

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 156.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## AN UNWILLING WITNESS TO THE STURDY DEMOCRACY OF THE S.L.P.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**S**OMETIME in 1898, there arrived on these shores from Galicia via London, Eng.—that portal that a special kind of social refuse chooses to pass through on its way to America—a queer social waif. His name was variously “Beer,” “Baer,” “Bier.” He claimed to be a Socialist; had written articles for several European Socialist publications; and he hung in and around the Movement in America. Phrenology is not altogether an article for quackery. Phrenology was hard upon the waif in question. And when he uttered himself, he confirmed to the ear what phrenology had previously announced to the sight. He sent in articles to the Party’s Jewish press, the *Abendblatt*. Some were accepted; many more were rejected. The man was mentally as hysterical as he was physically so. Socialism was to him a vaporous abstraction, just the kind of thing sickly minds love to toy with. He lacked both the mental equipment and the physical fibre to grasp and grapple with a Question that implied a SOCIAL STRUGGLE, and whose practical work lay in the living stream of living humanity. He was here not quite a year, when the 10th of July, 1899, broke upon the Party. In that midnight conspiracy to bag the Party for Reaction and “Organized Scabbism” were the then editors of the *Abendblatt*. These were promptly cashiered; a substitute was needed in a hurry; our Galician offered his services; there was no time to look around; pledges were demanded of him, and he gave them; and thus Mr. “Beer,” “Baer,” “Bier” was entrusted with the responsible office of Editor of one of the Party organs. How did the gentleman acquit himself of the trust thus conferred upon him? We shall let him speak for himself.

In the issue of the London, Eng. *Justice* of last October 19, there appears a long article by the gentleman under the caption: “My experience in the S.L.P. (U.S.A.)” The article is a long tirade against the Socialist Labor Party, its “intolerance,” its

“boss-rule,” and in it occurs this passage:

“It was on October 15, 1899. The fight between the factions was extremely bitter. The Party was torn to shreds. Socialism was discredited. We were the laughing-stock of New York, and the elections to the legislature were close upon us. In my leading article to the *Abendblatt* I lectured the comrades on their suicidal feuds, and gave them the advice not to oppose the two candidates whom the other Socialist faction intended to put up in the Thirteenth District of New York. We contested about two dozen seats, they only that one district. I thought this to be the first step towards a pacification of New York Socialism. The copy-boy took the article to the printing office. I received the first proof, but the second did not come up. On my peremptory demand to send me the proof several of De Leon’s lieutenants came up with the sufficiently curious reply that the article would not appear.”

This, certainly, is turning State’s evidence against oneself; it is bearing testimony, and by an unwilling witness, at that, to the sturdy democracy of the S.L.P. It is more; it is conclusive proof of the would-be Autocracy and corruption of those who raise the cry of Bossism against the S.L.P.

It is only an aggravation of the case that the candidate of the “other Socialist faction,”—harmony with whom and in favor of whose candidacy Mr. “Beer,” “Baer,” “Bier,” proposed “to lecture the Comrades” in the columns of a paper entrusted by them to him to carry out their orders,—was no less discredited a character than Barondess, a labor fakir, a political rolling stone that travels from Anarchy to Tammany and Reform; that is only an aggravation; but it is a non-essential. Likewise is it a non-essential to the story, Mr. “Beer,” “Baer,” “Bier’s” yarn about his forthwith having resigned. He was chased out. What he forthwith did do was to ask whether his conduct forfeited his salary. This was the humorous counterpart to the incident. The essence of the incident appears from his own narrative. An officer is placed in command by the rank and file; he is given a sort of Colonelship, the editorship of a Party paper, to carry out the Party’s plan of campaign. The details of the plan of campaign the Comrades have “lectured” one another on WITHIN the Party. The columns of the Party’s press are there, especially when the fight of the campaign is on, not for further “lectures,” but to execute the plan decided on by the majority of the Party; the Editor is the Colonel to execute the plan. The Colonel, in this instance, as told by himself, decided of his own motion, on an opposite plan; the

rank and file discovered his treason; instead of leading them on against the foe, they find he is leading them into the hands of the foe; and thereupon that rank and file of the S.L.P. gives proof of its not being a pack of dumb driven cattle: they refuse obedience. The would-be dictator and traitor is thrown over, the sovereignty is exercised where it ever resided, in an intelligent rank and file.

Not always are the adversaries of the S.L.P. such fools as Mr. “Beer,” “Baer,” “Bier.” Usually they steer clear of concrete statements, of all substantiation of their assertions and vilifications. Mr. “Beer,” “Baer,” “Bier” followed this cue well for a while. In the first two-thirds of his article he revels in the usual mild assertions. But he forgot himself towards the end, and there he himself knocked down his whole card-board structure against the S.L.P., along with himself. He proved that the S.L.P. is a truly democratic body, whose buzz-saw none can monkey with, without badly cutting his fingers,—as happened to Mr. “Beer,” “Baer,” “Bier.”

Which nobody can deny.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded August 2006