

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 324.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MAY 19, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

A CHEERING SIGN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE newly formed League for the Civic Education of Women announces that “members of the President’s Cabinet, United States Senators, members of the Federal and State Judiciary, and professors of the leading Universities will speak and teach against the suffrage movement from its platform.” No fact could well be imagined more clearly indicative of that other fact, to wit, that the Woman Suffrage Movement is about to drop its slough of freakishness and enter a period that “means business.”

Even inventions of great pith and moment cast their early shadows before them in the shape of toys and trifles. The same happens with all lofty aspirations. They first manifest themselves in garb more or less ridiculous. The lofty aspiration of Woman Suffrage was no exception. Artemus Ward justly ridiculed the “he-females,” the “ferocious creators,” armed with “blue cotton umbrellers,” and wearing “scanderlously short gowns,” who first took up the cause of woman, “the serlaive of proud and domineerin’ man.” That uncouth era was eventually left behind it by the Movement, and women of a different type stepped upon the arena—women of culture, of learning and of character. Despite all the virtues possessed by the galaxy of these women, they lacked one quality—practical foundation. With them Woman Suffrage was essentially a sentiment. This defect attracted to it a large element, both male and female, that lacked the talent, the character and the earnestness which fired the distinguished women who took the lead in the Movement for woman’s emancipation. These latter acquisitions were to a very considerable extent formed of the intellectually idle, who delight in things new for the sake of the newness, and, not infrequently, for the sake of enjoying the notoriety of cheap revolutionary mouthings. Although many seriously practical forces joined the Movement, they were not dominant. For one thing the highly cultured woman

element dominated; for another thing, and as a consequence of the first, the notoriety seeking element, an element that ever frowns upon the seriously practical as “fanatics,” insisted upon a “broad Movement”; for a third reason, the ripening times which pushed woman into the economic arena as a wage slave, afforded the seriously practical element better opportunities elsewhere for practical work than could be found in an organization that inevitably degenerated ever more and more into a camp for idle, however witty and pungent, satire, and for still idler lamentations. Social conditions were slowly but steadily rescuing the Cause of Woman from its freak stage. In only two occupations in the land—“sailors and soldiers,” and “telegraph linemen” (pole climbers)—are women not represented today. This development tended to dignify the Cause of Woman by placing it where it belongs—under the category of the Cause of Labor. That the development has finally raised the alleged Woman Question to the dignity of a thing to be reckoned with is proved by the organization of the League for the alleged Civic Education of Women, and the necessity the said League finds itself in of enlisting the help of the most conspicuous personages of the capitalist world in the land to oppose the Movement. From now on the Movement of Woman will move, indeed.

The first consequence will be the dropping out of most of the freaks. None will be left even of the distinguished women but those with whom high aims can not be dampened by material interests. All others will, under one pretext or another, lie low. The “Cause of Woman,” as they called it, will have been proved to them to be the Cause of Labor, and that, they need not be told, means the peril of the stocks and other things from which they sponge an idle existence. They will then realize the folly (on their part) to throw into the hustings large fresh battalions of voters, and that at a time when they and their husbands are intent upon wrenching the ballot from the male workers who hold it.

The second consequence will be greatly aided by the first. Freed from the navel string of its ridiculous origin, the Woman Movement, so called, will merge with the Labor Movement. The common quality of wage slave will cast off the hitherto deceptive sex nature of the Movement. And all the President’s members of Cabinet, professors, Senators and other High Priests of the heathen God Capital will not be a dike high or strong enough to resist the flood of Socialism.

Among the many cheering signs of the times none is more so than the organization of the League, and the list of speakers it announces to save its doomed programme.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded January 2010

slpns@slp.org