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EDITORIAL

## GET OFF THE FENCE!

By DANIEL DE LEON

“**U**NION Man and Socialist” has struck his teeth into and keeps firm hold of the calf of the California Socialist party.

Readers of *The People* will remember “Union Man and Socialist’s” demand in the San Francisco *Organized Labor* that the S.P. endorse the candidate for Mayor nominated by the A.F. of L. Unions of the city. The reasoning was sound. He stated the well-known facts that the S.P. favored and endorsed the A.F. of L.; that the S.P., with its small vote, could not possibly elect its Mayor; that the Union Labor party could; and that the S.P. should prove its sincerity. Being answered, or, rather, an attempt at an answer having been made by some S.P. men, “Union Man and Socialist” returned to the charge with a reply that makes one hear the sound of the crunching of bones as “Union Man and Socialist’s” teeth sink deeper into the aforementioned calf. The gist of the reply is found in the passage: “Is the Socialist party in favor of or opposed to the American Federation of Labor? Get off the fence! Answer yes or no.”

Many are the morals that can be drawn from the perplexity in which the California S.P. finds itself now, and which the whole S.P. is bound to find itself in eventually, if not sooner. The leading one of these morals is the valuable sociologic one that things do not happen at haphazard, as freaks imagine, but are ruled by a law whose logic can not be run away from.

The S.P. has all along been a heeler and bruiser for the A.F. of L. Not that the S.P. realizes the important mission of the economic organization of Labor. If it did, then its conduct would not be the blackguard one that distinguishes it of columniating the Socialist Labor Party every time the S.L.P. points out the crimes committed against the Cause of Labor by A.F. of L. Craft Unionism. A person may be mistaken in the estimate of another’s acts, and attack these acts, just tho’ the

acts may be. The honesty or dishonesty of his conduct is determined by his methods. The heeler-and-gouger method marks the mercenary. The S.P. has no faith and never had any in the A.F. of L., for the simple reason that the law of S.P. existence is pure and simple politicianism, which means visionaryism. This notwithstanding, the S.P. has helped, however unintentionally, to promote the cause of clarification.

In its wild, heels over head chase for votes, any kind of votes, the S.P. affected love and affection for the A.F. of L. It hoped to wheedle the craft Unionist vote for its ticket by echoing their errors, and by palliating, even approving their wrongful acts. The process could have but one effect, or result. Upon the same principle that, a bar of iron being stuck into water, the oxygen of the water parts company with the hydrogen and cleaves to the iron, the adulation of the A.F. of L. by the S.P. did not bring the A.F. of L. vote over to the S.P., by insensibly caused the A.F. of L. to cleave to the "politics" which the S.P. preached, and go it alone. This was a logical development.

The next step in the evolutionary development was like unto the first. Having absorbed from the S.P. the theory of "politics," the political A.F. of L. now naturally demands that the S.P. disband and merge with the "Union Labor Party," and not be a political scab.

The third and last link in the evolutionary chain was what we now see. The political A.F. of L. discovers that the S.P. support of its economic misdemeanors was but a lure, whereupon "Union Man and Socialist," uttering the sentiments of the political A.F. of L., turns upon the S.P. with:

"Get off the fence!"

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

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