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EDITORIAL

RIGHT FOR ONCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE report of the Rockford, Ill., State Federation of Labor convention, cursorily referred to last week, records one of the rare instances in which a constituency of the A.F. of Hell deserves applause.

In regulation A.F. of L. style a motion had come before the house to appoint a committee of lobbyists to the Illinois Legislature, to secure the passage of favorable legislation. It goes without saying that such methods are vicious. They proceed from that fertile ground of mischief and corruption which consists in denying obvious facts. It is an obvious fact that no longer can the working class be improved by "reform": all that Legislatures could now do is, at best, to pass laws looking towards improvement, but which laws, in point of fact, remain dead letters, effective only in promoting corruption among the labor leaders who are bribed with jobs, if not cash, to help wink at the violation of the "reform" law. It is an obvious fact that, not through prayers and genuflections to politicians can the working class "improve" their condition, but their condition, having reached the point where MENDING is out of the question, there is nothing left but to END their distress. A.F. of Hellism echoes the voice of its real presidents, the Hannas, the Belmonts, and the now probable Seth Lows. A.F. of Hellism denies the obvious facts, and prays for "reforms" through corrupt and corrupting committees of lobbyists. All this notwithstanding, the conduct of the Rockford convention deserves praise.

When the motion came up to appoint a committee of lobbyists, one of those curiosities known as "Socialist party delegates to A.F. of Hell gatherings" rose and objected with fierce indignation. His remedy was to vote for Socialist party candidates to the Legislature. The worthy was actually buried under derision. The arguments against him it would be too long to reproduce. It is clear, however, that they proceeded from the following principle: "Pure and simple craft Unionism

breeds corruption; admitted; but some of us get the benefit thereof; on the other hand pure and simple political Socialism must, like all lame-duck measures, likewise breed corruption; but the loaves and fishes would not then come our way, they will go your way, with us out in the cold. There is not enough to divide between you and us. You want your finger in that pie; we want the pie all to ourselves. The workingmen, say you, are too dumb as yet to listen to the solid talk of the Socialist Labor Party and the I.W.W. So say we all. For that very reason we propose to feather our own nests. You say nothing can be got for the rank and file of Labor through Union efforts before Legislatures; admitted: for the same reason nothing can be got out of Legislatures for the rank and file of Labor by pure and simple Socialist politicians. The reason is that politics without economic backing is moonshine. We are both lame ducks. We clasp hands with you across the prostrate body of Labor, which both our two sets consider too dumb to do the right thing. We are willing to let you 'bore from within,' that is to lie low; but we having 'been there' first, do not propose to let you drive us out. Git out yourself."

For once an A.F. of Hell gathering was right.

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

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