

The People.

VOL. IX.—NO. 36.

HENRY KUHN, NAT'L SEC'Y, S.L.P.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1899

PRICE 2 CENTS.

EDITORIAL

NO STANDING-ROOM FOR THE FREAK.

By DANIEL DE LEON

Among the hill-tops that the Socialist Labor Party captured and camped on, a solid body, on the night of last November 7, as one of the positions along the logical line of battle in this country, is that which affords no standing room for the FREAK.

What is a Freak?

At first blush, the question seems a puzzler. Eccentricity, mistaken by many for “individuality,” being the external trappings of freakdom, the external manifestations of freakishness are so numerous that they would seem to baffle all attempt at reducing the Freaks to one common fundamental principle. Yet not so. Despite all external multiplicity of appearance, there is an essential oneness in Freaks. What that essential oneness consists in, the late struggle within our Party afforded an opportunity to detect, and great is the debt of the movement in America to Col. Abe Gruber—the political lawyer whom the corrupt-reactionary *Volkszeitung* picked out in its attempt to capture the Party’s name and emblem—for the valuable aid he rendered in ascertaining the secret of the active or fundamental principle in the Freak.

In the contest before the Secretary of State in Albany, in the subsequent contest before the Police Commissioners, and particularly so in the third and last contest before the Supreme Court, Col. Gruber insisted with increasing emphasis upon one point in his argument; it was this:

“If there is ONE principle in Socialism more important than all others; if there is ONE principle that Socialists hold to firmer than to any other—it is the principle that the Party’s officers shall be held by {the} throat, and that, whenever ANY ONE WANTS IT, these officers (violently snapping his fingers and his eyes, and almost jumping off the floor) SHALL BE THROWN OUT!”

Col. Gruber is an able lawyer. He knows that, next to knowing the law, the successful lawyer must be thoroughly saturated with the ideas of his client. He did so saturate and allow himself to be saturated. The element—touched upon at this place in last week's issue—that rose in rebellion against the Party, seeking to keep it back on the tracks of reaction; in other words, the element whose material sub-class interests struck the keynote of, and furnished the fundamental principle on which the impotent rebellion planted itself;—that element was tongue-tied. Unable to speak the language of the country, it could not, nor did it try the work of “saturating” Colonel Gruber. The work of saturating the Colonel fell to the FREAKS. From them, through the medium of the “international English” at their command, he gathered his ideas of “Socialism,” and of the “pivotal point” upon which their “Socialism” turns, to wit: LICENSE.

And this—LICENSE—is the essence of Freakdom, as is well indicated by the notion that a sober, serious organization of men, like the Socialist Labor Party, can have for its pivotal point the reckless, indecent principle of yanking its officers in and out, for the fun of it, and promptly obedient to the whim of any minority.

Whether the Freak manifests himself in the garb of a squaw-swapping Free Lover, or in the motley of a Free Knowledgist, or in the paint of a Free Individualist, etc., etc., LICENSE is his active principle. A decent regard for the opinions of others; a decent regard for inherited decency and experience of the race; a decent regard and due appreciation of the meaning of the word “democracy”; in short, a manly submission to the bands of restraint, self-imposed by civilized man;—all this is absent from the Freak. LICENSE is the active principle to his feelings, his thoughts and his actions.

The Freak is an element of disintegration. A physical, mental, or moral cripple himself, the microbe of LICENSE fastens upon him as upon luxurious ground, and blossoms forth into those manifold exhalations of “Freedom” or “Individuality,” that are poison to whatever body inhales them.

It is a feature of Social Revolutions that they start with the sensitive element in the body social; it is the fate of Revolutionary Movements that they attract the Freak, like light-houses attract crows by night; it is a weakness of Revolutionary Movements to often mistake the hysterics of the cripple Freak for the intensity of their own sensitive element.

In other countries, abroad, matters might possibly justify a different course; here in America, however, not until the Revolutionary Movement has become strong enough to present so unyielding a front that the Freak dashes himself to pieces

against it, like crows against light-houses, not until then has the Revolutionary Movement grown out of its swaddling clothes, reached virility, and taken the requisite stand.

Upon that ground the SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY camped triumphant on last election night. On that camping-ground there is NO STANDING ROOM FOR THE FREAK.

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

Uploaded May 2005