

EDITORIAL

THE TURN OF THE CHICAGO KANGAROOS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IMMEDIATELY upon the experience made in San Francisco, where the Organized Scabbery, profiting by the pontifical benediction of the Kangaroo Social Democracy, alias “Socialist” party, roped the rank and file of the pure and simple Unions into a “Union Labor Party,” and knocked the stuffings out of the Kangaroos, there looms up a similar visitation above the horizon of the Chicago “alias” crew, threatening identical results, and proportionally throwing them into the sort of epileptic fits that people are known to sprawl in who get caught by their own meshes.

The sprawlings of the Chicago Kangaroos are comical to watch. They are addressing “the Trades Unionists” with articles many yards long. These articles argue that “the hostile attitude of the two capitalist parties, Democratic and Republican, toward organized labor is plain and palpable”; that “independent” labor politics have ever “disappeared in the swamps and bogs of capitalist politics”; that the right politics for labor is “Socialist politics”; and that the way to secure that is not to follow the lead of the “political scabs,” who have them in tow, but to join the Social Democracy, alias “Socialist” party. The whole trend of the Kangaroo argument is that the politics of Labor should be strictly along the lines of the Class Struggle. And that is the very rope that strangles these gentlemen.

On the front page of their organ, and framed in a double border of black lines, there is a standing declaration of principles headed: “Resolution on Socialism and Trade Unionism,” adopted at the Indianapolis Convention, July, 1901, of this so-called “Socialist” party. Among the passages thus conspicuously held forth, there glistens the following:

“We call the attention of trades unionists to the fact that THE CLASS

STRUGGLE, SO NOBLY WAGED BY TRADES UNIONISTS TO-DAY” is not enough to abolish the exploitation of labor, but that it “is the duty of every trades unionist...to assist in building up a strong political movement of the wage-working class.”

The declaration by these Kangaroos that the rank and file of the trades unions, whom they are addressing, are “to-day nobly waging the class struggle,” knocks on the head the Kangaroo posture of opposing the sort of politics into which the rank and file is to be led by the identical leaders under whom they are said to be “to-day nobly waging the class struggle.” If the tolerating of the furnishing of scabs to the Tampa cigar-manufacturers by the Gompers-Strasser-Perkins Cigarmakers’ Union, and of deputy-marshals to the Tampa middle class to shanghai and maroon the striking cigarmakers of the Resistencia Union is a “noble waging of the class struggle”; if the tolerating of Schaffer’s inciting and ordering of a strike of the “aristocrats of labor” in the steel industry is a “noble waging of the class struggle”; if the tolerating of the “check-off” system imposed by the leaders of the Miners’ Union and the International Typographical Union is a “noble waging of the class struggle”; if the allowing the starting of strikes at the behest of an employer so as to ruin his competitor in the garment trades is a “noble waging of the class struggle”; if to tolerate the aiding of employers in throwing dust in {into?} the eyes of the machinists and making them believe they have won a victory when they won a defeat is a “noble waging of the class struggle”; if to submit to be taxed by the Tobin organization and to have the label given to the labor fleecer in exchange for help, rendered by him in the squeezing of such taxes, and regardless of the wages paid; if to support a raft of trades journals that bristle with declarations on the “rights of the employer,” and that echo such employers’ lies as that the life of the wage-earner has been prolonged; if that and so much more of the same stamp is a “noble waging of the class struggle”, and if to denounce the leaders in such felonious practices, and to seek to open the eyes of the rank and file on the way they are being betrayed is to be a “scab” and a “Union-wrecker,” by what process of reasoning can Democratic, Republican and “Independent Labor” party politics be branded “capitalist politics,” and by what process of reasoning can those who hold the above language steer clear of the stigma of “scabs” and “Union-wreckers” when they now turn upon these same labor leaders, dub them “political scabs” and seek to induce the rank and file to fall

off from them, that is to say, to fall off from the decisions that those leaders will secure from their Trades Unions so as to set up a “Union Party”? If the fact that a body styles itself a “Labor Union” is enough to render it sacrosanct, to the extent of sanctifying all its economic actions, to the extent of compelling the silent approval, if not loud consent of class-struggle-Socialists, by what process of reasoning can the political actions of such a body—running strictly parallel to the lines of the, by them, “to-day nobly waged class struggle” on the economic field—be open to the condemnation of class-struggle-Socialists? If the former is an impious act, by what process of reasoning dare class-struggle-Socialists commit the latter?

These questions need but to be put, and the answer leaps to sight and hearing. The Chicago Kangaroo is caught in his own meshes; he is knocked down with his own words; he stands with both his cloven feet in his own vulgar mouth. Socialism does not overthrow one superstition to bow down before another of its own creation. A labor organization must be a LABOR organization. No amount of labeling will stand for the essence. An organization, the every breath of which is capitalist thought, is not a LABOR organization, it is a wheel in the mechanism of capitalist domination, and must be uprooted; the leader of such a body, is no better than a Labor Benedict Arnold: against that brood nothing short of a war of extermination must be waged. The Socialist Labor Party,—made up, not of poltroons, but of men; animated, not by knavery but by honor,—planted itself upon that solid ground. That ground was too elevated for the Kangaroo. He set up his camp in the swamps. He pronounced a “nobly waging of the class struggle,” the reactionary conduct of pure and simpledom led by the infamous Organized Scabbery. And to-day—like the complaisant husband, whose rival, no longer needing such a screen, kicks him out of doors—the Kangaroo is everywhere threatened with being put on the sidewalk, the Organized Scabbery having used him for all he was worth.

A complaisant husband, kicked out of doors by his rival, and there, out in the rain and cold, scolding that rival, who is safe within through the very complaisance of the wretch, such a wretch presents no more ludicrous, and piteous and despicable a sight than does the Chicago Kangaroo, now seen scolding the Organized Scabs, whom he helped to ingratiate themselves with the rank and file by the declaration that their treasonable acts were a “nobly waging of the class struggle.”

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