

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Recoiling Before His Own Work

President JOHN MCBRIDE of the United Mine Workers is reported to justify his action of agreeing to a ruinous strike “settlement” with the argument: “I know of an instance where five cannons have been trained by the strikers upon a single mine; violence was threatened on all sides.”

To appreciate this “justification,” it must be borne in mind that JOHN MCBRIDE is a “pure and simpler.” His position, like that of GOMPERS and the rest of that school, is that the trade union is all-sufficient to protect and emancipate the workers. He who stands upon that principle invokes violence, trains the cannon. The weapons of the “pure and simple” union are those of physical force exclusively, they are the strike and the boycott. Physical force, in some way or other, must back up these.

But “pure and simpledom” is not only based upon physical force, it urges such and compels its use. The “pure and simpler” denies the unity of the independent economic and the independent political action of the working class. By doing this it causes the working class to enter the political field upon a principle exactly the reverse of that which it adopts on the economic field. On the economic field, it is sought to unite the working class to the end that they, the masses, present a united front against the small minority of the boss class; contrariwise, on the political field, by discouraging the necessity of straightout labor politics, by encouraging the

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notion of “non-partisanism,” the working class is divided against itself, it is driven to rank itself among the various parties of capital; thus one set is led to vote the other down and thus the enemy, who is fought in the shops, is enthroned in public power. With the capitalist class deliberately put into office, with the whole machinery of government placed into its hands, that portion of the working class that allows itself to be misled by the “pure and simplers” is effectually stripped of the weapon of peace—the ballot—in its own defence, and is thrown upon the weapons of physical force.

When JOHN MCBRIDE was startled at the news that the striking miners were training cannons at the mines, he was startled at his own work. None more than he contributed to the training of those cannons, and to the doing of any and all the acts of violence about which he expresses horror.

This horror on the part of JOHN MCBRIDE may or may not be affected.

If affected, he is a corrupt hireling of the capitalist class, a traitor to the workers, and a deliberate misleader of the men who foolishly enough have placed confidence in him.

If not affected, if his horror at “violence” is genuine, then he is an ignorant man, an imbecile, as fit to be at the head of a large labor organization, as a land lubber would be at the helm of a Cunarder.

In either case he is mischievous. Away with him!

The People, Vol. IV, No. 14, Sunday, July 1, 1894

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
Official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.*

Uploaded November 2002