

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 13, NO. 119.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1912.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

THE CALIFORNIA ELECTION LAW SQUABBLE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN California the official ballot will have no electors for Taft.

The reason therefor is a sequence of facts and co-ordinate consequences that deserve consideration.

The election laws of California are so framed that the fate of a party's name is left, not with those who are active in shaping a party's policy and disburse a party's expenses, but with those who enroll with the party.

The immediate result is obvious. Voters who, to all intents and purposes are "outsiders," can on primary day, and simply upon the strength of their enrollment, vote into nomination candidates who do not represent the party, candidates for whom the party can not be held responsible, candidates who are foes of the party.

This is just what happened in California.

It matters not, to the issue, whether Taft stole the nomination at the Chicago convention, or not. The fact is that the Chicago convention was the convention called together by the duly authorized Republican officials. If these misbehaved, if the whole convention became untrue to the party or not,—all that is no concern of the Government. A party's convention may do as it pleases. To it belongs the name, or designation. The California election laws leave the decision upon subjects to "outsiders." Tho' a voter, enrolled with a party, contributed not a penny to the party's running expenses, or a minute's time to the party's running business, he may on primary day act as the umpire over the party's internal affairs. Accordingly, at the primary, such voters placed Roosevelt electors on the Republican ticket. Even if the Taft element had succeeded in gathering the necessary signatures for an independent nomination, Taft electors would have had to run under a designation different from "Republican."

Were this the situation in California only, it would be "curious" only. It is, how-

ever, substantially the situation in all the States where “primaries” have become legal. In all of them the law is so framed as to place the fate of a party’s internal structure in the hands of “outsiders.” Such a state of things is big with mischief.

In America, government—with all due apologies to Woodrow Wilson for contradicting him—is not “by Committees”; it is “by Parties.” Where government is “by Parties”—as it needs must be wherever the masses are admitted to the hustings—Parties must be held responsible. Party responsibility is out of question where the posture of a party is not determined from within, and rests with “outsiders.”

The presence of Roosevelt electors only under the title “Republican Party” on the California ballot is an absurdity that should cause us all to pause, and should cause all thinking people, whatever their political views, to take timely measures to stave off the danger; aye, the debauchery that the California spectacle presents, that the Pennsylvania ballot also might have presented, had the Roosevelt and the Taft forces not come to an agreement, and that most States are exposed to.

Early in the day of the “primaries movement” the Socialist Labor Party rang the note of warning. The Party’s representative, who appeared before the Senate Committee of this State in 1898 in opposition to the then primaries bill, summed up the situation created by the bill in these words: “Under these primary provisions, a lot of men whose noses, if squeezed, would distill whiskey, could put their candidates on the Prohibition ticket.”¹ Roosevelt on the Republican ticket in California, and Taft off it, prove the correctness of the warning.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded March 2014

slpns@slp.org

¹ [See “Workers, Guard the Ballot!” *The People*, Vol. VII, No. 51. March 20, 1898.—*R.B.*]