

EDITORIAL

REDUNDANT PROHIBITIONISM?

By DANIEL DE LEON

AMONG the planks of the Prohibition platform is one demanding “the abolition of child labor.” There are no strings to the demand. No qualifications that the abolition shall be “equitable”, or “constitutional.” The demand is absolute. This is as it should be. It has a sincere ring. For all that, the demand sounds oddly out of place when made to the orchestration that “liquor is the cause of involuntary poverty.”

If liquor is the cause of involuntary poverty, and Prohibitionism is to abolish the liquor traffic, it follows that Prohibitionism will abolish involuntary poverty. In the Prohibitionist Commonwealth involuntary poverty does not, can not exist,—according to Prohibitionism. What sense, then, is there of promising the abolition of child labor, root and branch? It is as if Prohibitionist{s}, after demanding the abolition of liquor, were to add a demand or promise to abolish “brandy ponies”—in either case an utterly redundant, superfluous demand.

Child labor is the result of parental poverty. Unimaginable is the parent who would deprive his child of the pleasures of childhood and of the school opportunities of its age for the sake of earning a pittance. Child labor is the batch and symptom of involuntary poverty. Socialism, for instance, does not promise, as a separate promise, to abolish child labor. The establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth carries with it the wiping out of child labor as completely as health implies the extermination of sores.

How, then, come the pillars of Prohibitionism, in national convention assembled, to promise the abolition of child labor, notwithstanding their general demand covers, according to them, the whole ground?

Can it be that these Prohibitionists are sober enough to entertain a vague suspicion that their scheme will not “cover the ground”?

Or can it be that the gentlemen's masterhood of the English language is not complete enough to protect their utterances from the blot of redundancy?

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