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EDITORIAL

THERE IS PROGRESS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

There's nane ever feared that the
truth should be heard
But them wham the truth wad
indite.

READERS of *The People* have seen in the correspondence column the letter of Helen A. Gray, Librarian of the New London, Ct., Public Library, to a citizen of that city who presented to the library three works of Karl Marx—*Capital*, *Wage-Labor and Capital* and *The Paris Commune*—and Engels' *Socialism From Utopia to Science*. The Librarian informed the donor that the "Book Committee, upon looking through the books," declined to accept them, and they were returned.

The four works donated to the New London Public Library are classic works; what is more, they are classic works produced by a Movement that is now avowedly respected as the most gigantic and significant of all ages. Even those who may disagree with it, if at all informed, concede the point; and they recognize that it is a Movement that cannot be ignored and must be confronted. Would not the conclusion be that an institution styling itself a public library, "intended to disseminate and cultivate knowledge" would be glad of the acquisition? Socialism is either right or wrong. If wrong, is it not well that it be thoroughly understood? All this notwithstanding, the New London Public Library rejects the books. What does that mean?

Whatever it may mean in detail, it records progress. Progress? Is it a recognizing of progress to check information? Let's see.

What was the general attitude in Connecticut herself about two generations ago when Abolitionism, the Movement then on the rise and, like Socialism, destined

within shortly to sweep the country, was struggling to make itself heard, and was beating its way against a storm of interested prejudice and defamation? Comparing the experience of Abolitionism then with that of Socialism to-day, it will be easy to tell whether progress has been made or not.



PRUDENCE CRANDALL
(1803–1890)

Events ever cluster around a name that typifies the time. The early attitude of Connecticut towards Abolitionism is best typified by that State's conduct towards one of her noblest daughters—Prudence Crandall. When it did not yet “pay” in Connecticut to be just to the negro, Prudence Crandall taught negro children, and for this act of patriotic humanity she was persecuted out of the State: **Prudence Crandall** was boycotted with vindictive cruelty, even water was denied her!

The intellectual and moral predecessors of the “patriotic bevy” that presides to-day over the Public Library of New London were ready to commit homicide upon a defenceless woman for no other reason than that their standard of morality lagged behind hers.

Is there no progress? To-day the donor of the Socialist books is not hounded from house and home out of New London; his life is left unassailed; only the printed matter that he donates is refused. Compared to the fate that a few centuries ago would have been meted out by the ruling powers, both to the gift and the giver of a new idea—both being certain to be burned at the stake; compared even with the experience of Prudence Crandall in that very Connecticut; who will deny that there is progress registered?

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