

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 250.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1901.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

WHERE WERE THEY?

By DANIEL DE LEON

WEDNESDAY morning's despatches from Europe, on the free fight in the British Parliament, were as full of matter as an egg is of meat. He who runs could read a lesson, not to be forgotten.

In the deliberative body, said to be the "Parliament of Parliaments;" in the country said to be the kingdom of free speech; in the land, withal, where, despite its original lead in capitalist development, the revolutionary movement of proletarian emancipation lies prone, strangled by the navel-string of bourgeois "reforms,"—in that country's parliament a Majority applied the gag to a large Minority, and, with physical force, accompanied by brutality, ejected sixteen members. It was not a case of a Majority suppressing a filibustering Minority; it was not a case of a Majority saving the "law of motion," essential to all deliberative bodies, by disengaging itself from some cloggy Minority, that would have paralyzed action. It was a case of closure virtually before debate; it was a case of strangulating speech; it was a high-handed procedure, the rough-riding over Parliamentary privilege.

But the despatches were eloquent, not only in what they did say: they were most eloquent in what they did not say. Scan them as one may, it was impossible to detect even the remotest allusion to two names—John Burns and Keir Hardie. Scores of names occur in the several despatches, tangled up in the fracas of struggling M.P.'s and constables—but nary a Burns, and nary a Hardie.

Where are they?

Among the "Apostles of the Working Class" in England, aye, among the "Apostles of Socialism" there, these two men hold pre-eminent positions;—but. But, their apostolate of the Working Class and of Socialism is of the "broad," the "practical," stamp. Theirs is the idea that the way to the Socialist Republic lies, not along the steep and thorny path of a strictly proletarian, class-conscious policy, but along the meandering road of each and every reform that the bourgeoisie can be coddled into taking up. In short, they hold that the correct policy is not the

Revolutionary one but the Reformatory: nibble away Capitalism by reforms.

Now, then, of all bourgeois achievements, parliamentary freedom is a leading one. It is the achievement with which the Capitalist revolution blazed its way into political power, and in the fire of which it reduced Feudalism to ashes. It is clear that he who holds that the road to the emancipation of the wage slave lies via nibbling reforms from victorious Capitalism, must, at least, be on the alert to maintain all the reforms in existence, especially those that are so essential as the principle of parliamentary freedom. The assault upon that principle in the British House of Commons must, accordingly, have aroused whatever fighting quality Messrs. Burns and Keir Hardie have kept concealed about them. This was their chance. Did these spurners of revolutionary tactics and aggressive Socialism, these apostles of nibbling reform from Capitalism rush to the rescue? No; significantly enough, no! For all it appears, they were safely crouching under some bench, while Parliamentary Freedom, that gift of the bourgeoisie, was being trampled on and thrown out by twenty constables!

The “broad,” the “practical,” the “reformatory” crew, or school, stands photographed by the posture of Messrs. Burns and Hardie in the House of Commons on the 5th instant. “Reform” with one and all is a blind for poltroonery, a cloak under which to conceal conscious unfitness for the man’s work of the Proletarian Revolution, and under which to nurse the vainglory of constitutional stage-strutters.

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