

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 312.

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MAY 8, 1910.

TWO CENTS.

EDITORIAL

THE GAYNOR-HEARST CONTROVERSY.

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THE conflict on the issue between Mayor Gaynor and Hearst in the Cohalan matter involves no economic question; as far as it may be the consequence of political fencing, it is of no importance except to the participants themselves. Nevertheless, there is that in the controversy that deserves the attention of all militants in the Socialist Movement, to wit, the necessity of close attention to essential facts, without which close attention no problem can be solved, no kink can be disentangled, no sound judgment can be rendered on any subject.

Daniel F. Cohalan, employed by the previous, the McClellan, administration, in condemnation proceedings, presented his bill for \$53,000 during the last month of that administration. The authorities with power to pass upon the bill reduced the same to \$48,000, and issued a warrant for the amount. That rendered the amount a valid debt upon the city; all that remained to be done before the money could be cashed was certain routine signatures, the Mayor's, or his representative's, among them. As a final act of pettiness, Mayor McClellan, who had fallen out politically with Cohalan's set, withheld his signature when the warrant came before him on the last day of his term. The money could no longer be denied to the claimant; what could be done was to delay payment for purposes of annoyance. Mayor McClellan's small mind found gratification in that, and the Cohalan warrant was among the unfinished business of the administration that had expired, and which the new administration had to perform. In this way the Cohalan warrant turned up in the first days of January before the new, the present Gaynor administration. The Gaynor administration had no power to re-open the Cohalan claim. Had Mayor Gaynor refused the countersign of his office Cohalan could have obtained a mandamus from the Courts. Being free from the McClellan petty purposes of annoyance, the countersign was attached to the warrant and the money collected.

These facts notwithstanding, Hearst's *American* of April 15 published a broadside virtually charging Mayor Gaynor with collusion in getting the city to pay an excessive, if not a fraudulent bill. The story gave the various dates when the Cohalan warrant was acted upon, the December dates, when McClellan was still Mayor, and the January dates when Gaynor had become Mayor—all truthfully enough, and the whole was accompanied by what purported to be a photographic reproduction of the warrant, the photography, however, being defective in the important respect that the date of the warrant's issue was not reproduced—an accident, says Mr. Hearst; an act of forgery and falsification, says Mayor Gaynor, according to the report of the Mayor's speech, as reported in Hearst's own *American* on April 29.

Upon these facts, there are just two points involved—

First—Was the incorrect photography a forgery and falsification?—That is for the Grand Jury to say;

Second—Could Mayor Gaynor's office have withheld its countersign, and compelled a re-auditing of the Cohalan bill? If it could, then there is at least a color of truth to the charge of collusion with Cohalan; if the Mayor's office had no power to re-open the auditing done under the previous administration, then the charge of collusion is false.

Around the second point the discussion is raging—and valuable is the discussion as a drill and discipline of the mind in all discussion. The Mayor reiterates his point to the effect that, after Cohalan's bill had been audited and passed by the Comptroller's office of the previous administration, there was nothing left for his office to do but to give the *visé* to the warrant,—while the Mayor does that, Hearst and his set give that one, and only essential particular, a wide berth. They talk of everything except that; the *American* reproduces irrelevant letters with sentences here and there printed in fat type to suggest importance; It prints letters all the way from Italy on matters that are foreign; and it quibbles with the word “valid.”

He who will read “Hearst's side” and not lose sight of the point in controversy; he who will take the time to wade through all the stuff that Hearst is dumping on the public, and who will steadily detect where Hearst's arguments leave the track

and wander away; he who does that will feel that he has had an exceptional drill in the art of close reasoning, and will be proportionally immune against the tricks of the “taker in.”

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Uploaded May 2011

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