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EDITORIAL

AS TO “MURDER.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

A CHARMING New York correspondent, who expresses her unqualified abhorrence for the “Bummery,” and who does not question “their advocacy of theft” and also “of other crimes, such as sabotage,” and who, furthermore admits that “to deny that Direct Action is a repudiation of the ballot is to plead guilty of the thieves’ dishonesty,” goes on to say: “But ‘murder,’ is not such a charge excessive?” Our correspondent advances the theory that, to place the advocacy of “murder” on the list of the “Bummery’s” principles, is to use “a figure of speech that rather tends to throw doubt upon the accuracy of the other charges that the Haywood Anarchists can be justly held accountable for.” Our correspondent’s ground for her reasoning is: “Murder is the deliberate act to slay a person.”

We accept the definition. Grounded upon that definition we have inserted “murder” beside “theft,” “sabotage,” “strike at the ballot box with an axe,” on the list of the “Bummery’s” preachments.

Before us lies a document with the official imprint of the Bummery, that is, the Chicago so-called I.W.W. The document is entitled “I.W.W.—Its History, Structure and Methods.” The document was published in 1911; its author is “Vincent St. John, General Secretary-Treasurer” of the concern.

Under the caption “Struggles of the I.W.W.,” and narrating the part that his organization and the Pennsylvania State Constabulary took in the McKee’s Rocks strike, Mr. St. John says (pp: 20–21)

“Their [the Constabulary’s] advent upon the scene in McKee’s Rocks was marked by the usual campaign of brutality. Finally one of the cossacks killed a striker. The strike committee then served notice upon the commander of the cossacks that for every striker killed or injured by the cossacks the life of a cossack would be exacted in return. And that **THEY WERE NOT AT ALL CONCERNED**

AS TO WHICH COSSACK PAID THE PENALTY, BUT THAT A LIFE FOR A LIFE WOULD BE EXACTED. [The underscoring is ours.] The strikers kept their word. On the next assault by the cossacks, several of the constabulary were killed, and a number wounded. The cossacks were driven from the streets and into the plants of the company." Etc., etc.

The document is not secret. It is extensively circulated. Price 10 cents.

It may be said that this passage is a good sample of Anarch braggadocio, strongly smelling of the agent provocateurs language, especially seeing that the allegations, or boastings, do not tally with the facts. That's true. All the same, the preachment is there.

If a policeman assaults you murderously, who is there who, if with the means at his command, would not defend himself even, if need be, to the point of taking the felon's life. But that is one thing; another thing it is to pick out a policeman, guiltless of the felonious officer's act, and kill him in vengeful retaliation. The former is a justifiable act of self-defence; the latter is murder,—and that is advocated by the literature of the Bummary, along with their other acts of turpitude.

None will deny that there are extenuating circumstances in the case of the starving man who lifts a loaf from the baker's counter; none will fail to absolve of cannibalism the shipwrecked crew who eat up one another; none will impute felony to the Russian in Russia who answers the gallows with a bomb. But to raise the starving man's act to the dignity of a social weapon for Labor's emancipation, is to preach THEFT; to apply to American society the standard of wrecks and of Russia is to preach MURDER.

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