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EDITORIAL

“BUNCHING HITS.”

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THE *Crisis* of Salt Lake City, Utah, has issued a circular proposing a method by which Socialists should “bunch their hits.” The circular has been sent “to a number of progressive thinkers,” including ourselves, it says. The compliment “fetches us.” We can do no less than yield to the request of expressing our “views on the question under discussion.”

The theory from which the “bunching” scheme proceeds is, in a nut-shell, that the Socialist hits now scatter; they scatter doubly: once in that the hits don’t bunch, and then in that the hits per force fail to draw together the forces that should be bunched. If this be so, Socialist tactics are false, at least seriously defective, and next to a Messiah is he welcome who will point out the error. The whyness of the wherefore of the error, or evil, is an integral part of the theory that points it out. *The Crisis* is explicit in that whyness. It says: “Nine voters in ten want exactly the same things that the most advanced Socialists want.” What keeps them from bunching? The answer is again clear, even underscored: “they do not know what to do NEXT.” The first thing to do, the NEXT, is accordingly, the thing to point out. It is the “crux,” so to say, of the question. That “NEXT” understood, that “NEXT” grasped, the rest is easy sailing. The logic is close, the proposition simple. Having concentrated the reader’s attention upon the abstract NEXTNESS, essential to the final “bunching,” the reader, holding his breath with expectation, hanging by the eye-lids with suspended animation, and soaring into the empyrean with hope to see the so long vexed problem solved at last, is led to the concrete thing to be done NEXT. *The Crisis* realizes that the brilliancy of the sunburst of its discovery may hurt the eye by too sudden a revelation. It therefore does not suddenly draw the curtain from the CONCRETE NEXT, but considerately lifts up the curtain slowly. It first explains that “the ownership of capital is the circumstance that determines our political and social institutions, our laws, our ethics, our development”; it then points to the fact that “power always goes with this ownership”; drawing up the curtain a little higher it announces that “society takes its coloring from the

ownership of capital”; and then, thrusting the curtain wholly and boldly aside, it points to a Municipal Ownership program as the CONCRETE NEXTNESS that will “bunch the hits”—because “OWNERSHIP is the one vital thing; all other things upon which Socialists are inclined to lay stress are incidentals; IT IS TAUTOLOGIC TO SPEAK OF ‘OWNING AND ADMINISTERING’ THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION; OWNERSHIP IS CONTROL.”—Woe is the expectant reader. He has dropped from the empyrean flat upon his face, with eye-lids torn and the breath knocked out of him with sorrow—at least if he is a workingman and has participated in the struggles of his class with the capitalist class. As he lies there, the reasoning that he has just been treated to gallops through his mind and he ruminates between moans—“Municipal ownership means OWNERSHIP by the working class” (he rubs himself on an old sore spot on his head where he was hit by a municipal Policeman during a strike) “then I must have OWNED that club”; after a pause: “Municipal ownership means ADMINISTRATION by the working class” (his eyes assume a distant look) “then the fire hose, which was played on the 16th inst. upon the faces of my fellow wage slaves, the miners of Windber, Pa., on strike for living wages, and which, as the capitalist papers jubilantly report, emitted ‘such a tremendous pressure of water that it really saved the day’—then that municipal fire hose was ADMINISTERED by the working class”; after another pause and several groans: “Municipal ownership means CONTROL by the working class, then state and national ownership must mean the same thing” (he wipes a tear from his eye) “then the State bullet of the militiaman who shot my inoffensive child dead at the Buffalo switchmens’ strike must have been a bullet CONTROLLED by me!”—And he groans and revolves no more, but rising mad as a bull and “bunching” the fingers of his right hand for a “hit,” he looks around shouting: “Where is the nose of that fellow that preaches that Municipal Ownership means ownership, administration and control by the working class!” We hope the justly irate workingman may miss the object of his search—for the sake of that object’s nose.

It is unnecessary to pursue the numerous other contradictions and inconsistencies in the plan of *The Crisis*. They all flow from the central false reasoning, and fall with it. The story is told of an irascible Down East captain, who, having had nothing but head winds on the home trip from Liverpool, swore he would have fair wind on the outward trip. While the ship was being unloaded and then re-loaded along the Boston wharf, the wind steadily veered around until, on the day of departure back to Liverpool, the wind blew plump into Boston Harbor,

plump into the captain’s teeth. The captain bit his lips but sailed, all the same. The first day he tacked to the South-East; the second day, the wind being still adverse and stronger still, he growled in his beard and tacked to the North-East; on the third day things were no better, he growled a little louder and tacked again to the South-East; on the fourth day, however, things being still worse, and the wind blowing dead against, he slammed his cap on the quarter-deck, ordered ship about, and with a big oath declared: “I’ll be _____ if I shan’t have a fair wind, any how!” And he had it. With a fine, spanking breeze upon his quarters he sailed—RIGHT BACK INTO BOSTON HARBOR. Impatient Socialists there be who are cut after the same pattern as that Down East captain. The adverse winds, with which the ship of the Social Revolution is bound to contend, tire them of the journey; they reckon not that, though they tack, yet are they steadily nearing the port of destination; the labor of the contest “gets on the nerves” of their brains, distorts their mental vision; means are transformed into ends; they want a “fair wind”; according to their degree of profanity they swear they will have one, anyhow; and they furnish themselves with it—by sailing right back into the port from which they started, the capitalist system of wage slavery.

No trick will knock out the capitalist class. The hit that will do the turn is the hit bunched of the wage-slave’s class interests exclusively. These class interests dictate that industrial economic organization that will not indirectly, but DIRECTLY place the working class of the land in possession of the machinery of production, and {that} will reflect itself so unquestionably into a political party that that party will never forget its purpose, and for the sake of fair weather, sail right back into the port that it started from. The “bunching” of Labor’s “hits” is being done to perfection by the Industrial Workers of the World. It is bunching the hits, and the men to do the hitting with.

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