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FIRST EDITORIAL

THEY START IN EARLY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

At this season, when all over the country strikes are breaking out; when the dumb proletariat is blindly striking about, and not infrequently sold out by its miscreant leaders, an incident is recorded that sheds much light, not on the perverseness of pure and simpledom only, but especially upon its widespread demoralization effect.

Among the divisions of Labor in rebellious posture during the last week or two, the most sympathetic was that of the newsboys. They were on strike against two types of the Capitalist class: against the new millionaire, "Hungry Joe," of the *World*, and the born millionaire, Hearst, of the *Journal*. These social waifs—who, ill-clad and worse fed and housed, have been spending their lung-power in rain and sunshine, in snow and sleet, and in the broiling heat, running their little feet off to eke out a miserable pittance, while the above-named millionaires were raking in the shekels out of these starvelings' marrow and life-blood,—struck their little blow. But puny as the blow was bound to be from these children, it acquired a swing and force that none other of the present strikes could boast of. A positive public opinion steeled and nerved the youngsters; their cry and their demands called forth a positive response from the public heart, beating strongly under a public vest. When the valuable public sentiment was at its height, it was suddenly pricked. Treason broke out among the leaders of the newsboys. And what treason!

One of them, in genuine political labor fakir style, tried to reach prominence at the expense of his fellows, in the politicians' eyes, with the expectation of gaining "political pull;" he was promptly turned down; but hardly was this danger averted, when a new one, and even a greater one, followed. Two of the leaders are now under bail under charges of blackmail and extortion. The affidavits for their arrests set forth that last Monday they went to the office of Patrick T. Duff, a *World* representative, and offered for the sum of \$600 to call off the strike from Yorkville

to the Borough of the Bronx, stating that, “if they did not get the money, they would make the strike stronger than ever, as they could get money to carry it on from some of the opposition dailies which were being benefited by the strike,”—all in the approved pure and simple labor fakir style.

These newsboys’ leaders begin early. Their minds, poisoned by the miasmas of the putrid movement that has for years been called the “Labor Movement,” can conceive of no greater “cleverness” than the “cleverness” of the adult fakir, who allows himself to be used as a tool by the Capitalists in their competitive struggles with one another, and is ever ready to sell out his fellows, who place confidence in him, to either or to both of the Capitalist concerns to whom he is willing to be a cat’s-paw.

Capitalism, and its first-born, fakirism, are rotten ripe for the mud-scow.

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