

# The People.

VOL. IX, NO. 16

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, JULY 16, 1899

PRICE 2 CENTS

ARTICLE

## THREE CHEERS FOR THE S.L.P.!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**o the Comrades, Friends and Sympathizers, and to the overwhelming majority of the 82,000 who last November did battle with the Socialist Labor Party at the polls:

A conspiracy of long standing against the Party came finally, last Monday, to a full head in this city—and the ulcer was lanced by the loyal members. The center and organizer of the conspiracy was the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* and its publishing association, that is to say, interests that are opposed to the Party's progress that have long been a drag to it everywhere, in this city in particular, and that, realizing their increasingly hopeless minority, decided upon a desperate coup to save themselves by throttling the Party through the capture and destruction of its press. The make-up of this element was roughly but sufficiently sketched in the article "Sign Posts" of last April 2, and has been subsequently amplified by the addresses of the National Executive Committee to the Party and its friends.

The report of the last meeting of the General Committee of Section Greater New York, held last Saturday, the 8th, and published elsewhere in this issue, was the beginning of the end. Unable, by fraud, to carry out their plan there, the conspirators then attempted violence. Failing in that too, they speedily played their last card. The following Monday, a call appeared in the *Volkszeitung* for a "special session of the General Committee," CALLED TO MEET ON THE VERY EVENING OF THAT DAY. The call could not possibly reach the English-speaking element, and, above all, was wholly illegal: the General Committee cannot be called in extra session but by the City Executive Committee; a handful of men calling themselves "delegates" cannot arrogate that power; but the call bore the mark of illegality in other respects: among the "callers" of the "special session" figures the Lieder Tafel, which had been dissolved by action of the General Committee, ratified by general vote.

In response to this “call,” the *Volkszeitung* element met in the evening; that kangaroo body called itself the “General Committee of Section Greater New York,” and proceeded to carry out its programme. That programme contemplated but one thing: to bag the Party, kill it if necessary, by destroying its national press—THE PEOPLE and the *Vorwaerts*. In order to do so, the National Executive had to be removed. The kangaroo General Committee undertook the job.

Under the expressly stated provisions of the Party’s national constitution, the National Executive Committee is elected, and, where needed, suspended, by a general vote of “the Section or Sections located in the city chosen as the seat of the N.E.C.” The City of Greater New York being chosen as the seat of the N.E.C., the N.E.C. is chosen or suspended by ALL the Sections located in Greater New York. Located in Greater New York there are, besides “Section Greater New York” (which comprises mainly the former Manhattan and Kings counties), a number of other sections located in Richmond and Queens counties, besides such strong language bodies as the Scandinavian Section. The power vested by the National Party in ALL these sections to elect, or suspend, and temporarily fill vacancies, was usurped by the *Volkszeitung*’s kangaroo General Committee of “Section Greater New York” alone, itself a wholly unrepresentative body even of “Section Greater New York” itself, which henceforth will continue to meet in larger number and more enthusiastic than ever in the performance of the Party’s work, being now freed from the incubus of the *Volkszeitung* delegates—IT “deposed” the N.E.C., and “filled the vacancies.” Even if that kangaroo body were a legal body, and not the fraud it was, it alone had no power to depose the N.E.C. and elect substitutes. Being the fraudulent contrivance that it was in fact, all its transactions are rendered all the more ridiculously null and void.

But matters did not end there. It was essential to the conspiracy to render the Party forthwith tongue-tied. These gentlemen cannot stand in the light of day; public information is a thing they recoil before. THE PEOPLE and *Vorwaerts* had to be forthwith captured, so as to prevent all information from reaching the comrades and readers, leaving the *Volkszeitung* small traders, Anarchists, usurious money-lenders and pure and simple corruptionists the floor all to themselves. Accordingly, no sooner had they “deposed” the N.E.C., when a mob of at least fifty of them, consisting of a large percentage of non-members of the Party, marched down to THE PEOPLE’S, *Vorwaerts* and N.E.C.’s offices (which were situated in the *Volkszeitung* building; on their way, were armed downstairs in the *Volkszeitung*’s office with clubs and murderous bludgeons; and attempted to break into the Party’s premises. The scene that ensued will be ever memorable to all who witnessed it.

