

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 7, NO. 173.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1906.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## MGR. FARLEY'S ERROR.

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**I**N a statement, that compares favorably with Cardinal Gibbons' late ill-tempered and abusive tirade against France and Socialists, regarding the present French law of separation, Archbishop John M. Farley of New York temperately sets forth his views. The Archbishop argues that the law is unjust on the ground that, as he puts it himself, the Church property which the French law secularizes "is property which they [the churches] do not derive from the Government," but from private munificence.

The Archbishop is in error. There is no such thing in existence, never was nor will or can be, as "property" that is "not derived from Government." All property is derived from Government. The understanding of the point will materially aid in understanding the meaning of the vast social wave whose crest is assuming different manifestations in different countries—peasant demands in Russia, anti-militarism in Germany, "trades bills" in Great Britain, "separation laws" in France, anti-clerical uprisings in Spain, and Socialism throughout civilization—but whose ground-swell proceeds from the identical source. That source is the awakening popular consciousness touching the SOURCE OF PROPERTY.

The American colonies would still be colonies, taxed, as historians have well expressed it, ruthlessly by Crown and Parliament down to the level of Hindoo ryots, had not in 1776 sufficient men realized that a time comes when debate must be closed on self-evident truths, when these truths need but to be proclaimed, and when they were proclaimed, and made the basis of action. It so happens at the present season with the world-encircling Movement for human emancipation.

The Movement of this generation holds as self-evident a certain number of truths among which the following two are basic, and concern the subject in hand.

The first of these truths is that Labor, and Labor only produces all wealth:

Idleness produces maggots only.

The second of these truths is that the tenure of wealth, or the system of ownership, in short, PROPERTY, is—as the great American Franklin first declared, and, as his great American successor and peer, Lewis H. Morgan, subsequently proved in detail in his great ethnologic work *Ancient Society*,—the creature of society. No one whose word deserves attention will to-day deny the principle that “property is the creature of society.” All reasoning that proceeds in ignorance of the principle can not choose but tumble into error.

It is Government, organized society, that conveys “property.” Bequests, munificent or otherwise; gifts, from pious or from conscience-stricken sources; sales; inheritances;—whatever the concrete form may be in which wealth is held or transferred, has Government, that is, organized society, back of it. Without such backing the “holding” or “transferring” is unimaginable. It is Government, organized society, that gives shape to the “holding” or the “transferring.” It is Government, organized society, that creates “property.” He who says “property” says “a creature of society.” The “property” of the French churches neither is nor can be different from all other “property”—the gift, or creature, of Government. The tenure of wealth, that is, “property,” changes with the social systems which it is a creature of. It has changed with previous social systems—it is again changing, now that society again finds itself in a state of transition, propelled by the never resting waves of progress.

Daniel O’Connell’s great warning to the clergy—“All the religion you like from Rome, but no politics”—implies and embodies a philosophy vastly wider than its specific application to politics. Let the clergy limit themselves to all the theology they please. The moment they cross that line, and undertake to be politicians, or undertake to be jurists, as in Mgr. Farley’s instance, a possibly good theologian is positively spoiled to make an assuredly bad scientist.

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

Uploaded June 2009

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