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EDITORIAL

## The Same Old Corpse in a New Shroud.

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**J**ust before adjourning, the so-called Convention of the so-called American Federation of Labor adopted the following resolution:

“That the American Federation of Labor most firmly and unequivocally favors the independent use of the ballot by the trades unionists and workingmen, united regardless of party, that we may elect men from our own ranks to make new laws and administer them along the lines laid down in the legislative demands of the American Federation of Labor, and at the same time an impartial judiciary that will not govern us by arbitrary injunctions of the courts nor act as the pliant tools of corporate wealth.”

All along the attitude of this “A.F. of L.” has been the attitude known as “Pure and Simple,” to wit, that labor needs no political organization, and can obtain all its demands, satisfy all its aspirations, by organizing itself purely and simply upon economic lines. In days long gone by and in climes far from ours, so false a position could and did find its apology in pure and simple ignorance; in our own days, however, and our own clime, this position has been directly traceable to and productive of pure and simple corruption; it is nothing less than impurity and duplicity. Its workings told its tale.

The pure and simpler was ever the last one to leave politics alone; in point of fact politics is the breath of his nostrils. With the regularity of clockwork, at every recurring election, his name appears, with his title of “President,” “Secretary,” or what not of some labor organization attached thereto, as the endorser of some capitalist politician or other, whom he “recommends to the workingmen” as a “staunch friend of labor.” We are all familiar with the signatures of these pure and simplers to such documents; they are a feature of campaigns; no doubt, from Gompers down or up, the cuts of their signatures are held ready for use in the capitalist’s papers; and the consideration for such endorsements are found in the political jobs held by these worthies, their sons, relatives and cronies.

Read and interpreted by the light of these undeniable facts, “pure and simpledom” does not mean a denial of the element of politics in the labor movement; on the contrary, the element of politics is recognized and used for all that it is worth. What it means, on the subject of politics, is that the labor vote shall not be consolidated in such manner as to render it valueless to the labor fakir, but shall be used and consolidated in such manner as to enable the labor fakir to traffic on it.

Hence the violent opposition of this gentry to “partisan” politics. The establishment of a labor party means the organization of the workers on a plan that precludes the hope of their voting for any but their own party candidates. Such “partisanism” would cut off the labor fakirs’ income from political sources. No labor party candidate would give a cent for the “endorsement” of any labor fakir or of the whole crew combined; his endorsement he gets at his nomination from his own, the labor party that sets him up; there is nothing from that quarter for the fakir. On the other hand, what capitalist politician would give a copper for the fakirs’ endorsement, when he knows that the labor vote which they are expected to deliver cannot be delivered, it having become “partisan” to its own political program? Honorable politics is rat-bane to the fakir; he must have dishonorable politics. This is attainable only upon “non-partisan” lines. Then he can endorse, or, to put it in English, sell out simultaneously to all the parties of capital.

Thus did things stand before; thus they stand to-day after the adoption of the resolution in question. The fakir feels the undertow that is pulling him to perdition; he feels the strength of the current that is battering into wrecks his pure and simple hull. The masses are awakening to such a sense of class-consciousness that the old style union cannot resist. “Political and Economic Organization” is the rising note in the storm that is approaching. In these straits, the pure and simple crew of pirates drop the old winding sheet of “No Politics” in which the Pure and Simple Corpse was shrouded, and wind their old corpse in the new shroud of “Non-partisan politics.”

But the stench of the old corpse deprives the new shroud of any chance of deceiving anybody.

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

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