

Torch of Reason

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THURSDAY, JUNE 10, E. M. 297

The Reason.

There is, as there should be, inquiry in regard to the exclusion of persons of certain belief from lecturing on our platform.

We will take freelothers for example and show that our union can not exist and prosper unless we do exclude these contentious elements.

In any organization which is composed of elements directly opposed to each other, the tendency is to finally adopt the ideas of one or the other of these elements. Understand that when the elements are directly opposed i. e., when there is no chance of compromise, one set of ideas must sooner or later predominate and finally completely overthrow the other.

Now although freelotheism is in the minority among people who call themselves liberals, the tendency will always be toward that doctrine on account of the fact that freelothers will willingly associate with those who are opposed to their doctrine while those who are opposed will not remain in an organization made up of such material and will one by one, drop out, leaving the work in the hands of feelovers; thus has many an organization become defunct or been changed from its original purpose.

Now it has become evident that one or the other elements must control the O. S. S. U. in order for it to fulfill its mission and carry on its great educational work.

Do we want our organization to rapidly drift into freelotheism or spiritualism and antagonize the real secularists, or do we want to define our position carefully and build an institution that really stands for the upbuilding of humanity and not for some pet idea or creed?

Those who believe in these other doctrines are not prohibited from organizing and the only opposition they will receive from the O. S. S. U. is that of argument, given in the kindest spirit possible, to show how detrimental we believe these dogmas are to the well-being of our home here on earth.

We would be very foolish not to expect some opposition at first but we believe that all parties concerned will soon see the absurdity of trying to do constructive work, while we hug to ourselves the creatures of our own destruction.

Misrepresented.

The principal free-love organ of Chicago tried to hit us hard last week, but we are pleased to know that nothing they said, that is true, will do us injury. The free-love lady insinuates that our president cannot subscribe to our ethical basis without being a hypocrite and, as near as we can understand the writing, makes out that he either drinks, uses tobacco or practices free-love, but those who know him best, know that Pearl W. Geer practices just what he preaches and that he can stand square on our platform.

Many of our active members use tobacco and some we are sorry to say drink intoxicating liquors occasionally but some of these very workers were the most active in adopting the amendment to our by-laws which debar teachers and lecturers (not members) from the use of these poisons. We hope for the time when none of our members will use them but many who have made the mistake of contracting these bad habits in youth are not yet prepared to quit, and it is a question in some cases whether it would be better to quit or not, but the young who are to come under the institution of our teachers and lecturers should not be led into the same mistakes that others have been, and, as one of our foremost workers, a tobacco user but a good man for all that, said the other day. "When it comes to lecturers and teachers hew right to the line." We do not debar people who have good moral character from joining our ranks and working, even if they do use tobacco.

Neither do we condemn them for we condemn no one for their mistakes; we simply will not grant them a lecturer's license and if Robert G. Ingersoll, Jesus Christ or the Holy Ghost should apply for a license to lecture on our platform they would all be rejected unless they gave good evidence of complete reformation, for Robert, we hear, uses tobacco; Jesus believed in spooks and drank wine too freely and the Holy Ghost was evidently a free-lover. Of course we love these people, especially Mr. Ingersoll, and would give the last

coat we have to hear him lecture, but as to the other gentlemen, we have no positive evidence that they exist and so no apology is necessary.

Modus Operandi.

No one man or set of men know everything and perhaps no one knows this better than those who have the educational part of our work in charge, and it is their hope and aim to soon secure help enough from the liberals of the world to engage specialists who by thorough preparation and experience can do the best work in their particular lines. A very good way to find out if these specialists are the right kind of workers i. e., if they are interested enough in our cause to do good work, is found in their willingness or unwillingness to help get the work started. Nothing tests a person better than work. After the novelty has worn off, one who is not really interested in the principles soon seeks greener pastures and so in the start perhaps it is as well that we have not a large amount of money, for then we would be able to pay good salaries and while we might get as good talent we would not be sure of the faithfulness of the workers in times of financial distress. The first thing was to get our paper started and next is to get our building completed so as to have a permanent home and then as the years go by help will come, for this is the first and only school of the kind in the world and as soon as men who are able and anxious to help our great cause see that the way to help it most is to unite in building educational institutions, there will be no difficulty for the help will come. Friends of truth and right help us to spread the good tidings.

Constructive Work.

Our work here is altogether a new departure. The TORCH OF REASON stands for constructive work. It is cheap. It is small because it is young, but will grow and the work that it represents will grow, for it has been started on the ground and has already a good start in building its foundation. It is somewhat laughable to hear the childish excuses of some who ought to help but who do not realize the importance of the constructive work in comparison with the old selfish tear-down-make-money-and-have-a-blow-out process.

D. M. Bennett's plan was that of organization, very similar to that of ours, but there was one thing that he did not understand and in fact no one could have understood it, for it has been developed since he did his great work, and that is the utter impossibility to successfully organize, into a working organization, all the forces which claim to be liberal. When this great leader started his work, spiritualism was in its infancy and of course was not understood as it is at present. The belief in a future life was not so obnoxious for it was simply the clinging to one of the ideas of orthodoxy and dropping the rest. But now that it has developed into a creed that in some respects seems worse than the orthodox myths, Mr. Bennett would without doubt, be in favor of having these radically different forces form separate organizations. He

says: "Friends of truth and progress let us effect organizations. Let us do this for our own social pleasure, our mental improvement, and to utilize our strength in the community in which we live. If we duly respect ourselves, if we step forward and take the position we ought to occupy, we shall be respected by our fellow men, and the rights and opinions which we hold dear will be strengthened and spread over our fair land. Let us organize."

It matters but little under what name we effect this organization; it may be "Liberal Associations," "Liberal Leagues," "Free Religious Societies," "Free Congregational Societies," "Ethical Societies," "Progressive Societies," "Societies of Humanity," "Scientific Societies," "Moral and Philosophical Societies," or any other cognomen that suits best. It is not so much the name as the purpose and spirit that should attract our attention and enlist our efforts. Let us decide to unite our strength; let us resolve to help each other and our fellow-beings. When six or more persons in one community feel united in this disposition, let an organization be effected.

This may be done in a simple and economical manner. It is not necessary to incur much expense. Regular meetings should be held once a week, or at least once a month. The first, as a general thing, is not too often. If the society feels able, a hall or room may be secured for this purpose, or the school-house may be used, or if no other way, meetings may be held at the residences of the members of the society.

At these meetings let our songs and hymns be sung; let lectures, addresses, exhortations, declamations and recitations be delivered by members and others. If no member of the society wishes to give an address, let good selections be read from our favorite authors, such as Voltaire, Paine, D'Holbach, Volney, Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, Haeckel, Ingersoll, Underwood, Davis, Denton, Tuttle, Proctor, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Draper, Frothingham and many others that might be mentioned. From the productions of these men ample selections may be made that will always be instructive and profitable to listen to, after which the short speeches and social conversations will be in order."

The great disciple of freethought taught that we should have a spirit of liberality towards the opinions of others, and we should never forget this. We should always remember that the orthodox people, the spiritualists, the freelothers and others who have in our opinion made vital mistakes, which have a degenerating effect upon the world, have as much right to think and express their thoughts as we have.

We should never condemn them but meet them with the only weapon worthy of a civilized being and that is reason. Of course it would not be right for us as individuals or as a society to cater to their ideas when we believe them to be making a great mistake, just for the sake of getting their support for it is far more honorable to fail than to succeed by sacrificing principle. But failure is impossible to those who fearlessly champion what to them is truth and right.