

THE VOICE of the PEOPLE

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Education
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Emancipation



Freedom in
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Democracy

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EDITORIALS

EVERY DAY.

By Covington Hall.

Empires into dust have moulded, kingdoms crumbled to decay,
But, unwearied, mankind marches on to conquest every day;
Over gods, kings, and bishops, over temples, thrones and shrines,
Moves the race forever forward where the star of freedom shines.

Every day a sword is taken from the eunuchs 'round the throne;
Every day some son of science leaves the priesthoods power-shorn;

Every day some God is buried; every day some terror dies;
Every day the soul awakens with a braver pair of eyes.

Every day the right advances; every day old wrongs retreat;
Every day some lie is trampled 'neath an outraged people's feet;

Every day sees superstition growing peaked and pale and small,
Sees another dead Jehovah from the thrones of heaven fall.

Every day our knowledge widens; every day some mind is freed;
Every day truth rings a death knell over some slave-making creed;

Every day love's wings grow stronger; every day sees man arise—
Every day the soul awakens with a clearer pair of eyes.

THE QUESTION OF DECENTRALIZATION.

The Failure of Centralization.

Since the inception the I. W. W. has been centralist, both officially and, with the exception of the western wing, in sentiment also. The general conception has been that the workers should be organized similar to an army—a few powerful officials at the top to think for the mass of workers at the bottom and to force them to act together. A typical application of this idea is the wide spread notion that if one category of workers strike the rest will be forced by the G. E. B. to strike, willy nilly, in support of them.

This militarist conception is so well known and generally accepted that it were a waste of time to further enlarge on it. Our literature fairly reeks with it. Dissenters from it are flatly called "sore heads" and "disrupters." Consistently our constitution gives the G. E. B. power rarely equalled in conservative unions and unknown in other revolutionary unions. And the G. E. B. quick to take advantage of the centralist sentiment, has usurped many other functions, such as the controlling and muzzling of the press, etc., not given it by the constitution.

This centralism, which sharply differentiates the I. W. W. from all other revolutionary unions—which are ALL strictly decentralized, is due to the fact that the bulk of the founders of the I. W. W. were Socialists. Believing in the usual Socialist theory of emancipation by proxy, or representation, they naturally favored centralization. This tendency was strengthened by the mistaken conclusion of early Industrial Unionists that the lack of solidarity between the craft unions was due to their autonomy. Centralization was proposed as the only remedy. Autonomy and solidarity were considered mutually exclusive principles in the labor movement.

Results of Centralization.

However glittering the military analogy may be, the centralist theory is not applicable in the labor movement, as experience has shown. The inherent incompetence of bureaucracies would alone

be sufficient to condemn it. However sincere or able a bureaucracy may be it cannot be competent to direct the worker's fight. This direction must come from the mass. The factors involved in this fight are so many and complex that no bureaucracy can possibly understand and respond to them correctly. Such important factors as the degree of exasperation of the workers, their powers of resistance, etc., are not to be ascertained by statistics or theory—and it is upon statistics and theory that bureaucracies must rely. As a result of bureaucracies habitually either force premature revolts that the workers' psychology won't sustain, or that suppress those long overdue.

The mass of workers, however, being directly exposed to the stimulus of Capitalism, if organized autonomously, react "chemically correct," in response to them though this is often done unconsciously and without theory. Like water seeking a lower level they habitually take the right course—that is, the only course open to them. They revolt when the proper factors are present and then only. This tendency of the workers to act correctly is the sole hope for the revolution. Were it in-existent the labor movement might be indefinitely misled. It is the force that makes for all union progress.

Thus even from an ideal standpoint bureaucracies are inferior to the mass as the directive body. And bureaucracies are by no means ideal. On the contrary, they are universally afflicted with either a deadening conservatism or a genuine parasitism—generally the latter. Either their timid fears or their cupidity leads them to suppress the natural movements of the workers. In the latter, the ordinary instance, they vigorously combat individuals, groups, ideas and movements that conflict with their petty interests as parasites, however detrimental this may be to the interests of the rank and file.

Examine the history of the craft unions for proof. These unions, instead of being autonomous, as commonly supposed, are usually highly centralized. In many of them the local unions, on pain of expulsion, are forbidden to strike or even to communicate with each other except with the permission of the national office. Herein lies the principal cause of their mutual scabbery. Time and again we've seen them join forces and act together only to have their natural solidarity destroyed by a Stone, Lynch, or other meddling bureaucrat. What imports it whether this destructive interference arises from false theories, timidity, or crookedness? In any case it would be impossible without centralization.