THE PEOPLE, the *Vorwaerts*, and the headquarters of the N.E.C. occupied the third floor of the *Volkszeitung* building. The “call” that appeared that morning in the *Volkszeitung* for a “special session of Section Greater New York” carried distinctly the odor of the proverbial rat. In the course of the day, the premises occupied by THE PEOPLE, the *Vorwaerts*, and the N.E.C. were set in a state of defence. By 10 p.m., about 25 picked Comrades were on their posts. Shortly before midnight, the membership of the new “National Executive Committee” began to put in their appearance, demanding admission “by virtue of their offices.” Admission was denied them; a parley ensued; and then suddenly the armed rioters made a rush up the stairs. The ante-room became a field of battle; fierce did the conflict rage for fully 10 minutes; blood flowed freely. Among the wounded comrades who that night defended the property of the Party, aye more, its insignia of office and the Party itself against the mob of reactionists organized by the “*Volkszeitung*,” were Comrades John and Charles Keveney, Owen Diamond, Arthur Keep, Peter Fiebiger, Max Forker, Henry Lightburn, Henry Kuhn, Gould and Steinberg. The wounded were promptly taken care of, new forces moved to the front, and the *Volkszeitung* crew, despite its numerical superiority, began to lose ground. At that moment the police, attracted by the crowd that gathered on the street, forced their way up the stairs, stopped the fight, and began ordering everybody out, even threatening to lock up all. Again, at that moment, the Party’s officers saved the situation. The police officers had to recognize that the editors of THE PEOPLE and *Vorwaerts*, as well as the National Secretary, were on their own premises, and in possession, while the *Volkszeitung* crowd, on the contrary, were equally evidently in the posture of men committing a breach of the peace. While this discussion was going on, the members of the Board of Directors of the *Volkszeitung*, guided by their own and a shyster lawyer’s stupidity, stepped in and unwittingly aided the Party officers. These Board of Directors’ people, seeing that their rioters had been successfully resisted and very thoroughly clubbed, had no more stomach for fight; they promptly pledged themselves to the sergeant at the police station, whither they had rushed in despair, that there would be no more fighting, that they would leave those in possession in quiet possession, and that all they wanted was “a guarantee that nothing would be removed from the premises”!!!! Their own admission of who was in possession was promptly turned against them. “They admit,” said the Party officers, to the police, “that we are in possession; so we are; you so find us; as to whether the property on this floor shall remain with us or not, that is a question that involves proprietary rights, and is not for you to decide; that is for the courts to decide; your duty now is, finding us in possession, to protect us against house-breakers; we now call upon you to clear that gang out!”—and the individual rioters were pointed out with the order: “Put

this man out!" The order was executed; the Party remained in peaceful possession that night; the next day, Tuesday, all its property on its premises, that is to say, all the insignia of its authority, together with all the furniture, was removed to the new headquarters, under the very noses of the baffled and impotently tooth-grinding *Volkszeitung* crew, gathered in knots all day in the neighborhood—the lager beer Anarchist, Justus Schwab, among them.

\* \* \*

There are Doubting Thomases, who, even when they see the ears of a rat wiggling and the tail of the rat wriggling, hesitate to conclude that a rat lies in between; they think it may possibly be a cow, a hippopotamus, a lamb, perchance. The more clear-headed know that between the ears of a rat and the tail of a rat only a rat and nothing else can be. The conduct of the *Volkszeitung* and its backers, centered in the Publishing Association, has for quite a while clearly enough denoted the RAT. Many doubted. To-day they can doubt no longer. The Anarchist conduct of the kangaroo General Committee, which was essentially nothing but an adjourned meeting of the reactionary Publishing Association, culminating with the attempted and evidently well prepared physical assault upon the Party premises, settles the point.

The *Volkszeitung* element, with its set contempt for this country and its persistent ignorance of our people's language, history and life, and had long been a mill-stone around the neck of the Party, in this locality particularly; the Party's progress made the Party more and more intolerable to them; the mill-stone, fortunately, has at last worn out the bonds that tied it to the Party's neck; the mill-stone is now rolled off.

Section Greater New York, whose aggressive and progressive element typifies the Party throughout the land, holds now more vigorously as well as enthusiastically than ever, the Party's banner on high.

\* \* \*

The rapidness with which things have developed, and the crisis itself, prevented the Party's officers from being at all points prepared. This happens especially with our national press. The press and business office material as well as large sums of money belonging to both THE PEOPLE and the *Vorwaerts* were wholly in the possession of the Party's foes. As a result, the *Vorwaerts* cannot appear this week, and may be forced to discontinue. It will be the duty of THE PEOPLE readers to promptly convey this information to the unprepared German comrades, readers of the *Vorwaerts*: the sheet they will henceforth receive through the German mailing list that the Party gathered, but is now stolen from it, will be only a rehash of the

hopelessly vicious, stupid, unscrupulously mendacious and hostile daily, *Volkszeitung*. Let them spurn the fraud.

With THE PEOPLE things stand better. Though all that belonged to it could not be rescued in time, some has been rescued—among these is part of the mailing list—but its money remains stolen. Most of our readers will receive the paper in due time, but many will not, owing to THE PEOPLE also being robbed of its latest mail list. But this inconvenience and may minor ones will be overcome. Let the comrades and friends notify all the readers whom they know; a new and full mailing list will soon be in shape again, and greatly enlarged, as the inevitable response of an indignant Party to the disgraceful conduct of traitors that long remained masked in its ranks.

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

Uploaded July 2004