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EDITORIAL

LINES ANENT A CARTOON.

By DANIEL DE LEON

YESTERDAY'S (September 29th) issue of the *New York Call*, Socialist party organ, has a brilliant cartoon, in which, however, the brilliant cartoonist made just one mistake—a mistake in one of the letterings.

The cartoon represents three roughly-carved wooden decoy-ducks a-floating on the water—these are correctly lettered, “Labor Fakirs,” in obvious and striking illustration of the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class who are whooping it up for the Republican party, and also of the sixty-and-odd notorious A.F. of L. labor lieutenants of the capitalist class in this city who were announced as President and Vice-Presidents of the “Workingmen’s Political Party,” which gathered two days before at Cooper Union to “accelerate” the boom of the Tammany-Independent candidate for Mayor, Justice William J. Gaynor, and which the said “Workingmen’s Political Party” then and there nominated with the directness and precision of well trained understrappers.

The cartoon further represents a flock of geese, a-flying through the air, and converging towards the decoy-ducks, which evidently are attracting them, by whom they are evidently taken in, and through whom they are as evidently to be victimized—these dupes are also correctly lettered, “Labor Votes.”

Finally, the cartoon represents, a man a-crouching in a punt behind the reeds, and, gun in hand, looking at the geese as they descend to the decoy-ducks. He is labeled “Capitalist Politician.” It is this lettering that is incorrect. Neither the lines on the man’s face, nor his posture, bear out the lettering. Were he really a capitalist politician his posture would reveal the thrill of joy, his face the smile of glad anticipation. They do neither. The man’s posture betrays impending collapse, his face with its hanging jaw denotes dismay; in fact, the man is bent over and looks as if he just received a kick in the pit of his stomach. Whom does that man impersonate?—THE GENIUS OF THE S.P.

Even if one look no further, the picture is a marvel of artistic grasp of subject and cleverness of execution. The Socialist party has long been “gunning” for “Labor Votes.” It “gunned” for them in regular Labor Fakir style: put on all the allurements of the Fakir: sided closely with him and took his part: helped him bark at the Socialist Labor Party every time the S.L.P. exposed him: aye, echoed the bark so accurately that it could not be distinguished from the Fakir’s: it went even further, it threw upon him the glamour of Socialism by denouncing the S.L.P. as unspeakably un-Socialist. And now, when the fruit of all these efforts was to be reaped, the S.P. finds, to the unsettling of its dull brain, that it has labored only for the Fakir. It has treated the Labor voters as though they were geese, and the geese go to the decoy-ducks. No wonder the Genius of the S.P. looks dismayed and on the verge of collapse.

But the brilliancy of the cartoonist’s conception and execution ends not there. With the real artist, there ever is unity in his figures. The three decoy-ducks lettered “Labor Fakirs,” a-floating on the water, are not a-floating loosely about. Scanned a little closer, their faces will be found expressive. Cleverly did the artist carve on their wooden countenances the look of astonishment, indignation, aye, of contempt, too, directed at that man in the punt. The cartoonist did even more. The painting of wind is considered a great achievement in art. Our cartoonist has accomplished a greater achievement. He has painted, or, rather, drawn sound. The decoy-ducks are not silent. Skillful lines around their eyes and bills, as the former dart and the latter point to the man in the punt, are resonant with this challenging apostrophe:

“What’s the matter with you! Come down here into the water with us! You have all this time agreed with us that the S.L.P. is an enemy of Unionism in condemning our conduct as economic and political scabbery. We are sound Unionists on the economic field, by the same token are we sound Unionists on the political field! You growl at us now? You must be a political scab! Quack, quack, quack—political scab!”

That cartoonist is a great artist. Art should be encouraged. He should get the whole of the “One Day’s Wage Fund.” He has earned it.

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

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