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EDITORIAL

THE COON BROUGHT DOWN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE below “deadly parallel” is a double-barreled shot-gun that does its work to perfection:

Hanford on Forenoon Session, May 5, 1904, of the So-called Socialist Party National Convention.

Hanford on Afternoon Session, May 5, 1904, of the So-called Socialist Party National Convention.

(Daily Appeal to Reason, Chicago, May 6, 1904, p. 3.)

(Daily Appeal to Reason, Chicago, May 6, 1904, p. 4.)

“We go out and tell men and women that you have got to come to Socialism for your salvation, but why can’t we understand that in the time intervening until the day when Socialism shall come to pass a man has got to live in order to establish Socialism, and that the race has got to survive or there will be no race to enjoy Socialism. The trades union movement deals with this question now. True, not for all but for as many as it can, and it is going to continue. You can read the history of the last hundred years, and I can tell you that had it not been for the force brought to bear by the trades union movement in resisting the encroachments of organized capitalism there would have been no working class to go into Socialism.”

“I can say here that I very much doubt so far from my having sacrificed anything for the Socialist movement, I very much doubt if I would have been alive to-day had it not been for the Socialist movement, and I will tell you why as a man in my trade. About nineteen years ago there came in what we call the linotype typesetting machine. They put one of them in a printing office, and one man got a job operating it, and he would do the work of as high as five or six men who were there before this machine was brought in. Well, strange as it may seem, just about the time of that typesetting machine was entering the printing offices, I got tangled up in the Socialist movement. And every day when I was out of work, when I was a victim of enforced idleness, instead of going to the gin-mill and waste my time *as others among the workingmen had done*, instead of become despondent, I occupied my time reading a book or a

paper or making a Socialist speech on a soap box, or something of that kind. In other words what was despair to other people was the star of hope to me.”

Irritable or ill-natured people might be inclined to point to the contradiction contained in the above, and ask, Where did he lie? But such a use of the above utterances would only exemplify how ill-natured people are prone to muffle the point. Mr. Hanford does not lie in either utterance. He tells the truth in both—and thereby unmasks and knocks himself down, like the booby and fakir that he is.

The second utterance tells quite truly, even strikingly, what the guild or pure and simple form of unionism does for the working class. It leaves them in such crass ignorance of what Capitalism means, it keeps the blinkers of visionariness clapped so tightly to their eyes, that they imagine they will for ever get jobs, and that the union is the guarantee therefor. And, then, when the truth comes crashing in upon them, when improved capitalist methods, through concentration and machinery, throws THEM (them, not the officers, the latter's graft is permanent) out of work, then the gin-mill is their asylum. What they become there need not here be enlarged upon. The disheartened men grow despondent, and presently are human wrecks—physically, morally and intellectually. The only star of hope, the only hand reached out to this sinking humanity, whom the pure and simple guild form of unionism dumps upon the shores of time and leaves there to go to perdition, is Socialism. The Gompers, or Hanford, or guild form of unionism, like Capitalism, in whose mechanism such unions are wheels, leads the working class, not to salvation, but to ruin,—the booby Hanford let that cat out of the bag.

But, then, the first utterance must be false! It is in flat contradiction to the second!—Not at all! It is perfectly true, in the Hanfords' mouth{s}—that is to say, in the mouth of men who intermittently graft on the guild qualities of the pure and simple union. To such men, the Gompers union is a refuge when the graft on Socialism is not available. To such men, “the time intervening” means the time when they can not be sent on some bogus Socialist tour, as to Colorado or elsewhere. When they can be sent on such junkets (and whenever the junket turns out dangerous, as now in Colorado, the junketer quickly scoots away from and rants at

safe distance) then they give up their union job; but in order to be in condition, in order to “survive” for the junket, their guild union must be in good condition, and they must be in good odor. In order to enjoy “Socialism,” that is, the vacation of such junketings, they must have “lived,” and the only way they have to live is to be in with the fakirs, who keep the guild unions alive.

It follows from the two utterances placed above in parallel lines that Mr. Hanford has unbeknown to himself, actually contributed a valuable piece of information to the Labor Movement. The *American Labor Union Journal* ill-naturedly says of Mr. Hanford and his set that they saddled the so-called Socialist party with scab-herdism. This is true, but is only an incident to what they did. What they really did was to show the Siamese twinship between the guild form of unionism and their bogus Socialist party. They need such a party for enjoyment, but “in the time intervening” between enjoyment and enjoyment, they must live, and they could not live if during their masquerading as Socialists they did not hold up the end of the Gompers scab-herding principle, in other words, act as buffers against bona fide unionism. Thus the four-jointed truth in the matter is:

Without the hope of Socialism, neither the rank and file of the Gompers union nor the grafting fakirs, who have no permanent graft on such concerns, could hold their heads above water; such unionism rushes them perditionward, the gin-mill being one of the gates. With bona fide Socialism there is hope for the rank and file, but not for the incidental Hanford set of grafters on the Gompers unions. A bona fide Socialist party would afford these gentry no salvation. They need a party that they can pollute. Then, when the graft on the union intermittently runs out, they switch on their “Socialist” party; and when the graft on their “Socialist” party intermittently runs out, then “in the intervening time” they graft on the union—by getting on delegateships, or on “agitation” or “secret” committees in the strikes that the permanent union grafters, “seen” by one set of competing capitalists, engineer against another set, or are allowed to get and keep a job in some shop.

There nothing like giving a scamp rope. The national convention of the so-called Socialist, alias Social Democratic, party did that much good that it give Ben Hanford rope—or to stick to our simile, furnished him the double-barreled gun to shoot himself down with in the eyes of thinking men.

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

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