

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 2, NO. 320.

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, MAY 16, 1902.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

THE FAKIR'S QUANDARY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WITH all the deserved contempt that the Socialist has for the "Labor Leader," it is the Socialist alone who can and does really pity the fellow whenever, as President Mitchell just now, he finds himself tangled in the meshes of his own corruption-breeding ignorance.

The condition of the coal miner was from the start bad. It was a badly paid trade, besides being unhealthy; and periodically it was accompanied with distressful accidents. His toil requited with such a pittance that it was impossible for him to recuperate the expenditure of tissue; and the evil being aggravated by the unsanitary conditions under which he worked; moreover, the whole being capped by the thousand and one "caves-in" and "blow-ups" attendant upon the trade, the miner, one would think, started as low as was possible to be. And yet, from bad this condition grew worse; and from worse, still worse. It seems to be the miner's fate to prove that, under the capitalist system of production, there is no limit to the depth that the workingman can be squeezed down to. Among this class the "pure and simpler" went to work, and organized "unions." The concerns were built upon the old delusions that constitute the shipyards of the British "union." The workers were told they could resist the encroachments of the employer along the lines of the employer, that is to say, along the lines of capitalism. The "Labor Leader" soon was in full bloom, bundle of ignorance as he was he did not understand the reasons why he could not make good his promises to the men; bundle of corruption, as he was bound to develop into, he took office under the capitalist, and his real mission then became to jolly the men along. But here he ran up against a snag. The capitalist system proceeds along its course; which is to say, that it turns the screws ever tighter upon the men. It goes without saying that the work of the "Labor Leader," or fakir, becomes under such conditions ever more irksome. A situation is finally developed in

which the fellow finds himself in a positive quandary. That is the case with Mitchell just now.

Capitalism has been doing its work to perfection. The result is:

First, that the rank and file finds itself in a desperate condition, almost beyond the "jollying" point;

Second, the rank and file, stuffed full by the Mitchells of "pure and simple" nonsense, demands of its officers to be led "to victory."

A rat caught in a trap is not in a worse plight than a fakir confronted by such a dilemma. A long life of dishonesty in their teachings to the men has so completely emasculated the fakir of all character that, even if he had sense to perceive, he lacks manhood to say:

"Boys, we have been traveling along a false road. It leads to a blind alley. Turn back. There is no hope for you while this social system of capitalism lasts. You must organize yourselves so as to overthrow it. You are bound to go down unless the working class owns the land on, and the tools with, which to work. That means freedom, it means happiness. That's a great deal to get. But it is easier to get that than slight improvements along the capitalist line. Go back to work. Organize yourselves into the Socialist Labor Party. We can sweep these regions at the next election. We shall then organize into the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance. And thus, our economic forces being protected by the guns of a mighty and growing political party of labor, we shall between election and election be able to throw up the trenches of economic protection, and on election take a further long step towards deliverance."

But Mitchell cannot if he would, and he would not if he could, hold such language. And there he stands before his convention, impaled upon the horns of a dilemma of his own constructing.

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