

DAILY PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

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AS readers of THE PEOPLE have gathered by this time from the reports in these columns during the last few days, the deep-laid and far-reaching conspiracy of an element, now known in the political history of the American Labor Movement as Kangaroo, to capture the English organ of the Socialist Labor Party, has suffered signal shipwreck,—a shipwreck that will draw in its wake the smash-up of the conspirators themselves. This episode may be now said to be closed. All that may yet remain to be done—the assessing of the heavy damages due to the Party in the case just won; the trial of the Party's case against the conspirators, which is equivalent to saying the entry of another judgment, plus still heavier damages in favor of the Party; the possible and futile appeals that the Kangaroos, now gone daft, may decide to prolong the day of their doom by; etc.; etc.;—all that is but like the picking up of the fruit, already shaken down from the tree. The battle has been fought, and lost and won. Paeans of triumph may continue to be sung by the Party, that—whether on the field of discussion, on the field of physical encounter, or on the field of political conflict, or on the field of legal trial of strength—has thrashed its foe, as few foes ever have been thrashed. The incident now belongs to history. As such, the time now is to consider the lesson it teaches.

The printed organ or organs, through which a party of revolution does its work of agitating, educating and organizing, must be, not only owned and controlled by the party itself, but such organ or organs must never be allowed to pass in any way, however fiduciary, into the hands of any other body over whose existence, and over each of whose individual members, the party has not absolute and prompt control. This principle the S.L.P. partially neglected to observe. It neglected to consider that material and other insidious interests are bound constantly to affect the geography of a political movement, whose outline boundaries, like the sand-banks that gird the solid shore, are subject to shift, obedient to the action of the economic and political atmosphere. Thus it happened that the Party entrusted the publication of its

English organ, THE PEOPLE, to a private association, that, although supposed to consist of Party members only, had a legal existence independent of the Party, and whose membership, operated on by the socio-economic changes of atmosphere, could and, to a large extent, did become alienated from the Party, until they drifted into positive hostility. Thus it came about, eighteen months ago, that the Party was confronted with the serious danger of losing its English mouth-piece. THE PEOPLE—on whose altars the militant Socialists of the land had opened their arteries, by bountifully bestowing upon it their talent, their funds, their enthusiasm, and their energies, till it was raised to matchless dignity and unprecedented power,—was suddenly pronounced its “valuable piece of property” (language used in one of the *Volkszeitung* Association papers in the suit), by a body whose controlling interests, mental atmosphere, and dominant aspirations flew in the face of all that the S.L.P. stood for.

In a sense, the danger was nil. A paper consists not in a name. Nothing that THE PEOPLE stood for could be, or was taken away from it. Nevertheless, the material scaffoldings requisite for systematic circulation, the mailing list, the Post-office permit, and a hundred other appurtenances, all reared by the Party, could be and were captured. That purely physical part of THE PEOPLE served as a pedestal that a collection of mountebanks mounted, from which they attempted to address the Labor Movement, and by which they certainly succeeded in creating no little confusion, however quickly the ass’s bray was detected, and they were hooted at.

It does not affect the point that, in the end, the experience was wholesome, the shake-up it brought being of inestimable purifying value. The point remains clear as a pike: the revolutionary movement that has not physical possession of its organ and the requisites thereto, has turned a weapon of its own arsenal into a potential weapon against itself. The lesson was bought. Let it be kept in mind.

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