Some of the "religious" faithfully believe that the I. W. W. can never fall into the control of cowards or crooks. But what guarantee can they offer that will justify us in further building up a centralized officialdom, when we see other unions cursed by such bureaucracies? And, indeed, with the I. W. W. in control of tried revolutionists has centralization been satisfactory? Let the present widespread agitation answer.

Further Objections.

Another factor against centralization is that in labor unions, where the rank and file are accustomed to blindly obey their officials, strike or other movements are easily demoralized by the bribery or arrest of these officials. But where the spirit of autonomy and independence prevails movements initiate from the mass and are almost impossible to demoralize. Crops of leaders may be bribed or arrested yet the movement goes on.

It may be further added that centralization is flatly at variance with the direct action, self-help or decentralizing tendencies of our times. A growing intelligence is repudiating the long tried and much found wanting "saviors" of all types. The workers are interpreting literally the axiom that the emancipation of the workers must be wrought by the workers themselves. They healthily refuse to be longer dictated to.

Unlike the military general, the labor leader cannot be entrusted with power. The general's problem is comparatively simple. Its factors are understandable. The labor leader's problem is unfathomably complex. The general is held true to his task by powerful patriotic and financial considerations. The labor leader is constantly exposed to great temptation. How this temptation is met is a matter of painful record. Labor traitors are not uncommon. What your boss calls you when he is referring to you while in comment.

To sum up our hasty examination: centralization is a failure because (1) bureaucracies are constitutionally incompetent as compared to the rank and file, (2) the innate conservatism of bureaucracies, bred of a sense of responsibility, prevents vigorous action, (3) centralized strikes or other movements are easily demoralized by the bribing or arresting of its leaders. In short, bureaucracies have neither the intelligence, initiative or honesty to be entrusted with the direction of the worker's war. These qualities reside only in the rank and file. Consequently the most effective type of organization is that which gives the mass the fullest expression. This type will be sketched in the next of this series of articles.

PAUL DUPRES,
Montreal, Can., Sept. 1, 1913.

TO THE "PO' WHITE TRASH."

By Phineas Eastman.

The reason I am addressing you, who do not belong to the Forest and Lumber Workers of the South, as above, is because that is the oft-cited military analogy does not apply to the labor movement with another Boss or cock-roach capitalist. I had a chat with a woods superintendent on the train between Monroe, La. and Shreveport, while returning from Chicago last July. He did not know I was one of the hated I. W. W.'s or he would not have been so frank with me. Among other things he said, "we do not fear the class of cattle in our employ called 'po' white trash," because they are a lot of low down yellow curs who are satisfied with cone pone and sow belly; give them a job at a dollar a day, and then work Hell out of them, and they are satisfied. They are just like their parents were before the Civil War, servile, cringing and cowardly to a degree, so much so that I feel like kicking one every time he comes near me."

He went on to say that what the Bosses feared was the sturdy common stock which formed the back-bone of the Union. He said that such fellows were not allowed on his job a minute after he got a line on them. How do you cowards like this line of talk from the big fat, lazy slob who works Hell out of you and allows you just enough meat and bread to keep you in working condition? Allows you about \$1.40 out of the \$10 a day you earn for him. Fine isn't it? For your wives, mothers and sisters sakes, don't join the Union of your class, because if you do you might help to bring about an EIGHT HOUR DAY in the woods and mills of the United

States, and much higher wages; think what a calamity that would be? instead of that damn dollar alarm clock, or 4 o'clock A. M. whistle, hustling your poor tired wife or mother out of bed before she can see to dress herself, both you and she could get up with the Sun, just as your Boss does now. You would then have time to improve your minds, and go to a moving picture show occasionally without bemoaning the expense, and feeling all broke up the morning after. But I forgot! this Boss I talked to said all you wanted was sow belly and a Hell of a lot of grinding toil, and judging you by your cowardly apathy and devotion to his interests, I guess he has you sized up right; but I'll be damned if I think your women folks are satisfied! When you go home to-night ask them if they are? I'll bet a dollar to a "sinker" that they will tell you a lot, also just what they think of you.

