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## EDITORIAL

### “DORR’S REBELLION.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

**O**N the 18th of this month a monument was unveiled in Providence, R.I., to the memory of Thomas Wilson Dorr. The chief dignitaries of the State officiated, Gov. Pothier at the head of them. In the course of his speech the Governor described Dorr as “one who, though headed open rebellion against the State, yet urged principles which to-day are known to be just.”

Queer occasion: queerer language!

Thomas Wilson Dorr was, in the Thirties, one of the few descendants of the Colonies’ revolutionary days in whose mind there remained alive the theories of freedom that impelled rebellion against England. He was one of the few in whose breast there remained, unquenched by the subsequent economic development, the fires in which British political tyranny was consumed in the Colonies, and by the heat of which a New Nation was constituted. By the time of the Thirties popular slavery had de facto been restored. A few ruled; the many were held under. Dorr was not sidetracked by the Abolitionist furore. He saw clearer. He recognized the existence of a sort of slavery among white people in the North. The immaturity of conditions disabled him from perceiving what to-day is clear to all enlightened citizens, to wit, that the source of the slavery that galled his mind was economic, and that the day had gone by when political reform could steady. Dorr stood in the Thirties just where the Revolutionary Fathers had stood. With them he looked to political forms for freedom. His own little State of Rhode Island being borne down by the predecessors of its present Aldriches and sons-in-law of Rockefeller, he set up the standard of a political movement that was to “restore political rule to the people.” The rotten-borough political system that, to-day, has reached perfection in Rhode Island, and that brought open disgrace upon the State, was then already far enough advanced to be set into successful operation against Dorr. Tho’ elected Governor in

1842, his reactionary adversary Samuel W. King was seated. Dorr and his supporters flew to arms—"Dorr's rebellion." They were overcome; and Dorr was tried and sentenced for high treason.

With the elimination of Dorr from the field the political evils that he had combated now had a free field. They rapidly developed into the political rotten-borough monstrosity that Rhode Island is to-day, weighed down by a State Government that is utterly unrepresentative.

With these facts in mind the raising of a monument to Thomas Wilson Dorr is unexplainable. When, however, the words of Gov. Pothier are considered the queer performance is explained:

Usurpation adopts one of two methods—

Either it brutally pronounces itself what it is;

Or, if it believes itself well in the saddle, it cloaks itself with false pretense.

Usurpation in Rhode Island chose the latter method. Believing itself absolutely safe (no uncommon illusion before a fall), Rhode Island Usurpation raises a monument to one who fought it—and caps the climax of blind duplicity by claiming that the State now enjoys the just principles which Dorr urged.

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