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EDITORIAL

They Are Surprised!

By DANIEL DE LEON

An editorial upon the magnificent growth of our vote in this city, published in last Tuesday's *New York Press* (Republican Capitalist), and entitled "Socialism's Local Growth," is entitled to more than the passing notice we take of journalistic comments under the head of "Political and Economic"; indeed, the article is beautiful enough to reproduce in full as a basis for comment. Here it is:

"Without desiring to alarm any sensitive people, who, by staying away from the polls year after year, show that they can stomach a Croker and yet would rush to the city's defense if they saw the rising of a Commune, we are obliged to chronicle the fact that, from the official returns, the Socialist party is the only one that has shown a positive growth in this city over previous years. Moreover, it, and not the Stecklers, Goo-Goo's, O'Brienites, Graceites, Garoos or Gazoos, Prohibitionists or People's party, with the latter two of which it has heretofore been classed, is already the third party of this town.

"In this last election it polled an average of nearly 11,000 votes. Devendorf (!?!), its candidate for State Controller, got 11,095, and most of his colleagues ran over 10,980. The tail of the ticket, Franz, the candidate for Register, got 10,349. The highest vote cast previously for a Socialist candidate—we except Henry George's purely personal campaign—was 7,706. The increase, therefore, is over 35 per cent. Such an increase in Tammany Hall's vote would have enabled it to sweep the city by 40,000 votes, instead of carrying it by 20,000. Such an increase in the Fusion vote would have enabled it to bury Tammany Hall forever from sight with a majority of some 90,000. As for the Stecklers, with their vote running from 5,075 to 10,170, after their extraordinary claims and extraordinary noise, and the Goo-Goos, with their infantile returns of a vote to a district (Lockman for County Clerk, the head of the ticket,

getting only 1,659), the Prohibitionists, with their 957 votes, and the People's party with their 652, they are effaced by this silent growth of a new and dangerous protest, that of the Commune against Croker.

“There is no blinking the fact that in this city we have invited much more than what we so far see in these returns. Whatever have been our principles, Croker has been our practice, and we are not exactly prepared to march to the wall of a local Per-la-Chaise any foreign-born citizen who, as between Croker and the Commune, cries “Vive la Commune!” We think that, on the whole, Crokerism is less dangerous, though infinitely more despicable, than Communism—being a stealthy and surreptitious Socialism, the Socialism of the hall thief and the bank sneak. But we cannot expect everybody to look at the thing in the same way. We have given in this city government the best municipal arguments ever advanced for the overthrow of the existing order. By maintaining almost perennially a government of thieves we have granted Socialism's main contention. That those who seek its overthrow have not already pressed those arguments with more effect upon the newly-naturalized citizens of this town is evidence of the tremendous power of assimilation in our civilization to which, only yesterday, we called attention.

“All must watch the further development of this movement, if there be such, with intense interest. A most remarkable feature of it found in these returns is that these 3,000 votes, and more, were gained by it in spite of the frantic bids made by more than one party for support in a coin supposed to be most prized by the conventional Socialist—the coin of Sunday rum.

“We are not supposed to say off-hand that the 3,000 men who declined this bribe should have less of the community's respect than a good many others who fancy themselves much more entitled to it. Between Moloch worship and belly worship we are glad that we are not called upon to decide.”

We can pass with a silent smile the half silly, half intentionally ignorant passages in which the pasteboard claim is here again insinuated about the Socialist vote being a “newly naturalized” and German vote; and we can pass with an additional broad smile the clumsy attempt to give a color to this pretence by the editor's translation of “Patrick Murphy,” our candidate for State Comptroller, into “Devendorf.” But apart from such minor points, there are three salient ones in the article that deserve special notice.

The passage: “By maintaining almost perennially a government of thieves we have granted Socialism’s main contention,” embraces three distinct views, one true, two false.

1. It is false that “Socialism’s main contention” is proved by governmental corruption. Socialism’s main contention is that, owing to the economical law of value, the man with larger can and does make impossible the existence of the man with smaller capital; that hence the middle class must go, and the proletariat cannot rise from wage slavery into independence; that machinery held in private hands hastens this evolution; and that the solution of the question is the collective ownership of the land and capital necessary to work with. This contention is true, and what proves it is, not governmental corruption, but the fact that the social system is perpetually out of gear. The numberless bankruptcies, cases of insanity, suicides, prostitution for a living, crime in private life, Ella Millers at one and Consuelo Vanderbilts at the other end of the line—these are the proofs.

2. It is false that Crokerism gives the impetus to our growth. The fact is that we made the growth that gives the chills to the *Press* during a City and State administration of “gentlemen.” It was this that helped to teach the masses. They learned that whatever rulers we have their economic condition will go down so long as the capitalist system lasts. They learned that Reform or no Reform by capitalists, the proletariat would always be held down, and that “Reform” will never do the people any good until the working class itself takes hold of the broom stick and then “reformed” by sweeping capitalism out of existence.

3. It is true to say that the placing of thieves in government positions must cause indignation. But were the thieves displaced by non-thieves in November of 1894? No! Who are thieves? Those who hold and enjoy what they do not directly or indirectly produce. The administration that was swept into power by the tidal wave of 1894 was in this, the only respect worth considering, no less thievish than the crew that was swept out of power.

The next point to be noticed in the article, is its surprise at our “silent growth.” This remark is the more surprising coming from a newspaper. Does Socialism carry on its agitation like raw-bone Anarchists in underground rat-holes, or like capitalist Anarchists in the secret recesses of their offices? No! We speak at the corners of the streets, in public meetings, and we print an expensive {extensive?} literature, and we have been growing steadily. That this growth should seem “silent” and should startle a capitalist editor is the worst commentary possible on “American Journalism.” Its policy of silence to deceive its readers has succeeded in deceiving itself. It thus came to believe that Socialism did not exist. And when on the morning of the 6th inst. it heard

the thundering thumping at the doors of their sleepy intellects of 16,000 Socialist votes in New York and Brooklyn, self-made Rip-Van-Winkledom was startled.

Finally we call attention to the repetition in the *Press*, a Republican paper, of the thought already expressed by the *Post*, a Democratic counterpart, to wit, that the Socialist ballot will have to be overcome with bullets. We can understand in no other way the allusion in this article to the Pere-la-Chaise, where the French capitalists butchered 20,000 Socialists in cold blood. But we would warn the *Press* and others against cultivating such thoughts. In the first place, out of the Pere-la-Chaise slaughter field Socialism in France rose unconquerable as we now see it. Truth cannot be crushed by Force. In the second place, suggestions of Pere-la-Chaise may be anticipated by Sicilian Vespers. Force should be the last word in the mouth of a class like that of capitalism, which, with its 8 per cent. of our population (and not a few of these 8 per cent. living in Europe) could be crushed like a hollow egg shell by the overwhelming majority whom they have been riding, raiding and robbing.

Take a reef in your tongue, Mr. *Press*; stick to the constitutional methods of the ballot and amendments, which the country's institutions have established and which the Socialists have adopted. Upon that road you will encounter many a startling surprise, but you will have time to learn and may escape the fate of the Southern rebel; if you don't, the surprise you now express will be like nothing to that which you and your class will run foul of.

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

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