

The International Socialist Workers and Trade-Union Congress of 1896.

SHALL POLITICIANS BOSS IT?

At a conference of Anarchist-Communists of all nationalities it has been decided to issue the following manifesto.

FELLOW WORKERS—As you are probably aware "The International Socialist Workers' and Trades-Union Congress" meets next year in London. A committee of twelve, consisting of six members elected by the last congress and six appointed by the Parliamentary committee of the Trades-Union congress, has been entrusted with the preliminary arrangements for the congress. This committee has issued invitations to all Trades-Unions and to all Socialist organizations that believe in and advocate political action to participate in the congress. No invitations have been issued to any organization of workers, other than Trades-Union, that is known to object to the principle of political action, and particular care has been taken to make it clear to them that it is intended to exclude them from the congress.

It is well known to you all that there are large numbers of workers in all countries, some of them organized in Trades-Unions, who ignore the principle of political action or object to it altogether. These workers, commonly known as Anarchist-Communists, faithful to the declaration of the International that "the economic emancipation of labor is the great goal to which all other political movements must be subordinated" believe that the introduction of any attempt to conquer political power, and to take possession of the means of government, far from being advantageous or useful to their cause, will only delay the day of emancipation. Experience has taught them the uselessness of voting, and they have found out to their cost that whenever one of their more active spirits, getting tired of the slow work of education, descends into the political arena and mixes up with the people who have made politics a profession, he becomes demoralised and gradually abandons the position of independence he has occupied before. At one time Socialists all the world over were agreed on that point. It is only recently, comparatively speaking, that some of them have taken up the new position of advocating parliamentary action, and, like most apostates, they pursue with undying hatred the men whose constancy to principle reminds them of their change.

The real, perhaps the only, usefulness of these International Congresses lies in the opportunity they provide for the workers of different countries to meet and exchange their views. Forming a section, and by no means an unimportant section, of the working classes we cannot allow another congress to meet without protesting against any attempt to make party capital out of that which should be of benefit to the whole of the Labor world. The spirit of intolerance that we complain of first manifested itself at the Paris Congress of 1889, when the followers of Marx refused to listen to S. Merino or to allow him to move an amendment he had given notice of, and followed this up by his forcible ejection, a course of procedure which led to the secession of the greater number of the Italian and English delegates. It grew to gigantic proportions in the expulsion of all Socialists opposed to political action from the Zurich Congress, except the few who were in possession of Trades-Union credentials. It has now so entirely overpowered the reasoning faculties of the organizers of next year's congress that they refuse to recognize as eligible for

admission any section of the working classes not agreeing with their views on political action.

We have no objection to a Social-Democratic congress as such, or to a congress to which only believers in political action are admitted, provided no attempt be made to claim that such a congress is representative of and speaks in the name of labor. But we object to remain silent and allow a body of political adventurers—members of Parliament, capitalists and manufacturers, journalists, professors, lawyers, shop-keepers, all politically on the make—to take credit to themselves as the only representatives of Labor and to gull the wage-slave of Capital with promises of a better time to come; promises which could never be realized if their tactics were successful, as that success would allow them to live by exploiting the worker. We claim that an International Socialist Workers' Congress should be open to workers of every shade of opinion, and we denounce as treason to the cause of Labor the attempt to exclude the Anarchists for no other reason than that their views differ from those entertained by the people who have made the bossing of these congresses a fine art.

We appeal to your sense of fair play. Only the opponents of political action, as defined by the Social Democrats, are excluded, everybody else is admitted. According to the wording of the invitation the most reactionary workman, even if the proven enemy of his class, together with the employer and exploiter of labor, can sit and vote as a delegate at the congress; we alone, who have surely given sufficient proof of the sincerity of our convictions, the earnestness of our endeavors to alter the conditions of the down-trodden and wretched, are excluded because our presence would spoil the game of the party bosses and endanger their efforts to blind you in the future as they have done your brothers on the Continent in the past.

Fellow Workers, it rests with you to say whether these tactics shall be successful or not. Invitations have been sent to your Unions to take part in the congress and to appoint delegates thereto. We ask you to exercise your influence in your Union to have your delegates instructed to vote for the free admission of all. The final decision, the final responsibility, rests with the congress. The ingenious, if dishonest, attempt of the organizing committee to evade the difficulty by a carefully worded form of invitation will not be allowed to succeed. We intend to knock at the door of the congress and to assert our right to plead the cause of Labor as we understand it. Remember that this attempt to exclude us is only the thin end of the wedge. To-day it is our refusal to be drawn into political action which has brought us under the ban of these would-be politicians who try to boss us all; to-morrow some objection on your part to one or other of their notions may bring their displeasure upon you. If, to-day, you oppose this attempt to stifle our voice, if you take care that your delegates be instructed to vote for free speech and liberty for all, you will strike a blow, which, in the long run, will be beneficial not only to you but to the cause of Labor all the world over.

London, September 1895.