

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 4, NO. 278.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 1904.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

STRAWS AND BEAMS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

HAS not the following passage from an anti-Hearst Democratic paper a well-known ring?

“Close observers of the Hearst boom in New Jersey, where the ill-smelling gas is being let out of it at a great rate, remark on the extraordinary collection of hired men who are working for him. They range from absolute nobodies, at the respectable end, down through venal labor leaders, imported ruffians, scrapings of the slums, and employees of the Hearst newspapers. The alliance is natural. To aid such a candidate, the gutters must needs be raked.”

Now, compare that with this passage from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, where Marx describes the elements that were gathered by the third Napoleon preparatorily (sic) to his coup d'état:

“Along with ruined rouses of questionable means of support and questionable antecedents, along with the foul and adventures-seeking dregs of the bourgeoisie, there were vagabonds, dismissed soldiers, discharged convicts, runaway galley-slaves, sharpers, jugglers, lazzaroni, pickpockets, sleight-of-hand performers, gamblers, procurers, keepers of disorderly houses, porters, literati, organ grinders, rag-pickers, scissors grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, that whole undefined, dissolute, kicked-about mass that the Frenchmen style ‘la Boheme.’”

The anti-Hearst capitalist paper winds up its summary with the question:

“Was there ever a movement like it!”

The answer to the question is given by the passage from Marx. There have been such movements before; decidedly so, and that of “Napoleon le Petit” a leading one, and one that most interests us. Of all European nations, France is the one to which

we come nearest. Besides her republican form of government—the directness of her history, the unity of her acts, the sharpness that marks her internal development, are all characteristics that find their parallel here best, and vice versa. Given similar conditions, similar if not identical phenomena will be seen.

This William Randolph Hearst may not yet be the American Napoleon, boosted into power by the social refuse of a social system whose staple output is refuse, and that is thus scourged by a whip of its own twisting; but, if not he, then some other William Randolph Hearst will do the “Napoleon le Petit’s” trick. Eventually, if not sooner, the President HOG, long prophesied to America, will be inaugurated—unless headed off by the Socialist Revolution.

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

Uploaded May 2007

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