

The People.

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EDITORIAL

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THE PEOPLE enters with this issue upon the 6th year of its existence—stronger without bluff, self-supporting without figure-juggling. A look backward on this occasion is not amiss.

During the 20 years that followed upon the close of the war, the political waters in the United States were stagnated. The great issue that had proceeded was disposed of; none other could immediately take its place; our people settled down to rest from their great exertion. The generation that grew up in this interval was brought up upon exceptional political sights; fierce political contentions without actual difference between the combatants, false pretences as issues, schemes as methods, duplicity as protestations, chicanery as weapons, poltroonery as principle. Such example could not choose but leave its impress. It came to be the general opinion that politics was a game, that the trick consisted in wheedling the votes from the voters, that truthfulness and manhood were out of place there. The evidence of this baneful effect was soon observable among the pioneers of that new issue, whose herald-waves beat the shores of time in America the moment the Federal armies were disbanded.

The new issue was the labor or the social question. If the question of chattel slavery required the strongest, purest manhood of the nation for its solution, the succeeding question, that of abolishing wage slavery, being infinitely superior demanded the clearest cut warfare—with all that that implied.

But the political experience of the 20 years that followed, molded the tactics of the labor movement at its inception. Cowardice took the place of bravery, duplicity the place of straightforwardness, ignorance that of knowledge, and this influence was reflected in the press that the new issue gave birth to. So deep was the impression left by these 20 years of political stagnation and resultant tactics, that it came to be considered puerile to talk straight out, and he who did was looked upon as a fool by some and by others as a “hindrance to the movement.”

It was at a time when these false tactical notions were at their fullest bloom that a stalwart band of Socialists founded THE PEOPLE. The polluted “reform” press

looked upon it as a salon-worn-out aristocratic dame might look through her glasses at what to her seems to be the unconventional and therefore uncouth appearance of a muscular rustic; superciliously they sneered; owlshly they prophesied its death. Time has shown, and what it has shown is stagnation, if not yet over, is at least rapidly passing away. The field lies strewn with the carcasses of discarded "reform" papers; in our columns the epitaphs of many have already appeared, and the epitaphs of many more are in the inkstand on THE PEOPLE'S editorial desk, ready to leap into type.

The sun of a new era shines upon this country to-day. That new era in much resembles that of the Fifties. Success and the future is the reward of the intelligently brave; ignorance or cowardice or both are again backnumbers. By the light of this renewed sun THE PEOPLE treads its path. Its principle from the start was, "If I cannot live telling the truth and unflinchingly waging war on the foes of civilization, there is no reason for me to live." Its experience, its vigorous growth, along with the decline of poltroon "reform" papers and their increasing death rate, establishes the fact that there is reason and that the times are ripe for its existence. In this fact, which assures the success of its mission, THE PEOPLE rejoices. In closing volume V. and opening volume VI. it takes a new start in its approved policy conscious that its arm is strengthened by hosts of converts and of determined comrades.

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

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