

EDITORIAL

WHAT THE POLICE IMBROGLIO DOES TEACH

By DANIEL DE LEON

WILLIAM DEVERY, said by the Republicans and Goo Goos in general, to be a perambulating lump of unspeakable iniquity, civic and political, was made by these gentlemen the objective point of reform. To encompass their reformatory plans they wrestled long with the Issue, and, finally, after much travail, the scheme was born that was to do the work. The scheme consisted of a new Police law. Instead of a four-headed Police Board there was to be but one, and the wheels within the wheels were set in such a way that the effect of the law was to hoist Devery out of his office as Chief. No sooner had the scheme become a law, when, strictly obeying it and by virtue of the law's own mechanism, Devery, instead of landing on the sidewalk, remained in his identical office, no longer as "Chief," it is true, but as a lawfully appointed First Deputy. As First Deputy, Devery continues to fill the identical functions that he filled before. If anything, he enjoys now greater facilities to ply the "unspeakable practices" at which "the moral and intellectual elements" of the community felt scandalized.

At this turn of affairs there is an unusual commotion. The Republican leaders foregather in the Fifth Avenue Hotel and "plot," incensed at Tammany; the Goo Goos flutter like owls; some Tammany folks shake their heads ominously; people erudite in the law study the affair with the interest of physicians studying a complicated disease; and the "clever chappies," caring little one way or another about Devery, but always on the alert for "cleverness," snap their eyes with delight at "the clever way in which Tammany outwitted Odell."

All that these various sets of people are thinking and saying may or may not be true. But, whether true or false, what the real observer sees in the occurrence is a most striking instance of self-stultification on the part of the "purity of the home" or the "home ruling" element.

The fight against Devery is placed upon the ground that his administration "pollutes our city," and the methods adopted against him proceed upon the theory

that the city cannot itself protect itself, and must be protected from Albany. Now, then, who are the elements that have undertaken this crusade? Is it elements that hold that, at this stage of our national development, there is no such thing as a “municipal election” in the strict sense of the word? Is it elements that hold that good local government is inseparable from good State and National Government, and, consequently, that “politics up to the handle” must dominate a municipal as well as a State election? No; it is none of these. It is the identical elements that shout at every municipal election, and are now getting ready to shout at the approaching one. “Our city is our home; no politics here; home rule!”

The Nation is not an aggregation of cities, independent each from the other. The cities, in a country like this, at this stage of capitalist development, are like drops of blood in the human system. The Nation is that system. No purification of a single drop of blood is possible except through the purification of the whole system simultaneously, and via its central blood depository; neither is any one city purifiable except through the purification of the Nation via its National and State Capitals.

The Goo Goos have knocked themselves out, and, with this Police imbroglia, have borne convincing evidence to the attitude of the Socialist Labor Party:

“All elections are National and State elections.”

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

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