

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 9, NO. 295.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE MARK OF CAIN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AN illustrated paper publishes the picture of two men seated beside each other and intently reading. The two men have evidently grown grey, not with dissipation, but with thought. The lines on their faces, the shapes of their heads bespeak natural capacity that has not been allowed to go to weed. Altogether the picture may be considered a work of art—two strong intellects, drawing upon a vast fund of knowledge and experience, co-operating together in some common purpose.

Who are the two men?—George W. Wickersham the present Federal Attorney-General, and Frank B. Kellog, a special attorney for the United States. And what may the two be intent upon doing?

Are they intent upon uprooting some deep social evil, whose ramified roots require the combined legal acumen to trace and grip?—No!

Are they intent upon promoting by some legal enactment, requiring a broad grasp of jurisprudence, whereby some of the many crying evils of the day may be redressed?—No!

Are they intent upon freeing the society from some trammel that holds it back, and thus enable it to deploy its energies, multiply its forces and leap forward?—Not at all!

What, then, are these two intellectual colossi up to? O, disillusionment! The mental energies of the two men are bent upon the opposite—they are “consulting over the brief in the suit to DISSOLVE the Standard Oil Company”—in other words, they are scheming to turn the wheels of civilization back.

The law of social progress is to produce wealth in increasing abundance and with decreasing waste and toil. The seemingly impossible problem is the problem that faced the human race since its start. In the reaching of this goal the Standard

Oil Company is the highest rung yet attained in the Jacob's ladder that is to connect man with the angels. That rung in the ladder has its serious defects; they are defects that come from the imperfection of the artisans themselves. The defects, however, are not inherent. They can be removed. The great effort of modern society is to remove the defect and save the thing itself. The blessings that the Standard Oil rung of the ladder of civilization is instinct with now go to waste; worse yet, they are turned to curses. The reason is obvious—their private ownership. The intellect of the Age is centered upon stripping the Standard Oil, together with the other uppermost rungs of the ladder, from the slime of their birth. To DISSOLVE the Standard Oil would be like killing the babe that is born because of the impurities it inevitably was born with. It is to plan to throw civilization upon its haunches.

Wickersham and Kellog, wasting their intellectual powers in the effort to DISSOLVE the Standard Oil instead of rendering it collective property, are, if they only knew it, pictorial representation of Standard Oilism—potentiality for good and for evil.

Such is the curse that capitalism places upon its pets. It is the modern mark of Cain.

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

Uploaded August 2010

slpns@slp.org