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EDITORIAL

## Go to, Fakirs!

By DANIEL DE LEON

**F**or a number of years trade union leaders of the Gompers, McGuire and Powderly species, when urged by the Socialists to take a decided stand in favor of progressive action on the natural lines of the labor movement, said in reply, “confidentially,” that no one who knew them well could doubt their Socialistic inwardness; that they deplored the conservatism of their followers; that they could not, in the interest of the very cause which was dearer even to them than to the outspoken Socialists, speak out as they wished because the prejudiced rank and file would immediately place the affairs of the unions in the hands of reactionists; that they hoped for a slow but steady change of views, to be brought about by the teachings of experience in the natural course of economic development; and that, as soon as a new spirit would manifest itself in their respective labor organizations, they would be found where they longed to be—at the head of the progressive column; until then, however, they must, as leaders, remain at the tail end of the retrograding cohort.

Well, the day came at last when in spite of the systematic muzzling of Socialists in trade organizations; in spite of the taboo apparently placed by the workingmen themselves upon the idea of emancipation from wage slavery; in spite of the hypocritical motto, “No Politics in Trade Unions,” with which the “political workingmen” of the boodle parties drowned the voice of any member “unpolitical” enough to suggest the necessity of true labor politics, the new spirit manifested itself and became so strong that it could no longer be repressed.

Here was, certainly, the opportunity of the “leaders.” By changing positions from the tail end of the retrograde to the head of the progressive column, not only they could satisfy their legitimate but long suppressed desires without endangering the cause that was so dear to them, but they could secure a new lease of that very power, with the emoluments attached thereto, which some skeptical people had come to think was their only real aspiration.

Strange to say, they stuck to the tail and pulled it with all their might. Their previous

secret love for Socialism and the Socialists turned into hatred of the most open and violent sort. Their intrigues against the new spirit took the most disgusting and treacherous forms. To be short, they fought for the right to commit suicide with an energy that they had never displayed in the struggle for life.

This passeth the understanding. Why did those cunning men throw off the mask they had so long worn successfully at the very moment when the wearing of it a little longer could alone save them from decapitation? May it be that their conscience told them that only by committing harrikarri they could atone for their past misdeeds? Or do they perchance suspect that everybody by this time has plainly seen their faces under their disguise and that it were nobler to die unmasked, fighting, than to be detected in the art of shamming and sacked accordingly?

However that may be, go to, labor fakirs; this is doomsday for you.

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

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