

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 207.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

MODERN “CANDIDES” AND “INGENUS”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE can be no doubt that a broad grin will suffuse the countenance of a good many people who read the account of the proceedings in the Naturalization Bureau when Wenzel Moeth and Michael Laden applied on January 21 for admission to citizenship, and were refused. Nor can there be any doubt that the story is published in the capitalist press as a good joke. But is it a joke?

Moeth and Laden, being asked who make the laws in this country, answered: “Roosefelty and Fairybanks.”

The answer was a flash of unconscious genius—that genius that all people who are familiar with the sallies of bright children have more than once been startled with.

The laws of the land are not, directly or indirectly, made by the people. The laws of the land are made by a committee of the capitalist class. In modern society the capitalist class has just one function—the function of despotizing over the working class, and keeping it in subjection. That being the collective work of capitalist government, such work may well be considered typified in some one or two men, who are the incarnation of capitalism. On the same principle that history speaks of the “art of Raffael”—meaning not merely what Raffael actually painted himself, but all the art productions of which he was a type—so likewise is it correct to say that, to-day, the laws are made by Roosevelt and Fairbanks. When Moeth and Laden said the laws were made by “Roosefelty and Fairybanks” they simply uttered with the lisp of childhood a chunk of unsophisticated wisdom not uncommon with bright children.

There is much more than appears on the surface in the biblical passage “of them (children) is the kingdom of heaven.” With that keen penetration of his,

Voltaire freed the biblical utterance of the theological incrustation that dulls and deadens its deep philosophy. In Voltaire’s novels, the heroes he launched forward to criticise society and tear off society’s mask of hypocrisy, were not the graduates of Sorbonne, or other “seats of learning.” His heroes were unsophisticated by learning; and deliberately he chose for them names indicative of the fact—“Ingenu” (Ingenuous or Frank), “Candide,” etc. Voltaire’s Candide and Ingenu, traveling over the country, candidly and ingenuously expressed their views of things as things struck them—and every utterance from their unsophisticated minds unerringly hit bull’s eye, and tore down some social lie.

Moeth and Laden are the Candide and Ingenu of the occasion. They hit the bull’s eye—however unintentionally. It is the “Roosefeltys and Fairybanks” who actually make our laws.

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

Uploaded December 2009

slpns@slp.org