

*Daniel De Leon*

## **Editorial: The Tables Turned**

The working class of France has been furnishing its fellow toilers in the United States with an object lesson, the value of which our plutocratic press evidently appreciates, seeing its endeavors to lie low upon the subject.

As it is generally known, there was a good deal of rioting in Paris last week, with the police, there exactly as it happens here, the actual rioters, and that, as a final piece of brigandage, the Bourse du Travail (Labor Exchange) was closed. As there is to be a general election on the 20th of next month, these police riots were a sort {of} ante-election skirmish intended to intimidate the workingmen voters. Unfortunately for the bat-blind French bourgeois, a very considerable portion of the French working class has so completely emancipated itself from old time superstitions and has acquired so clear an understanding of both the right and the might of its class, that it won't scare worth a cent. It has discovered that the weakest spot of the capitalist class, the ballot box, is at the same time the strongest spot of the working class, and it has made up its mind to attack that spot. Accordingly, it has led the way to a stampede from the old political parties in France and has set up its own, the Socialist workingmen's party, which receives its suffrage, and which is marching directly to the conquest of the public powers.

The work of scaring such an element is hard enough under all circumstances; but there were particular circumstances in this instance that, not only rendered it harder, but caused the "scaring" to be suffered by "the other fellow."

*Daniel De Leon*

Indignant at the brutality of the police, the leaders among the workingmen's party in the Chamber of Deputies issued a proclamation to their constituents. Among these were the voters of Marseilles, a town that is to-day held under Socialist sway, and the working men of Marseilles promptly responded by holding indignation meetings in which a spade was called a spade.

The attitude of the Marseilles workingmen turned the tables upon the bourgeois conspirators in Paris. In the why and the how thereof lies the object lesson furnished to ours by the French working proletariat.

It so happens that in the present French cabinet there is a deputy, M. Peytral, who was elected by Marseilles, several years ago, before the Socialist workingmen's vote wrenched that city from the grip of the capitalist politicians. Just as soon as Marseilles began to howl, M. Peytral began to quake. Despite the Socialist victory since his election, M. Peytral had nursed the hope that he could be re-elected from Marseilles; but in sight of the preset attitude of his constituents the alternative stood clear before him: either allow as a member of the cabinet the police to go unpunished and the Bourse du Travail to be closed, and relinquish all hope of a re-election; or jump on the police, re-open the Bourse du Travail and give your re-election a chance. M. Peytral did not hesitate. He immediately resigned from the cabinet, and could not be induced to resume his post unless his ultimatum was accepted. Rather than run the risk of another ministerial crisis, the sorely tried French president submitted.

Accordingly, the Bourse du Travail was ordered to be re-opened.

The riotous conduct of the police was disavowed by the Government.

And, last not least, M. Loze, the Prefect of Police, was dismissed, although, to lighten his disgrace, he was given a third or fourth rate diplomatic post abroad.

That M. Peytral will not have saved himself is more than

### *The Tables Turned*

likely. Intelligent workingmen will not reward services done to them by continuing in power a foe of their class, although he may, under great pressure, have rendered them a great service. But the proletariat of America is furnished the object lesson of the power it holds in its hands when it wields solidly and independently the ballot of the freeman. With that weapon it can at one stroke achieve more than with all the other weapons of the strike and boycott put together and waged for centuries.

*The People*, Vol. III, No. 16. Sunday, July 16, 1893

## **The Tables Turned**

*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the  
Official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.*

*Uploaded October 2002*