

ARTICLE

TIMBOOCTOOISM.

An Instructive Sample of an Interesting Phenomenon.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WE give below a faithful translation, headlines and all, of the article with which, in its issue of Wednesday, the 10th instant, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* broke the news to its dupes of how the card-board structure of its attempt to defraud the Socialist Labor Party of its English organ fell together over the ears of its schemers. The purpose of reproducing this article is no trivial one. It will not merely serve as a justification for the name of “Timbooctoo”, applied to a certain set of people here, so as to indicate their denseness, it will especially acquaint attentive observers with a mental phenomenon found nowhere else.

Here is the article:

“IN THE MATTER OF THE ‘PEOPLE.’”

“THE JUDGE DISMISSES THE SUIT AGAINST ‘THE PEOPLE’ OF THE DE LEONITES.”

“The Socialist Co-op. Publishing Company, after the split on July 10, 1899, started a suit against Kuhn & Co. to prevent the De Leonites from publishing a paper with the name of *The People*. In the suit the following court decision has now been rendered: [Here follows a rather clumsy but, in the main, correct translation of the decision with which our readers are acquainted.]

“This decision, as may be seen, is rendered without regard to the circumstance that, in point of fact, we considered OUR side the real S.L.P., and *The People* was continued in its interest, in consequence whereof—leaving aside everything else—all the reasons given in the decision would speak in our favor. Besides, it seems to us an unjuridic proceeding to simply brush aside a contract, upon which rests completely the whole relation of the party to the Association, and which very plainly determines the question of property, simply with the remark that this contract was obscure. The judgment further shows that the right of the other side to use the name *The People* is founded, among other things, upon the absolutely incorrect statements of its Editor, according to which *The People* was owned and controlled by the S.L.P., while, as a matter of fact, it

was the Socialist Co-operative Publishing Association that exercised these functions. These notices by the then Editor of *OUR People* which, entirely unprovoked, did indeed appear several times in its Letter-Box column, are alone a proof of an intention to bring on the crash that finally did come, and to secure to himself a favorable position, for when that day arrived; and those Letter-Box notices testify at the same time to the extraordinary loyalty of the party members, who, in order to avoid all bickerings, restrained themselves from protesting against such incorrect assertions.

“That policy of abnegation now bears its punishment.

“The judgement will, with great probability, be reversed,—in the event of an appeal.”

Leaving aside a number of minor points that simply reveal the incapacity of these people to think coherently, as for instance the claim that the Association exercised the function of controlling THE PEOPLE, despite the express language of the contract providing for the manner of electing the paper’s Editor, and placing his election in the hands of the S.L.P. as a last resort;—leaving all that aside, the leading feature of the article is the conception it betrays of what the *Volkszeitung* folks consider a political party.

Wherever civilization has reached the franchise stage, a political party is not a thing of air; this is especially so in America to-day where the official ballot prevails as a social institution. Mr. Justice O’Gorman, accordingly, having to establish, as a leading point in the case before him, what body was the Socialist Labor Party, followed a course dictated by common sense, human experience, sound reasoning, and methods of civilization. His search did not take him long. Having found out that, he decided that that body was the owner of THE PEOPLE. This reasoning the *Volkszeitung* condemns; and how? Does it claim that the Socialist Labor Party was not the owner? Oh, no. It tacitly admits that, but it claims that ITS set is the Socialist Labor Party. And upon what line of reasoning? Here is the rub: Because “we (the *Volkszeitung* set) considered our side the real S.L.P.”!!!

In other words, the *Volkszeitung* gentlemen are of the opinion that a few marauders can set themselves up as a political party under the name of one in existence, officially recognized and ruled by set laws, and that by the simple fact of these marauders so doing, THEY are the party, and the rest of society, including the party which is to be defrauded, should submit to what the marauders “consider” themselves to be. This is a complete betrayal of the condition of the think-tank of the Kangaroo, or *Volkszeitung* incubator and incubatee. It demonstrates what we have all along contended, that these specimens are wholly and essentially alien to

our country, and not alien only to its language and institutions, but alien also to elemental principles of civilization that the human race has reached; in other words, that they are intellectually (to say nothing here of their moral and other sides) social misfits, spewed out by their own country.

Of course one laughs at the *Volkszeitung* conception of what jurisprudence and correct juridic decisions should be. But after having yielded to the sense of amusement, it is well in all soberness to place the affair on the files of history. The future historian of the Socialist Movement will thereby eventually be aided in understanding the titanic work of the S.L.P. He will understand that the S.L.P. had to address itself, not only to the sufficiently arduous task of teaching Socialism in the land, but first of all to overcome a mountain-high popular prejudice, peculiar in America only, to all that called themselves Socialists. And he will be aided in understanding the peculiar reason for that prejudice here, to wit, the circumstance that such a set of intellectual and moral misfits as the present *Volkszeitung* gentry were the ones from whose lips the word "Socialism" first fell upon the ear of our workingmen; that such a set of dunder-heads presumed to handle so vital a question, and impudently set themselves as the sole and exclusive people capable of understanding Socialism.

The English speaking workingmen laughed, of course, at the ridiculous spectacle. But they were not amused simply. A sense of contempt came over them. They identified Socialism with the jackanapes who paraded under the name; and they turned their back upon Socialism. Hardly a day passes but the *Volkszeitung* columns furnish material of the nature of the one submitted here. They can not all be translated. Let the one given above suffice.

All hail, July 10, 1899!

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded February 2006