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EDITORIAL

JULES GUESDE ON CO-OPERATIVES.

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ATREAT is offered to the readers of *The People* in the speech [“Co-operatives’ and Socialism”](#) pronounced by [Jules Guesde](#) at this year’s national convention of his party in Paris, and published elsewhere in this issue.

The economics of the speech are clear as crystal, the reasoning cogent. In these days, when the “Co-operative” scheme spooks in many a head in this country, Guesde’s critique is of interest—and it is especially so for us in a country like ours. Over and above the dangers that cluster around the “Co-operative” in France, or Europe in general, the specific circumstance of a fluent population, that is blown into the United States from all the four quarters of the compass, renders the “Co-operative” scheme specifically ticklish and fraught with perils for us.

But there is one passage in Guesde’s speech that is pre-eminently big with sense and warning. It contains so profound an observation that it applies not to “Co-operatives” only. Guesde says:

“The ‘Co-operatives’ may and oftenest do become a diversion, if not an obstacle, to the recruiting and developing of the Socialist Movement—a diversion because, and you can not deny it, when an elite of workingmen put their intelligence into a ‘Co-operative,’ when they carry inside their heads nothing but commercial schemes{,} how to create a custom for it, how to secure its property and development, there is no room left in brains so occupied for the Socialist idea, no more time for the Socialist education of the masses. . . . The ‘Co-operative’ mustard catches easiest those who could render incalculable services to propaganda, but who, hemmed in, confiscated, paralyzed by a necessarily commercial work, become on the contrary dead losses to the struggling proletariat from whom they are torn away.”

Substitute for the “Co-operative” in this sentence the pure and simple Union,

any Union other than the up-to-the-handle revolutionary Union, and the parallel is exact. The identical danger presented by the “Co-operatives” or tearing otherwise valuable elements away from the proletariat is seen latent in the pure and simple Union. Hence the love and affection of the bourgeois for both drawbacks upon the Socialist Movement—the “Co-operative” and the Pure and Simple Union.

Guesde’s estimate of the “Co-operative” is at once a lecture on the absolute necessity of the Union being revolutionary, otherwise it becomes non- if not anti-revolutionary.

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