

EDITORIAL

“RAW MATERIAL” AND “ASH-BARREL REFUSE.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE is a side-show episode in the present municipal campaign that will reward attention. Looked at from the surface, it is separate and apart from the campaign, or from politics. Looked at more closely, and ever keeping in mind that economics lie at the root of politics, the side-show will aid in appreciating the local political situation.

The scene of action is the lower East Side, some times called the New York Ghetto. It seems to be a city, if not a world, by itself. It has a number of daily papers of its own, all in the Yiddish jargon. These papers need manual and also intellectual labor, so-called. The manual labor part falls mainly in the hands of compositors; the intellectual labor, so-called, falls into the hands of editors, so-called.

As to the manual part, it is organized into a body named the Hebrew Typographical Union, affiliated with the International Typographical Union. Like master, like man. The Hebrew Typographical Union belongs to the raw material out of which eventually may issue the class-conscious material that will intelligently grapple with the Labor Question, and unitedly make front against the capitalist class, overthrow it, up-root the system of wage-slavery and rear the Socialist Republic. As yet, however, the Hebrew Typographical Union is not the fine woven cloth, it still is raw, the rawest of material.

As to the intellectual labor part, its characteristic may be judged by the recent performance of one of its prominences—prominence at least in point of bone. The gentleman in question went one time under the name of Rombro, his present alias is Philip Kranz. Let's take his perspective. He is a Social Democrat. Three years ago he turned up at the International Socialist Congress of Paris as a delegate of that party, and there he voted for the Millerand resolution, which declared a capitalist

government may be impartial in the struggle between Labor and Capital. Returning to this country and his party, he joined his kind and with them organized a trades union of “intellectuals,” of editors, etc.,—the Amalgamated and Fused Brotherhood of Intellectual Pushers of the Quill—for short, the Journalists’ Union. What sort of intellectual service was rendered to society by this union may be gathered from an article entitled “Political Review” by this Mr. Kranz in the *Jewish World* of last September 13. In it this passage occurs:

“The whole trouble of our city administration came out of the mixing local politics with national. The plague of American politics must be cured, and the best cure is that local politics should be separated from national, and that citizens should not vote the straight party ticket, like a machine, but for reformers in city elections.”

In other words, Mr. Kranz, typical of his fellow Journalist Union men, is an intellectual strumpet. He, claiming to be a Socialist, writes poisonous articles on the source of the evils suffered in cities. That union is made up, not of raw material that may eventually be woven into good cloth, but is made up of the frayed, worn out, rotten stuff that, together with other offal, goes to make up the contents of the Ash-Barrel.

The next step leads to the climax. The Journalists’ Union joins the United Hebrew Trades. In that body is its “allied” trade of the Hebrew Typographical Union. The Journalists’ Union goes on strike. The United Hebrew Trades endorses the strike, and orders sympathetic strikes, whereupon the Hebrew Typographical Union refused to strike in sympathy and is expelled from the United Hebrew Trades.

In refusing to drop their jobs in sympathetic strike with a set of men who sacrifice principle to jobs and are ready to play the strumpet for the capitalists, the Hebrew Typographical Union rose to a height of logic rarely attained. Jobs being the song of the pure and simple union, or Raw Material; jobs being the still shriller song of the Journalist Union, or Ash-Barrel Refuse;—jobs being the aim and object, at the sacrifice of character and decency—as preached and practised by these “intellectuals” themselves—what folly to give up the jobs secured by the very organization whose sole aim is jobs!

Does not this episode, tho' a side-show in the municipal campaign, aid in understanding the row between Republicans and Democrats, aid in appreciating the antics of the Social Democratic clown in this circus, and—last not least—aid in imparting weight and swing to the uplifted Arm and Hammer of the Socialist Labor Party?

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