

EDITORIAL

GRAPE NO. 2. (FAKIR MENTALITY).

By DANIEL DE LEON

ALL careful observers must have been struck with the dough-face appearance of the Fakir. He has no opinion of his own; he is all things to all men; he always looks as if he were ready to give up his own views and agree with you; uncertainty is smirched all over his countenance. This facial appearance and mentality are a natural consequence of the slippery, because contradictory, ground that he stands on.

The fakir starts with the theory that the capitalist has rights; and yet on top of that he “demands” that the workingman be treated well. The fakir admits that the capitalist is rightful master of his plant; and yet he “demands” of the capitalist that he run his plant upon “Union rules.” The fakir admits that the capitalist’s profits are proper; yet he “demands” higher wages from the capitalist. Such a contradictory position makes the man who holds it acquire permanently the facial expression of a man standing on a banana peel.

The capitalist is a robber and lives upon robbery perpetrated on the workers; to concede that he has rights is to deny all rights on the part of the workingman. The capitalist is a usurper; to concede that he is properly master of his plant is to strip the worker of all rights to dictate how the plant shall be run. The capitalist’s profits are fleecings from the workingman; to concede that profits are legitimate is to place the workingman who asks for higher wages in the light of a beggar. Too ignorant to learn, too corrupt to accept the sound doctrines of the New Trade Unionist, as that would deprive him of his living, the Labor Fakir is trained in a school of contradictions. The effect of that is that he never holds straightforward language: he seeks to carry water on both shoulders: he wobbles.

The mark of these characteristics of degeneracy is stamped upon the document recently issued by the “Borers from Within” on the late cigarmakers’ strike, as published in these columns and previously commented on.

Time was, when, being driven by the Socialist Labor Party, the old time Fakirs,

the Regulars, yielded the point of the necessity of political action, and were frequently heard to vapor about the “political field.” But they were always careful never to say WITH WHAT PARTY. They didn’t want to spoil it with any: by leaving all parties unmentioned, they could boodle with the Capitalist parties, and impose upon the Socialist Labor Party, until the S.L.P. refusing, finally, to be longer deceived, cast off from its midst all those who took naturally to being played for gudgeons, and drew the sword and threw away the scabbard against the whole pack of the Organized Scabbery of Labor Fakirs. As the Regulars acted formerly, so do the Irregulars, or “Borers from Within,” act now; the poltroonery and chicanery that characterized the Regulars, now characterize the Irregulars. The “Borers from Within,” in this instance, close their plagiarism of the charges brought against their pals, the Regular Labor Fakirs, by the DAILY PEOPLE, and at the time denounced by them, with the allegation that “the working class must march its hosts against the capitalist class in the political struggle as well.”

As the Regular, or old time Labor Fakir, is a caricature imitation of the bourgeois, so is the Irregular Fakir, or “Borer from Within,” a caricature imitation of the Regulars. These “Borers from Within” do not even dare to come out for their own Kangaroo party. They hint only darkly at “the political struggle.” Thus they expect to get support for their job-seeking schemes from all sides. They calculate that the Republicans will say: “They mean our tariff on tobacco leaf Republican party;” that the Democrats will say: “They mean our anti-expansion Democratic party;” and that the Kangaroos will say: “They mean our armory-building Social Democratic party.”

Ignorance breeds corruption. By a sort of in-breeding the two produce the poltroon with a man-on-a-banana-peel physiognomy and mentality.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded January 2006