

EDITORIAL

THE RED FLAG AND THE WHITE AND YELLOW.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE have been introduced in the Massachusetts Legislature two bills that are aimed at the exclusion of the Red Flag from public displays and processions.

The motive behind the bills is partly silly, partly wrong-headed.

It is silly to suppose that the march of Socialism can be arrested, let alone prevented, by the suppression of the Red Flag—the distinctive symbol of the world-encircling movement, whose distinctive color indicates the brotherhood of man, hence, is the eloquently silent demand for Peace on Earth. It is silly, to suppose that any legislative measure, least of all an anti-flag law, will stop Socialism. As well legislate against the rise of tomorrow's sun. Economic evolution, coupled with human intelligence, will take the safety of the Red Flag in its charge.

The move against the Red Flag is, moreover, wrong-headed.

The Red Flag makes no bones of its purpose. Its purpose is the overthrow of the existing Capitalist order of society, and the substitution of the same with the Socialist or Industrial order;—in other words, to do what James Madison long ago prophesied would have to be done, to wit, adjust the national institutions to economic conditions that were bound to change. This is a revolution, no doubt. But the Constitution of the United States, as Madison's words indicate, was too wise to imagine itself of and for all time, as originally framed; and it wisely provided accordingly, through its amendment clause. The Red Flag, the symbol of Revolution though it is, falls within the Nation's organic framework.

It goes without saying that the Socialists of the land will resent the Massachusetts assault upon the Red Flag. In doing so the Socialists take the field not in their

own personal defence only. The assault upon the Red Flag of the Socialist Revolution is at the same time an assault upon the freedom of all other political convictions.

It is not the Red Flag of Socialism alone that is to-day proclaiming Revolution in the land. The White and Yellow Flag of the Ultramontane Papal Polity is doing the same thing. The political cornerstone of the United States is embedded in the principle, promulgated in the Declaration of Independence, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. This principle is denied by the Ultramontane Papal polity; and, in conformity with its views, the Papacy seeks to establish in this land a polity in keeping with its theory, to the effect that the source of power on earth is an infallible human being, at present located in Rome. This certainly is Revolution; a very radical Revolution; nevertheless one which the people of the land have a right to bring about “as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.”

It matters not to the Socialist that the Papal-proposed Revolution in the land is one that Socialism will oppose tooth and nail; it matters not to the Socialist whether the Ultramontane Papal-proposed Revolution, or any other, instead of making for progress, means retrogression. All that matters not to the Socialist. He stands upon the Declaration of Independence. He holds that it is a people’s right to alter or abolish any social system as to them may seem desirable, provided the methods adopted are those of Civilization, and not those of Barbarism. So holding, the Socialist resents all assault upon the freedom of political convictions.

Legislation against the Red Flag savors, accordingly, of treason to the Spirit and the Letter of the organic law of the land; hence, of treason to the American Flag itself, the folds of which protect whatever amendment to the Constitution, whether “Red” or “White and Yellow,” or of whatever other color, the people may constitutionally decide upon.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded November 2014

slpns@slp.org