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EDITORIAL

SLUMMERY SELF-CONFESSED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

BORIS REINSTEIN, the National Executive Committeeman of the Socialist Labor Party for the State of New York, has in preparation a pamphlet upon "Slum Tactics in the Revolutionary Movement." The circumstance that suggested the subject to Reinstein was the posture struck by an element who bolted from the I.W.W., kept the old name, ran up the flag of Anarchy, and forthwith earned the name by a series of acts so slummy, such, for instance, as the advocacy of theft as a revolutionary act, that they served to point the moral and adorn the tale of Slummery. And now, before Reinstein's treatise is completed, comes James Wilson, until recently the Editor of the Spokane *Industrial Bulletin*, organ of the so-called I.W.W., with a 12-page Address that furnishes a vast amount of "inside material" to Reinstein's valuable work.

Wilson's Address is prime. He was one of the inner circle of the so-called I.W.W.—"I'm-a-bummery," for short; a storm center in the Spokane "Free Speech Fight"; a "martyr," and all the rest. The Address is in the nature of "State's evidence." It confirms the worst that *The People* has argued of the crew—and more, too.

The jail authorities of Spokane had been denounced by the I'm-a-bummery for cruelty—Wilson proves that all the suffering undergone by the members who were imprisoned was due to the peculation of the "Free Speech Fight" leaders. Wilson, upon this head, speaks of workingmen "who had been starved and afterward neglected by those in charge of the money given for the good of the Union men taking part in the struggle"; he writes of "the brutal neglect of those who should have been their [the imprisoned men's] natural defenders"; he mentions Fred W. Heslewood as "receiving large sums of money ostensibly for the relief and defense of the men in jail, their families and dependents"; and he refers to this act of

Heslewood, whom he calls the “agent of Vincent St. John” as an act of people who “ground our misery into dollars for selfish and foolish purposes”; in confirmation of this conclusion he speaks of “several members having lost their lives and many having lost their health in the struggle.” Wilson goes into further specifications on this head. He estimates the amount of moneys collected by Heslewood “at from \$10,000 to \$15,000”; this notwithstanding, he states in underscored type that, “in many cases, the men who were discharged from jail, although sick and destitute, were refused help, food or clothing”; and, finally, he closes this head with the question: “But what can be said after all this of Heslewood’s brazenly refusing to allow his Union, 222, to audit his books?”

Another head under which Wilson’s Address may be subdivided is that of the “legal fight” for which moneys were called for incessantly. On this head he says that “as to the law end of the affair, it was not and could not have been anything but a farce and a graft of the foulest kind”; he indicates that, in the promotion of the said farce and foul graft, Socialist party papers were subsidized by Heslewood, notably does he specify the *Appeal to Reason*, which he states, was being paid through Bruce Rogers, a “contributing editor” of that paper, “at the rate of \$100 per week. For what? God knows!” Finally, under this head, Wilson gives the interesting information that, having expressed to the Flynn-Jones woman the opinion that the legal fight be discontinued, his suggestion “was received with bitter opposition,” and that St. John “thereupon advertised a fresh strike to take place March 1”—the thing had panned out so well financially, that the beneficiaries hated to let go.

A third head of Wilson’s Address may be called “The Treaty” with the Spokane police, which has been claimed as a great victory.” On this head Wilson says that a committee “called upon the Spokane Chief of Police, the Mayor and the Prosecuting Attorney and stated there never was any intention of calling a strike [renewal of the “Free Speech” riots] on March 1, and that they—the committee—were ready to submit to any terms required by the police unconditionally,” and he adds suggestively that there should be an inquiry “narrowly and broadly into the whole matter of receipts and expenses, and of the final agreement with the Spokane authorities.”

There is a fourth head into which the Address falls, and the peculiar tartness of

which justifies mention of it. The Spokane strike, so-called, was broadly heralded as a “Free Speech Fight.” Those acquainted with the element who conducted the affair know, of course, better. The facts, proving that crew to be everything but apostles of so enlightened a thing as Free Speech were recorded in these columns. Now comes one of the chieftains of that “Free Speech Fight,” James Wilson himself, and states that “free speech is not allowed an I.W.W. [he mean’s the bogus or I’m-a-bummery concern] man while in jail, if it concerns the affairs for which he is actually in jail!” and he certainly illustrates the point with himself as a specimen—he was simply expelled, without a hearing, just so soon as he began to practice free speech upon his pals, the precious New Castle, Pa., *Solidarity* being in the conspiracy to suppress the facts, and float false information.

Of course, James Wilson is sore. He failed to receive his “martyr’s” dividends. Himself a duper, he has fared as would-be dupers usually fare: was himself duped by his fellow dupers—just as each and all of them will successively fare at one another’s hands. For all that, Wilson’s Address is valuable. It will furnish important data for Reinstein’s valuable work—incidentally the Address furnishes one more confirmation of a principle that is taking shape in the Labor or Socialist Movement of America: “Look out for the man or the body that turns against the S.L.P.—such an act, as the rattle of the rattle-snake announces the crawling thing, is an announcement in advance of corrupt schemes, known by the schemers to deserve and certain to receive merited horsewhipping from the S.L.P.”

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