
Shrinking Shrimps

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Far be it to me to want to add to the shrinking of the shrimps. I only want to mention a few of them.

Gag law and tyranny make wonderful changes. It appears that in the end they are the most potent factors in the revolution.

See what they have made of the workers — a class conscious, wide-awake, clenched-fisted, fighting-mad, victory-bent, irresistible, unconquerable, unified mass. Gag law and tyranny did overnight what we have been trying to do for half a century.

See what they did to Debs. They did not make him great — he always has been great because of his great principle, his great mind, his great heart. No. Gag law and tyranny could not make Debs great.

But they brought him out. They stood him on a hill and showed him to the world. They intended to hide him — to compress him so they might be able to get him into a dungeon. But they couldn't. They couldn't any more get Debs into a dungeon than they could get the Atlantic Ocean into a washtub.

The more they pressed and compressed and oppressed, the bigger and larger and greater he grew, until today he stands there high above the fumbling clouds of persecution, smiling in the chromosphere of the coming freedom.

And the greater he grows — he, the personification of the awakening working class — the smaller grow the shrinking shrimps of capitalism.

Where and who are the agents of the Department of Justice who hounded him at that Ohio meeting and who caused his arrest? Get your specs and look again, maybe you can see them.

Who is the district attorney that prosecuted him? What's his name? You may find it among the murky records that the clerk of court files away.

Who is the judge that tried him? Search me. For a few days he floundered around in borrowed light — borrowed from Debs — and then disappeared. Better get some stronger spectacles. You'll have a job to find that shrinking shrimp.

And the Supreme Court. You couldn't find two university presidents in the United States who could name the gentlemen who gave their unanimous opinion that Debs should go to the pen.

Shrinking shrimps! Only with a high powered microscope will the world be able to discover them.

And Congress — the Congress that concocted that scandalous espionage law — it crawled out through the keyhole and got lost. The attorney general, too, who swelled up like a toy balloon and bobbed about for a day, wheezed out something about the dignity of the law and collapsed.

But the world has one more Socrates, who gave his life for truth and light; one more Jesus of Nazareth, who cast his lot with the underdog; one more Galileo, who pulled the veil from the smiling face of heaven; one more Lincoln, who lived and died for the undying ideal of Liberty.

There he stands like a Colossus, under his feet the broken chains of slaves and the crumbled ruins of prisons, round about him a host of comrades and the throng made up of all the world's oppressed.

While the shrinking shrimps of persecution fade away in the gathering shadows of oblivion.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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