

EDITORIAL

MARCEL SEMBAT'S INTERPELLATION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

The “Intellectual Kangaroos” of France, beaten in their first game of “Socialist unity,” by the class-conscious Guesdists, have devised a new scheme with the same object in view, but far more comprehensive, it seems, than the “Dreyfus affair.”



MARCEL SEMBAT (1862–1922)

“To save the Republic” is a paying business. They would gladly save it every fortnight. In the “Dreyfus affair” they saved it from “the Army;” they now propose to save it from the Pope. This is the meaning of the Socialist Radical, Marcel Sembat’s interpellation of the Ministry and the Pope, that is creating so much sensation.

To save the working class from Capitalism would be a very different “affair.” This must be deferred to the Greek calends, in accordance with the “new method” and the Kautsky resolution.

Until then, the “Intellectual Kangaroos” must save all they can. They must, for instance, reach the next election with Millerand still at the head of the Ministry of Commerce. By that time, through the immense patronage at his command, they will have organized a vast army of office holders, chiefly drawn from the “bourgeoisie” (or middle class), and the intellectual “declasses.” Of course there will also be in that army a number of “pure and simplers,” fully entitled by their machinations against the class-conscious French Socialist Labor Party to represent the interests and aspirations of the “proletariat” (or wage working class).

In other words “Socialist Unity,” a la Kangaroo, will be an accomplished fact in France. The various “schools,” regardless of their “theoretical differences,” or “abstract tenets,” will march together on this one broad, practical platform: “Save the Republic every day and get what you can out of it.” If the “narrow, sectarian”

Guesdists still refuse to fall in, they will be declared, together with the Pope and “the army,” enemies of the Republic.

In fact, by that time—such is the fond hope—the French Socialist Labor Party will hardly be worth noticing. There will not, it is expected, be much or many left of them. The wage-workers, from among whom they must recruit their adherents, will, it is hoped, have lost all class-consciousness. This middle class issue against the Pope and the Catholic congregations—so runs the scheme—will surely carry them away; sidetrack them, indeed beautifully.

For it is essentially a middle-class issue, as every one can see except that “blind, stupid working class,” fit only to be led by “Intellectual Kangaroos” to its damnation. Nor is it a new one by any means, as the Voltairian “bourgeois” of the French Revolution, who first raised it and enriched themselves by it, might testify. True, when the confiscated estates of the church had passed into their thieving hands, they duly apologized for the revolutionary sacrilege by sending their wives to the confessional, their daughters to the convent and their sons to the seminary. And the church, always meek, always forgiving, always absolving, prayed for them. Now, however, the church is rising and the middle class is declining. By degrees, through the patient, steady workings of her Jesuits and Passionists and other congregations, the church is getting back more property and of greater value than she ever possessed, and it all comes from the overmortgaged, overtaxed, overmatched middle class. Great Voltaire! Can this be tolerated?

Well, who ought to care? Surely not the French working people, who possess nothing and who, so long as the present system lasts, can never possess anything. Surely not, at any rate, the class-conscious French Socialist Labor Party who, with the eye of science, clearly sees in the middle class and its intellectual bamboozlers the only remaining barrier to that Social Revolution, by which alone despotism in all its forms—economic, mental, and moral—can be swept away from the face of the earth.

This anti-Pope scheme will fail of its purpose. The French Socialist Labor Party, caught napping in the Dreyfus scheme, is now wide awake.

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