

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 1, NO. 37.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 1900.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THEY DON'T MEAN IT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

The Bryanites are running this campaign on the question of “republic or empire.” They are loud in their declarations of sympathy for the Boers, and they declare that the policy of the McKinley administration in the matter of the war in the Transvaal was wrongful; that this policy is in line with the imperialistic tendencies of the Republican party, and threatens the very existence of the republic.

Do they mean what they say? Are they in earnest in their desire to avert the destruction of the Dutch republics, which McKinley helped the British to conquer and to check the march toward Imperialism here?

Here are the facts:

In December, 1899, American ships, sailing under the Stars and Stripes from ports in the United States to equally neutral ports, were stopped, seized and searched and their cargoes embargoed by British warships.¹ The United States was at peace with the world; its ports were neutral ports; its ships had the right to sail the high seas without molestation. This right is the one grand achievement of American diplomacy. Battled for in 1812; insisted upon to the very point of war every time it was questioned, it finally became a principle of international law,—“Free ship, free goods.” This principle of “free ships, free goods” on the high seas, was ruthlessly and flagrantly violated by the seizure of these ships. The violation was so plain that every effort was made to hide the fact under a cloud of irrelevant book quotations. But no proper demand for redress was made by the executive. An insult had been given to the flag. A blow had been dealt the Republic.

¹ [Apparently a partial lapse in memory by De Leon. In December 1899, British cruisers seized three ships bound from New York to the Portuguese colonial port of Delagoa Bay in Lorenzo Marques (Mozambique). The ships involved carried American-owned cargoes, primarily foodstuffs, destined for the Boers of the South African Republic (Transvaal) and Orange Free State, with whom the British were at war. However, two of the ships (the *Beatrice* and the *Mashona*) were British owned and the third (the *Maria*) was German owned, and sailed under their respective flags. These incidents stirred a debate on international law and the meaning of “contraband of war.” (Also see De Leon’s editorial, “Impeach McKinley,” *The People*, January 7, 1900.)

A right had been trampled on by the British lion, but McKinley said nothing, and thus allowed the British Government to make of the country a mere appendage, whose ship{s} she could use as her own.

McKinley was guilty of treason to the constitution he swore to defend and support. Did the Democrats demand his impeachment? No. They hastened, with the Republicans, to cover up this crime. They became confederates in concealing this felony. McKinley should have been impeached and punished along with his Secretary of State and every member of the cabinet for their criminal acquiescence in this outrage. But the Democrats were too busy getting up collections for the Boers—which never reached them—to meet the occasion as earnest men would have met it.

If they were really in earnest they would have made this act of treason the issue of the campaign; their platform would have had one plank; they would have gone to the country with one demand: the impeachment of McKinley, the wiping out of the stain on our national escutcheon.

Instead, they prate in vague and general way of “departures from early principles.” Here was a specific case of treason. They are afraid to touch it. They whine about changing a “Republic into an empire,” but here was the Republic changed into a vassal colony of Great Britain;—and their eloquence is stilled.

No, they don't mean it. Cowardly and corrupt, they dared not defend the nation when the not less corrupt, but bolder, Republican criminals struck this blow at American sovereignty. A combination of bourbons, hypocrites and demagogues, they will only fight against unarmed negroes and only “defend liberty” at a safe distance.

The failure of the Democrats to demand the impeachment of the arch-traitor, William McKinley, proves they don't mean it, brands them traitors along with him.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded May 2005