

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 10.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, JULY 10, 1907.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## WELL FOR KIKUCHI.

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**N**OT, as a rule, are the regulation addresses delivered by notables on festal occasions before Colleges or Universities, at all original, or in any way worthy of note. As a rule there is in such addresses a formal stiffness and an odor of mustiness to conform with their surroundings. A notable exception to the rule was the address delivered at University College, London, by Baron Kikuchi of Japan. The Baron advised his countrymen to abolish their own and adopt the English language. In all the speeches made, and articles written, and inventions schemed in favor of an international language, the Baron's suggestion is the first step and the longest step taken in the right direction.

Strange as it may seem, the schemes to establish an international language—Volapuk, Esperanto, or what not—by manufacture has found ardent response among Socialists. This is strange because better things should be expected from Socialist minds, accustomed as these presumably are to the thought of evolution. The bourgeois reformer, the An-Archist, and all such imagine society can be improved by schemes. They ignore the evolutionary process; in other words, they ignore facts and adjust these to their fancies. That such folks should be blind to the facts essential to the structure of a language, and should buckle down to fabricate a new one is nothing strange. They know naught of the evolution that underlies language. It should be otherwise with the Socialist. Habituated to the evolutionary thought he is the last man with whom so rattle-brained a notion as the manufacture of a language should be expected to take lodgment. The scientific habits of thought the Socialist has presumably acquired, and which cause him to reject all “schemes” for social improvements, should be enough to open his eyes to the fact that A LANGUAGE IS A STRUCTURAL GROWTH.

A language does not consist of words. A language is a structure, and that

structure is the slow growth of a thousand and one social and ethnic causes. Words are but the clothing of the structure of a language. No more than man can be created, as Goethe's Wagner tried to do, by cristalization *{sic}*, or a new social order by a scheme, can a language be created artificially. That a universal language will one day be spoken is certain. The same causes that have given birth to the scores of languages in existence, will lead, if not drive, civilized man in all latitudes to choose a common means to exchange their thoughts by.

Baron Kikuchi's suggestion is planted upon these principles. It rejects the idea of an artificially constructed language and suggests a natural one. It is in this respect that the Baron's words constitute the first and the longest step so far taken in the direction of an international language. Before one can move forward the path must be cleared of rubbish. The rubbish of manufacturing a new language impedes to-day the path toward reaching the international language. The Baron's error in imagining that English, one of the existing, living languages, can become the international medium of thought is an immaterial error. More likely is the forecast that Latin, the most heroic language ever spoken; a language that, besides being a spontaneous growth, has a monumental literature upon which modern intellect has found it profitable to whet itself, and has gone in several degrees into all the European languages—more likely it is that such a language, already international to a certain extent, will be raised to the dignity of actual internationality.

At any rate Baron Kikuchi has done well.

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

Uploaded October 2009

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