

# THE PEOPLE

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## 'SOLIDARITY'

*By Daniel De Leon*

At the Brussels Labor Congress last year, a delegation of Italian Anarchists begged for admission. The chief argument of its spokesmen was, in substance, that the intelligence of the labor movement in Italy could not be measured by the standard of economic knowledge in such countries as Germany, for instance, where the wage-working masses have had unusual opportunities of studying the social question in its most scientific aspect. In this regard, they said, the Italian proletariat was still in a primitive stage; but although its perceptions might still be dim, its heart was beating in unison with those of its more enlightened brothers, and it only needed to be in touch with the great Socialist international movement which was then represented at Brussels in order to acquire the clearness of views that would make it a valuable addition to the revolutionary forces of Europe. They had not come to disturb the congress, although they might not always agree with what was said in it or done by it, and they hoped that their fraternal embrace would meet with a cordial return.

To the few unknowing ones in the great assemblage this extreme humility, this overflow of fraternity, this promise of good behavior, were very touching. But, in the first place, the fact that there was then and there a delegation of Italian Socialists, representing *bona fide* labor organizations of strength and standing, whereas the Anarchist delegates claimed to represent certain indefinite quantities or vague shadows known in their parlance as "groups", was in itself a denial of the assertion that the ignorance of the Italian proletariat had proved an insuperable obstacle to the dissemination of true Socialist doctrine and to the adoption of Socialist methods; an assertion, by the way, tantamount to a confession that Anarchist doctrine and methods are fit only for ignorant people. Again, those who were acquainted with the history of the movement in Italy—and they were many at Brussels—knew that these very Anarchists had proved the greatest if not the only obstacle to the advance of Socialism in that country; that they were even then opposing

and hampering the Italian Socialists everywhere and at every step; and that their object in seeking recognition at Brussels was merely to derive from their official admission in the international councils of labor a certain prestige, which would give them an additional power for mischief. After a short but powerful speech by Jean Volders, they were thrown out. A few days later they held a meeting, at which they manifested their true meekness and solidarity by declaring that every member of the Congress ought to be shot.

Now comes to New York Dr. Merlino—an Italian Anarchist of the same breed—and undertakes to start a paper, not in the Italian but in the English language, called *Solidarity*. Surely, addressing intelligent American workingmen, in a country where economic developments are of themselves, practically, bringing on Socialism faster even than it can be taught theoretically, Dr. Merlino had a fine opportunity of expounding true Socialist doctrine and advocating true Socialist methods, thereby showing at the same time that the Brussels Congress had grievously wronged the Italian Anarchists in refusing to believe and admit them. But we have carefully perused his sample number, and we have sorrowfully come to the conclusion that if the Italian Anarchists do not teach Socialist doctrine in their own country, it is not because the Italian proletariat is so ignorant that it could not understand them, but because they are, themselves, absolutely ignorant of the fundamental principles of social economy.

That Dr. Merlino has not the least conception of “value”, for instance, and that his confusion of ideas upon the important matter of “exchange” is therefore frequently ludicrous, will sufficiently appear from the following quotations;

“There is a monopoly particularly important, that of *money* and credit. The price of commodities being determined by their relations to the quantity of circulating money, if all other monopolies were abolished, this one would suffice to the capitalist to squeeze the people.” Yet, in Section 7 of his “Synopsis”, or platform (which, by the way, we commend as a wonderful mixture of Socialistic truth and Anarchistic nonsense), he says: “The exchanges will take place directly between the associations, without middlemen, forestallers, commission agents, or speculators. *Money is not needed.*”

Money would not be needed precisely because, as Dr. Merlino at least

supposes, all other monopolies would have been abolished;—which, however, would not be the case under Dr. Merlino’s system of separate associations, as we might readily show. How, then, could the monopoly of something that was not needed “suffice to the capitalist to squeeze the people?”

We have not the space to-day to consider at greater length Dr. Merlino’s manifesto. Should the benefit of doing so become more apparent than it now is, or should his future productions deserve better than this a serious criticism, we would undertake the necessary labor, were it only for the enlightenment of Dr. Merlino himself.

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