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Report of the Work of the Chicago Mexican Liberal Defense League

Voltairine de Cleyre

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About the middle of May, 1911, a few comrades in Chicago, responding to the appeal of the Junta of the Mexican Liberal Party, took up the task of informing themselves as to the underlying causes of the great revolutionary struggle in Mexico, and of spreading that information among others, to the end that they, too, contribute their share in making this mighty effort of a people fruitful in the minds of the enslaved of the world.

The longer we studied developments, the clearer it became that this was a social phenomenon offering the greatest field for genuine Anarchist propaganda that has ever been presented on this continent; for here was an immense number of oppressed people endeavoring to destroy a fundamental wrong, private property in land, not through any sort of governmental scheme, but by direct expropriation.

We, therefore, used every opportunity we could to win a hearing for the voice of the Mexican Liberals, *Regeneracion*, and to support it financially. We have not accomplished wonders,

but we have done something; and it is with the hope of stimulating workers in other cities to do as well as we — and if better, we shall be only too glad — that I submit the following report.

At various picnics, private gatherings, and mass meetings we have sold copies of *Regeneracion*, or distributed freely the unsold copies, to the number of sixteen hundred. We have distributed four thousand copies of the leaflet “The Mexican Revolt” among the unions of this city; five thousand copies of W. C. Owen’s leaflet on the McNamara case, showing that revolutionary action is the only possible cure for the evils under which all civilized countries are suffering. We have sold some two hundred copies of Owen’s pamphlet on the Cause, Progress, Purpose, and Probable Outcome of the Mexican Revolution, and figure on distributing two hundred more during the coming month.

We have given a good many lectures and short talks in the city, at the Scandinavian Liberty League, at I.W.W. Local 85, and the Open Forum. We have held one very successful international meeting, and are now arranging for another on the first of May. Our secretary, Honoré Jaxon, old-time land rebel of the Canadian northwest, visited England from August till March; had an excellent statement of Mexican conditions and the purposes of the revolution printed and distributed by the Standing Orders Committee of the British Trade Unions, beside several excellent interviews in the Manchester Labor Leader and other journals. Returning through Canada, similar interviews were printed in the largest newspapers of Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, and Winnipeg. Mr. Jaxon also lectured before the Trades and Labor Council of the first three cities, explaining the struggle of the Mexican proletariat.

In February, Ludovico Caminita visited the city, speaking on the Revolution in Italian; as the result of his Visit, we came in touch with a few very active and self-sacrificing Spanish speaking comrades, from whose example we almost

unconsciously adopted the habit of taxing ourselves a little weekly for the support of the paper.

I earnestly hope that those who read these lines will feel moved to form little local groups to do the same; no matter how little it is, it is something. And when we consider the uncomplaining poverty to which *Regeneracion's* workers reduce themselves (which may be seen from its weekly financial statements, — and I know no more speaking appeal than those careful accounts giving family men \$3.00 or \$5.00 a week to live upon) for the sake of thundering in the ears of this deaf world the battle-cry “Down with Authority — Land and Liberty,” I really wonder how the mass of those who are sympathetic in idea with libertarian movements can continue to prattle about “art,” “literature,” the latest imported Violinist, and the aesthetic beauty of the concepts of Anarchism! While these men fight the battle, with starvation as companion.

Comrades! We are apparently on the eve of a war of invasion to protect scoundrels in possession of the stolen lands of Mexico, against the revolt of a people who are being exterminated through this iniquity. Have you, you who read this, done anything to stop this crime? At least to register your protest? Have you circulated a paper, a pamphlet, or a leaflet against it? Have you given a dollar to maintain the Word of Revolt?

I know many of you who sit in cafés hours at a time and discuss “Chanticleer”; spend dollars on theater tickets and concerts, and think nothing of expensive suppers. Do you think you are Anarchists? Do you know that your comrades whose very lives are voluntarily thrown in jeopardy, hourly, are living on less than you throw away? And asking no better than to go on doing it, if you will bear your share in spreading the propaganda of Revolt?

The trouble with us all has been that for many years we lived in the clouds of theory, because conditions made it impossible to do much else; and now that the condition for real work is here, we are so theory-rotted that we are helpless to

face it. In the words of the editor of the Chicago Post: "The Anarchists took to kissing games." I who write have been as much to blame as any; let me shake off my blame by stirring you to awaken now. Cease theory-spinning about future society, and deal with what is before us, with what can be accomplished now.

Herewith I give financial statement of money received by me as treasurer of the League, and transmitted to the Junta at Los Angeles:

Collected on Subscription Lists in Chicago....

\$66.06

" " " in Philadelphia.... 9.00

" " " in Rochester.... 9.75

" " " in Buffalo.... 10.00

" " " in St. Louis.... 2.75

" " " in Atlantic City.... 1.00

Donated by three Chicago Arbeiter Ring
Branches.... 8.00

Donated by Bakers Local 237.... 5.00

Sales of Regeneracion.... 41.50

Individual subscriptions.... 7.30

Collections and sales for leaflets and pamphlets....
31.35

Proceeds of meeting.... 20.60

Collections of Group for Regeneracion.... 35.65

Total.... \$247.96

April 1st, 1912, Chicago
Voltairine de Cleyre, Treasurer