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EDITORIAL

## TWO TYPES—SAMBUCO AND HANFORD.

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**W**HAT the “check-off” system means needs no detailed explanation. A summary is sufficient. It is a system by means of which the labor-fleecer retains control of the Labor Movement. Originally, the labor-fleecer needed do nothing more than issue his orders to his labor lieutenant, the officer or fakir in the Union. This gentleman, thereupon, saw to it that strikes were declared against a competitor of the employer, or boycotts placed on such competitor’s goods, or resolutions passed in favor of some legislative measure that suited Capital and left Labor out in the cold, or endorsements adopted of capitalist candidates for office. Incidentally, and all the time, the labor lieutenant was to keep his eyes open to detect and quickly nip in the bud, by persecution and brow-beating, every manifestation of intelligent Working Class opposition to the rule of the Capitalist Class. All this the employer accomplished through his labor lieutenant in the name and in behalf of “Unionism” and “Organized Labor.” Thus the “Labor Movement” was but a manikin of the Capitalist Movement. This state of things is predicated upon another, to wit, the readiness and spontaneity of the rank and file to place their necks in the yoke of the labor lieutenants of Capital.

What, on the one hand, with the bitter experience made by the rank and file of the way the labor lieutenant treated them and disposed of their funds, and, on the other, the declining earnings of labor, the rank and file grew less ready to join “Organized Labor;” the former spontaneity to place their necks in the yoke of the labor lieutenants of their labor fleecers slacked up. To allow this state of things to continue meant the downfall of the labor lieutenant; and that, in turn, would mean the end of the time when the Labor Movement would dance to the fiddle of the capitalist class. To check this dire consummation, the capitalist class, jointly with its labor lieutenants, devised the “check-off” system. By this system, whether the rank and file wanted or not, it had to chip in dues to support the labor lieutenant. On payday, the workingmen’s envelope contain their wages, less the dues due to the

“Union”; these dues are checked-off from the wages. Thus the labor-fleeing employer stepped more fully into the ranks of “Organized Labor.” Formerly he only ruled the “Union” from the outside; now he becomes an officer of the “Union,” its dues collector. The “check-off” system, wherever introduced, marks the complete domination of capitalism in the “Union.”

This remarkable development brings to the touch the people in the ranks of the Working Class. It divides them into two sets: the poltroons and the men; the set that submits and from which the Working Class has nothing to expect but base betrayal, and the set that rebels, that rings the note of warning to its class, and that alone carries in its folds the promise of the emancipation of Labor. Into these two sets the whole Labor Movement is divided. Types of the two sets are found in the miner Pietro Sambuco and in the member of Typographical Union No. 6, Ben Hanford.

As reported in these columns, a meeting was recently called by the miners of Nottingham, Pa., to perfect an organization. Everything was going on smoothly until the company showed its hands, through an officer of the United Mine Workers’ Union. This body is controlled by the capitalists so completely that it has adopted the infamous “check-off” system. The labor lieutenant in this instance proposed that Sambuco, who had been elected to a Committee, be chosen to go around the mine to get names for the “check-off” system. The insidious scheme suffered shipwreck on the spot. Sambuco refused flat-footedly; and there and then he exposed the “check-off” system, together with the Organized Scabbery that promoted such treason to Labor. The discussion was long and protracted; the Organized Scabbery resorted to all their tricks, including that of claiming to be “Socialists-too”; but they were routed and discomfited in the midst of the floods of light that Sambuco and his friends poured upon the situation, enlightening all the others who had thitherto been kept in dense intellectual darkness on the Labor Question by labor lieutenants of the fleecer class.

From the type “Sambuco” now turn to the type “Hanford.” Hanford’s Union, too, has adopted the “check-off” system. It is practiced and is in full bloom in two offices in this very city. It is in operation in the office of the *Record and Guide*, 227 William street, and in Rogowsky’s, 440 Pearl street, the largest machine-composition shop in the city, outside of the newspaper shops. Has Hanford’s voice ever been raised in his Union against the iniquity? No! But not only has he by silence tolerated the wrong; he has by actual submission endorsed it. He worked within the last twelve months

at Rogowsky's, and every pay-day he bowed submissively acquiescent when his pay envelope, containing his wages, with the dues subtracted, was handed to him. As well might "Socialist-too" Hanford never have "passed that way" for all the light that his presence shed on the path of his fellow wage slaves on the dangers that beset them, as well might he never have been for all the example set by him of manly resistance to the degradation and enslavement of his class!

It goes without saying that Sambuco, the mentally clean and morally virile wage-slave, is a member of the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. It is still more superfluous to note that Hanford, the mentally unclean and morally poltroonish wage-slave, is a favorite figurehead in the Kangaroo Social Democratic Party.

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

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