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EDITORIAL

OFF WITH THE LID!

By DANIEL DE LEON

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found an article entitled “The ‘Catholic German-American’—Extracts from It and Comments on Them,” by a Brooklyn comrade.¹ None should fail to read it; and, reading, reflect.

For the full appreciation of the extracts, it must be known that the *Catholic German-American* is an 8-page publication, only three of the pages of which are in English; and that these English pages contain not, even remotely, the bigotedly stupid assault upon modern civilization that, in the German pages, is pointedly made the basis for frenzied, shatterpated assaults upon Socialism.

About twenty years ago, the *Weekly People* having just been started, an enterprising advertising agent offered his services. Undeterred by the warning that a bona fide Socialist paper could not expect support and encouragement from bourgeois interests, the unsophisticated gent undertook the job. Two weeks later he was a good deal wiser, and resigned. What had happened?

We shall reproduce from our diary the account given us of his experience by the disappointed advertising agent himself:

“The first thing I did was to make a list of the leading firms that I found were advertising in the *Volkszeitung*. Within a week I had seen them all, spread *The People* before them, enlarged upon its merits as an advertising medium, and solicited their adv. I was listened to courteously and attentively. In one particular instance I was listened to with marked interest. I thought I had that firm sure. They all asked me to come back in a few days and they would let me know. The first firm I called upon again was the one that seemed to me most favorable. It was a large establishment. The offices were in the rear, and had a full view of the store down to the street doors. I noticed that the member of the firm with whom I had spoken saw me step in, and that he immediately began to bustle

¹ [To be appended at a later date.—R.B.]

about. When I got to the office I saw he had *The People* spread out on his desk, all blue-pencilled, and that he was in great excitement. I did not have to broach the subject of my visit. He started it. ‘How dare you ask me to advertise in a paper like that!’ he fairly screamed. ‘Look at this, and this, and this,’ he went on saying as he pointed to the blue-pencilled passages. “‘Capitalist exploiters of Labor’! ‘Parasites upon the working class’! ‘Socialism demands the abolition of the capitalist system’!” and so he raved on, reading from the blue-pencilled passages in *The People*. ‘How can you expect me to advertise in a paper that holds such speech!’ I was astonished at the outbreak, and mildly suggested: ‘But you advertise in the *Volkszeitung*, and it holds the same language.’ His answer was: ‘What do I care what they say in Dutch!’, saying which he tore up the paper and threw it into the waste-basket under his desk. The experience I made there was substantially the experience I made everywhere else. I’m through.”

The speech spoken in the language of country is the speech that is really heard. The speech spoken in a foreign tongue is whispered. “What do I care what they say in Dutch!” allows a peep into the mind of the *Catholic German-American* to wit, “By letting out what really we are after in a foreign tongue, there is less danger of the dominant element in the land catching on to us.”

The German part of the *Catholic German-American*—a publication “issued with the sanction of the ecclesiastical authorities”—is a vulgarization of the celebrated encyclical of Pius IX, anathematizing the railroads, the press, representative government, in short, all modern civic and mechanical engines of progress and civilization, not, really, as engines destructive of religious or devotional tendencies, but as menaces to the temporal, therefore, the political power of a temporal-political structure founded on the principle of autocracy—the Vatican.

Off with the lid!

The Roman Catholic assaults upon Socialism are feints: they are assaults upon the Nation’s democracy. The Roman Catholic assaults upon Socialism are fought under false colors: they are assaults that proceed, not from religious, but from political premises, premises the objective point of which is the control of property, and the re-enslavement of Man.

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