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EDITORIAL

KICKING AGAINST PRICKS.

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WITH Senator La Follette leading, the Insurgents in the Senate are presenting the sad spectacle of effort misdirected, therefore, wasted. A singular display of such wastefulness of energy was witnessed in the Senate on the 15th of this month.

Commenting upon the fact that Senators voted according as their private business dictated, Senator La Follette said:

“It is an outrage against common decency that any man on the floor of the United States Senate should sit here to represent his own interests. We are here in a trust capacity, but the public conscience has either become dulled, or Senators have forgotten their duty and their oaths. We have Senators here who hold bank stock and do not hesitate to vote on legislation that determines whether such stock shall pay a tax or not. We have Senators who own mining stock and do not hesitate to sit here and vote to fix the duties on the ores in their mines. It is time the Senate made an order to put a stop to this business.”

And following up this line of reasoning, Senator Reed of Missouri, a Democrat, added:

“In my opinion there is no difference between a man spending money to corruptly secure a seat in the Senate and for a Senator by his vote to pour thousands of dollars into his own pocket through protective tariff schedules, yet we see here the spectacle of Senators having vast interests in the subject under debate proposing to vote to increase their own profits in such business. I have noticed that no member of the Senate more actively opposes reductions in the duty on woollen manufactures than those Senators who have interests in woollen mills, or are more eager to retain a duty on raw wool than those who own vast flocks of sheep.”

No doubt such acts as these Senators put their accusing fingers upon are “against common decency,” but the accusation is flighty or sound, visionary or well-

founded, according to what the accuser means.

If what is meant by the accusation is what undoubtedly Senators La Follette and Reed mean, to wit, that the acts “against common decency” are correctable evils and that the Senate can “make an order to put a stop to this business,” then the accusation is flighty and visionary.

If, on the contrary, what is meant by the accusation is that the acts “against common decency” call for radical treatment, then the accusation is sound and well-founded, and, as such is instinct with the constructive power that will remove the indecency.

Men have to live. They can live, not upon the airy things that butter no parsnips; they can live only on wealth, the product of Labor. Where are the members of a political government to get this wealth from? Salaries are grafts on such wealth. The straight, the direct, withal, the only satisfactory way is to have a business of their own. To expect, of men so situated, that they avoid the acts “against common decency” complained of is to expect of them to be and act as angels, who live on air and are clad in air.

The trouble lies with the political State. The cat that would eat fish must be willing to wet her feet. He who would continue the political State must be willing to put up with acts “against common decency.” The acts “against common decency” complained of may be complained of only by those who realize the necessity of substituting the political with the Industrial or Socialist State—only in that State is the administrative authority part and parcel of the productive agencies of wealth—because only in that State are the members of a government producers.

The political State, which to-day is the capitalist government, itself is a common indecency. It is so rank a common indecency that the fumes of its indecency are getting upon the nerves of some of its own beneficiaries. How could any branch of such a State “make an order to stop this business”?

Would Senators La Follette and Reed join in the overthrow of the political State and in rearing the Industrial State?—then they would be talking to a purpose. Otherwise they but kick against pricks.

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