

EDITORIAL

FIRST, TRAGEDY; THEN, FARCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE Sixth Assembly District branch of Local Kings County, N.Y., of the Socialist party, having, after repeated efforts, secured the Editor of the *Daily People* for a lecture on “Unionism and Socialism”; the lecture having been held before a packed house, close to five hundred strong, despite a 10 cents admission charge; and the points scored by the lecturer, both in the course of the speech and the course of answering questions, having been received by the large audience with marked appreciation; finally, at least one other S.P. organization in New York having decided to emulate its Kings County fellow body; the Executive Committee of Local Kings County adopted, one the first of this month, as reported in the *Call* of the 6th, the following resolution and recommendation:

“The Executive Committee disapproves the action of the 6th A.D. in engaging De Leon, a non-party member, to speak and recommends to the Central Committee to adopt the following motion: ‘Subdivisions shall not be permitted to engage any speaker to take up the Socialist position in lecture or debate on a Socialist party platform who is not a member of the Socialist party.’”

Which reminds us:—

When, two thousand years ago, the then structure of the political State under the Roman Empire was becoming impossible under the weight of its own dead hand; when the agonized breast of humanity heaved with overpowering despair of happiness and even of tolerable life on earth; when, as a consequence, the fevered mind wished, and, wishing, believed the end of the world at hand, and began to prepare for the grand finality;—at that time a new organization of men arose—men are gregarious ; even when preparing for heaven they feel the necessity of organizing.

The organization (congregation) that then sprang up was of the most democ-

atic. The necessary chairmen (deacons) were chosen by “the floor” from “the floor.” Equality reigned supreme, and was all-pervading. Thus arose primitive Christianity. But things did not last for long, as started. The world failed to end. Within two hundred years the eyes of the congregations began to turn upon earth at least as much as toward heaven. Mundane aspirations prompted mundane methods. The structure of the congregations began to run foul of the structure of the existing political State. The senility of the latter was no match for the youthful vigor of the former. No two hundred additional years elapsed before the younger structure, grown to adult estate, de facto supplanted the old. Religious Christianity had disappeared. Political Christianity with its own hierarchy of officials was in possession. With the vanishing of its original religious purpose, the political State Christianity also shed its original democracy. Arrayed, at first against tyranny, the developed Christian organization gradually excluded the masses; it became oligarchic; finally its despotic powers were perfected, and prelatical arrogance and autocracy became proverbial.

What mundane Christianity did not even start upon a century after its birth, the hierarchy of the Socialist party is already putting through, barely a decade old. Launched to the tune of “democracy,” and originally electing its National Executive from “the floor” by “the floor”—the general vote of its membership—already the S.P. hierarchy has excluded “the floor,” as too numerous, from its own electoral hustings. In these very days, when even the bourgeoisie of America feel the impetus democracy-ward so strong as to take measures for the election of the Federal Senators, no longer by the State Legislatures, but by a general vote of the States,—in these very days the hierarchy of the S.P. has created a Cardinalate of State Secretaries, vested with the privilege of choosing the party’s Nat’l Executive. And evidently the process has got its “steerage way.” The move of the Kings County Executive Committee to dictate to its constituencies whom these shall grant their platforms to, lets the shepherd hierarchs forfeit the wool of their sheep, marks a second and long step forward. The next thing in order is an Index Expurgatorius, in approved papal style, decreeing the literature that the faithful party members shall not read, under penalty of excommunication. The Rev. J. Stitt Wilson, S.P. Mayor of Berkeley, in a letter declining a re-nomination, compares our own Age with the Age that “re-dated

history nineteen hundred years ago.” So it is. But vain is the notion of the Reverend gentleman, as betrayed by the conduct of the rest of his party’s hierarchy, that our Age will allow itself to be “gold-bricked,” and thus jockeyed out of Freedom as did the Age of “nineteen hundred years ago.” Nineteen hundred years ago the then decrepit structure of Despotism was supplanted by a new structure with the identical ends, only the name being changed. The material possibilities of our Age, together with its enlightenment, will prevent a repetition. While the catastrophe of “nineteen hundred years ago” is out of the question to-day, history, nevertheless, is repeating itself in the sense that Marx stated. The ripening of the Despotism of political Christianity was the tragedy; the performance of the S.P. hierarchy “nineteen hundred years” later, in our own Age, are the capers of a tumbling clown in a farce.

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