Men, men, wake up! or are you really "yellow curs?" Stand up and demand your rights, by joining the Union and fighting side by side with the brave boys who have made the Boss come through with an increase in wages here and there, a decrease in your living expenses in the "Robbersaries" and Weekly Pay-Day. Do not you know you can, by being MEN and swelling the ranks of the Union, wring more concessions from the grasping Boss? If you are afraid to join the Local near you, write to Jay Smith, Sec.-Treas., Alexandria, La., and he will put you on the Secret Membership Book, where you will find lots of company, because we have had to adopt this means in order to beat the Bosses black-list. Get busy right now, and rise in the estimation of your women folks and your fellow-workers already in the Union, some of whom are toiling right by your side in the mills and woods of the South.

"A faint heart never won a fair lady," and neither will such an organ win a damn thing except kicks, blows and contumely.

Don't be afraid of starving here in the South where you have mild weather for ten months in the year, and worlds of turnip greens, sweet potatoes and peas. Ask your women what they think about your joining the Union? they will tell you to go ahead, and promise to give you their support, and that's a big help too.

ARE YOU PO' WHITE TRASH OR MEN? ANSWER!

CAPITALISTS have no regard even for their own laws when these laws stand between them and the workers' pa envelopes.

THE STANDARD OIL CO., so Wall Street announces, will declare CASH dividends circling around the \$100,000,000 mark this year, or more than 100 per cent on its pre-"dissolution" capitalization.

That whole \$100,000,000 was stolen from the workers in the Oil Fields and Refineries of this Continent and you, the workers, are a bunch of suckers when you don't organize in the ONE BIG UNION and declare it into food, clothing and shelter for yourselves and families.

"YE ARE MANY, THEY ARE FEW!"

THE "AMERICAN LUMBERMAN," commenting on the struggle between the N. I. U. of F. and L. W. and the S. L. O. A., says: "Victory is now conceded to the mill operators." Whoinhell "conceded" it, sonny? NOT US BY A DAMSITE. And if you were as thoroughly posted on the history of the I. W. W. as you allege yourself to be, you would know off-hand that statement was a lie, for victory to the enemy has never been conceded any time anywhere by the I. W. W.

That SKIRMISH in western Louisiana is NOTHING to what's coming when the Lumber Trust's Southern peons next revolt. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, sonny, for some day SOON even John Henery Kirby will be taught that pumpguns cannot abrogate the law of ECONOMIC NECESSITY.

A CHILD'S DEFINITION:—"Monotony is where a person or a company has everything its own way." Nota Bena: There's no monotony in the I. W. W.

ART OF EATING.

"Brain and Brawn" says, Ist, "never eat when the stomach is full of gas." A Bo never will, he throws the gas off trying to eat. 2nd: "Never eat when tired, angry or excited." When in H—I will a Rebel Bo eat? 3rd: "Never eat more than enough to satisfy real hunger." A Bo never will. 4th: "Eat slowly and chew every mouthful thoroughly." A Bo will, if it is not raining and he sees no Bull around the house.

—Los Angeles Shorty.

INDIVIDUALITY.

By Robert G. Ingersoll.

"On every hand are the enemies of individuality and mental freedom. Custom meets us at the cradle and leaves us only at the tomb. Our first questions are answered by ignorance, and our last by superstition. We are pushed and dragged by countless hands along the beaten track, and our entire training can be summed up in the word—SUPPRESSION. Our desire to have a thing or to do a thing is considered as conclusive evidence that we ought not to have it, and ought not to do it. At every turn we run up against cherubim and a flaming sword guarding some entrance to the Eden of our desire. We are allowed to investigate all subjects in which we feel no particular interest, and to express the opinion of the majority with the utmost freedom. We are taught that liberty of speech should never be carried to the extent of contradicting the dead witnesses of a popular superstition. Society offers continual rewards for SELF-BETRAYAL, and they are nearly all earned and claimed, and some are paid. We have all read accounts of Christian gentlemen remarking, when about to be hanged, how much better it would have been for them if they had only followed a mother's advice. But after all, how fortunate it is for the world that the maternal advice has not always been followed. How fortunate for us all that it is somewhat unnatural for a human being to obey. Universal obedience is universal stagnation; disobedience is one of the conditions of progress. Select any age of the world and tell me what would have been the effect of implicit obedience. Suppose the Church had had absolute control of the human mind at any time, would not the words LIBERTY and PROGRESS have been blotted from human speech? In defiance of advice, the world has advanced.

I believe it was Magellan who said, "The Church says the earth is flat; but I have seen its shadow on the moon, and I have more confidence even in a shadow than in the Church." On the prow of his ship were disobedience, defiance, scorn, and SUCCESS.