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EDITORIAL

A NECESSARY AMENDMENT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON either side of us lies a document—one a morning paper of this city, the other a circular issued by a trades union. The document to the right has an editorial which closes with these words:

“No labor leader is safe who considers harmony between Capital and Labor possible, and who denies the class-struggle character in the struggles of our days. The intellectual error gradually develops into a moral one, and the at first but mistaken labor leader into a traitor.”

What paper may that be from? We do not wish to hold our readers long in suspense. We shall proceed to answer the question; and shall do so by now turning to the document to the left, the circular issued by a Trades Union—Firemen’s Union No. 30 of the Int’l Brewery Workmen. The document opens with this passage:

“The *Volkszeitung* declared itself a short time ago ready to accept a truthful statement on the cause of the disturbances among the brewers, but **THE MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE UNDERSIGNED UNION HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE [it was time!] IN THE SAID PAPER**, since its Editor refused to accept communications from us when it was still time to **PREVENT** the trouble. We were then systematically killed with silence, despite all requests by letters and committees. By a timely interposition on the part of the *Volkszeitung*, there would not be to-day any brewer troubles in New York. But, in **CONSIDERATION OF THE PROMISED ADVERTISEMENTS FROM THE POOL-BREWERIES**, the *Volkszeitung* preferred to remain silent.”

Nor is this the only document of that sort to our left. There are several others whose history may be summed up with the above. It is this:

The labor leaders who run Local No. 1 (New York City) of the Int’l Brewery Workmen’s Union, were convicted at the national convention of the Union, held in

Cincinnati, O., Feb. 1–14 of last year of having sold out to several breweries in the matter of contracts by which their rank and file were betrayed to the employer, and several of the delegates of the Local were expelled from the convention. Being hands-in-glove, like all fakirs are, with the brewery firms concerned, these officers—one of whom at least has amassed a house on his nefarious practices—bearded the national convention of their Union and subsequently their national officers, and cracked the whip over their local rank and file. Not all of these submitted. A strong portion resisted. But they were “disciplined”—fined out of their eye-balls, and driven from work. In this fight in New York, the German labor press was arbiter. According as it suppressed or published the facts, the corruptionists would win out and Labor would be betrayed, or the corruptionists would be beaten and the interests of the working class safeguarded. The *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, the only local German daily that claims to be a labor and a Socialist paper, to boot, LAY LOW. Its Editor, Herman Schleuter, all in a tremor refused to take the protests from the fighting men of Local No. 1, containing an account of and exposing the rascality of their labor fakir officers, on the ground that the Board of Directors of the *Volkszeitung* Corporation had ordered him “to take no further (!!!) part in the controversy,” while the gentleman’s fit associate on the paper, Alexander Jonas, almost dislocated his spine in the snakish contortions that he went through before the protesters in his usual feat of trying to escape one lie by squirming into two. And all that, Why? The passage above quoted gives the answer—because of advertisements from the very brewery bosses concerned—advertisements that no honorable labor and Socialist paper would accept, let alone solicit!

The maxim, quoted at the beginning of this article from the *Volkszeitung* is by the light of the above facts—to here leave unmentioned scores of others where that paper sold out the interests of the working class in consideration of advertisements and subsidies from labor fakirs and from capitalists—obviously needs amendment. It should run this way:

“No labor leader is safe who considers harmony between Capital and Labor possible, and who denies the class struggle character in the struggles of our day. Consequently, and above all, no paper can be considered safe that, being the property of a private corporation, is able and ready to profit by the corrupt

conspiracies of such labor leaders with the capitalist exploiters of labor; or that so completely shuts its eyes to that essential feature of the modern class struggle, the brotherhood of the working class, and the oneness of the plundering class, as to call ‘traitors’ only the Irish or American labor fakirs, but lovingly hob-nob and share the plunder with its own German dittos. With the labor leader, the intellectual error gradually develops into a moral one, and the at first mistaken labor leader into a traitor; with such privately owned paper, however, the rottenness and treason are congenital, and the development is from rottenness to deeper rottenness, from treason to deeper treason.”

Thus amended the maxim will hold water, and will be a pillar of fire by night and of smoke by day.

[N.B.—The brewery documents, including the report of their convention, are in this office for inspection.]

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

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slpns@igc.org