

Editorial: The Class Struggle

A bit of news, the details of which were given us at this office by an eyewitness, is of no little interest.

Some time in the middle of last month Lawrence Gronlund addressed a meeting of the Socialist Section of San Francisco. His subject was "Individuality and Socialism." He went out of his way, however, and tried to explain wherein he differed from Karl Marx, and on that subject he volunteered some fatherly advice to the Socialists. The burthen of this part of his address was to the effect that the "class struggle" theory was all right enough in Europe, but that here in America it had no application.

Mr. Gronlund had no sooner closed when an overwhelming surprise burst upon him. His hog-wash against the "class struggle," that had seemed to please many of the audiences he had addressed elsewhere, from pulpits and in parlors, was received with evident displeasure by the San Francisco audience that faced him, an audience of "practical English-speaking" Socialists. But that was not all. In that audience sat many a Socialist who was more than a match for Gronlund in economic knowledge, besides force of character and eloquence, to neither of which he could as much as pretend. One after another these comrades took the platform and answered. J. Harriman started; he was followed by MacIvor, Austin, Lewis,¹ Sully, Whitney and others. All of them explained the principle of the "class struggle," as promulgated in {the} *Communist*

¹ Probably Austin Lewis.—R.B.

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Manifesto, and maintained it with graphic illustrations of its international application. The most significant fact at that stage of the proceedings, and that that most completely dumfounded Gronlund, was the way the clear, manly words of our comrades were received by the audience, which was fully 500 strong. The applause with which that American audience greeted the explanation of the soundness of the class struggle is described to have been such, as at times, threatened to take the roof off the house.

Then came the third act of this curious episode. In closing, Gronlund said he had never dreamed of meeting such a large audience of “native borns” and yet so clear-headed Socialists, and that, had he know it, he would have spoken much more radically.

Gronlund is but the type of a class—a class who theorize against the class struggle, simply because they are afraid it is too radical, and who, in proportion as they shove forward their “Americanism” as an argument why they must “know,” simply use the fair name of America as a cloak to conceal ignorance, or a mask behind which to cover their cowardice.

Instances multiply to prove that the American is not the physical, mental and moral pollywog that those (some native and others foreign born) would make us believe who presume to take him under their particular wings for protection.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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