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FIRST EDITORIAL

CAST ASIDE LIKE A SQUEEZED LEMON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

An incident has recently occurred in the Labor Movement of this city that merits contemplation. It serves to illustrate the idiotic utopianism of the “boring-from-within” theory in trades unions run by Labor Fakirs; incidentally it renders the no less valuable service of holding up to merited scorn the poltroonish tactics once pursued, but now happily discarded for all time, by the Socialist Labor Party in its “trade union policy.”

Mr. BEN HANFORD, now an expelled member of the Socialist Labor Party, is a member of the International Typographical Union, No. 6, in this city. None clearer than he recognized the demoralizing effect of the Labor Fakir upon the working-class. In language, peculiarly his own by its loudness, hysterics and profanity, he unmercifully denounced in conversation the criminal conduct of the Labor Fakirs, those of his own Union in particular; and he drank some, and swore deep to their confusion. Then came the *Sun* strike; and, with it, a gradual transformation until the point was reached where Mr. HANFORD was found cheek by jowl with the Labor Fakirs of his Union, doing their bidding at all points. About two weeks ago this point was also passed, Mr. HANFORD finding himself suddenly dumped. He ran for delegate of the *Journal* chapel, and was beaten ignominiously.

What is it that was happening in the midst of all this?

The Labor Fakir has a keen eye for weaknesses of the human nature; he detects these quickly, and with masterful tact exploits them for his own purposes. The Socialist “borer from within,” whatever other characteristics may be his, has two leading ones: he is vainglorious, and he is a softy. These two weaknesses the Labor Fakirs regularly turn to advantage at the right moment. That right moment is the strike. Then they push the “borer from within” to the front; they tickle his vanity by giving him opportunities to hear himself talk, and see to it that his fervor is kept at boiling heat by applause; they make him feel important, and gratify his conceit by

throwing upon him much work, particularly hard and compromising work; in short, they “work” him for all he is worth;—but despite all the glory, prominence and importance that they seem to heap upon this innocent, they never let go of the helm. This sort of thing is allowed to go on until the Labor Fakirs in charge, in their unerring judgment in such matters, conclude that they have no more use for their Socialist, and he is then simply cashiered. Just about the time when our softy’s head is most swollen, when he imagines himself “running things,” and congratulates himself that he is about to turn the whole Union into the S.L.P., he finds himself cast aside like a squeezed lemon, useless and powerless;—and that is the end of all his labors.

This is a condensed history of “boring from within,” and of the last six or seven months of the instructive life of Mr. HANFORD, himself a Socialist “borer from within.” The Labor Fakir is a dispassionate philosopher. He harbors no personal resentments. He is ever ready to use anything that brings grist to his mill. When the *Sun* strike came, Mr. HANFORD, despite all he had said against them, was just the man whom the Labor Fakirs needed. As a “borer from within,” he was to be had for the asking. Accordingly, instead of utilizing the matchless opportunity of the strike as a characterful, well-balanced Socialist would, to preach the gospel of the class-conscious Labor Movement and thus, though at the expense of the Labor Fakirs, help enlighten the wage-slaves, he took the poltroon’s course. An opposite course he condemned as “endangering Socialist propaganda in the Union.” He went before Section New York with a cowardly strike resolution, he appeared in Cooper Union and many other places with rhapsodies of the stalest and most poisonous pure and simple; he “braved” the Courts; and, while it is true that he got his fingers on a \$5-a-day Secret Committeeship, yet it is undeniable that, with jaws, legs and arms, he worked like a dray-horse. Just as he was imagining himself at the zenith of his glory, and all-powerful to succeed in his “boring from within,” he fell head foremost, cast-off, useless, powerless—bored out.

The poltroon period of the S.L.P. is left far behind. The Socialist Movement now harbors men of different caliber, whom the Labor Fakirs—long familiar only with the softy-vainglorious combination—, now look with amazement on, and whom, with chattering teeth, they decry as “bad Socialists.”