interests that animated those bourgeois "Insurgents," so true it is that there is no "great occasion" but it gives utterance to some principle of general value, that the instance in question illustrates the point. A certain utterance made by one of the participants in the struggle, Senator Howard R. Bayne of the Richmond-Rockland district, should not be allowed to drop into oblivion.

Said the Senator at the caucus meeting of March 27: "A good deal has been said here to the effect that the majority must rule. In a sense, my fellow Democrats, a majority always does rule. In another sense it never does rule. It is the IRREDUCIBLE MINORITY that rules, that number of men, one or more, that is necessary to make the majority."

Was it merely the stress of the occasion, or was it profound study and keen observation, or was it both combined, that propelled Senator Bayne's generalization? That matters not. Fact is, the generalization is worth keeping in mind.

Economics teach that the price fetched by a commodity in a normal market is the amount of labor-power socially necessary to reproduce the article. Among the causes that economics point out as perturbers of the normality of the market is the insufficient supply, not of the article itself, but of that portion thereof that is produced with no more expenditure of labor-power than is socially necessary. For instance—if the supply of shoes, produced with no more expenditure of labor-power

than is socially necessary, falls at all short of the demand, and the demand can be met only by the supply produced with an expenditure of labor-power in excess of that which improved machinery renders socially necessary, then, in the absence of any other perturbing cause, the market price of the whole supply is determined by the value of that portion of the supply, although a minor fraction thereof, which requires a greater expenditure of labor-power than socially necessary. The minority of shoes necessary to make the majority is, in such an economic contingency, the ruling factor in the price.

A parallel principle asserts itself in sociology.

Majorities rule, as Senator Bayne expressed it. All the same, majorities consist of fractions. All these fractions are necessary to make up the majority. And if, as Senator Bayne well pointed out, a fraction, needed to make up the majority, is “irreducible,” then that fraction, that minority, and not the majority, rules. Weighty is the fact in sociology. It explains revolutions.

If the majority in a Nation enjoyed inherently supreme power, then, revolutions, which ever start with a minority, never could be. On the other hand, if ruling power lay in minorities, then there could be no stability, hence no progress; any and every sporadic, whimsical minority would acquire supremacy; society would present the aspect of a school of tumbling porpoises. When, however, the fractional minority is strong in convictions and planted upon solid facts—then it is “irreducible”—then it colors and affects the conduct of the whole fractional majority, as the nervous conduct of the present bourgeois majority proves itself to be affected by the “irreducible” Socialist minority—then the Star of the Future shines on the brow of the minority, certain to eclipse the Star of the Past on the brow of the majority.

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