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EDITORIAL

Play Not With Pitch

By DANIEL DE LEON

On Saturday, the 7th inst., that queer thing called the “Chicago People’s Party” held its nominating convention.

From the reports accessible here it appears that the convention was visited by Brother Eugene V. Debs, through a letter addressed to it, and by Comrade Keir Hardie in person. Debs’ letter is said to have been one expressive of his abiding belief in the “nobleness of the work of the People’s Party of Chicago”; Keir Hardie is reported to have made a speech, in the course of which he discarded upon the sacredness of the name of the party—“People’s” party—and expressed the hope that the party would be “true to its name.”

After these amenities were over, the convention proceeded to perform its “noble work” and to exemplify the “sacredness” of its name. It nominated for the head of its ticket one Col. Francis T. Colby, whose regiment had taken possession of the village of Pullman during the late strike, and was the last to evacuate, after the workers had been browbeaten by the bayonets and Gatling guns, on paper and otherwise. Nor did the “nobleness” of the convention’s work end there, or did it rest satisfied with thus exemplifying the “sacredness” of its party name. Several delegates, who represented workingmen’s constituencies, and who also has labored under the delusion of the Chicago concern being “noble” and “sacred,” protested against the infamy of such a nomination as that of Colby’s; but in vain, and as they justly abandoned the convention, J. Morrell, one of the delegates who remained to carry on the “noble” work and carry out the “sacredness” of his party’s name, shouted to the departed ones, unrebuked by the others, “We don’t want the workingmen; we can get along without them anyhow.”

As to Brother Debs, what an irony of fate, what a disgraceful sight, to behold the prisoner of Woodstock, the victim of one of those identical Gatling guns on paper that

were backed by the actual guns of the Swashbuckler Colby, continuing blindly infatuated, despite all lessons of the past, and identified with a party the “nobleness” of whose work consists, and must necessarily consist, in spurning the working class and in rewarding with a nomination for office one of the very men who contributed to enforce famine on the Pullman workers and defeat upon the railroaders!

And as to Comrade Keir Hardie, we would like to take a snap shot of his physiognomy, were some American Socialist, on a visit in England, not only to stray out of curiosity into a meeting of the Liberal party—that arch deceiver of the British workingmen and whom he has done such valuable work in combating—but to address the meeting upon the “sacredness” of the name of the party—“Liberal” party—and actually indicate the belief, by expressing the hope, that it would be “true to its name!”

With the misguided, fatuous Debs the warning may already be too late, with Keir Hardie it may yet be on time—

Something of the pitch you handle
On your fingers will remain;
As the raven’s tale of darkness
Gave the bird its lasting stain.

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

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