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EDITORIAL

HIS NOSE AGAINST THE WALL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

“WE are sometimes so near an object that we can't see it,” once said Wendell Phillips. “I could place you so near the City Hall to-night that you would not know whether you were looking at a ton of granite or a wall of a large building. So it is with a fact. The men who stand nearest to it are often the last to recognize either its breadth or its meaning.”

Senator Beveridge of Indiana is one of those self-same men, nearest to a fact, who is among the last to recognize its importance, its scope, or its domination over modern life.

In his address before the Yale College Forum on the 17th instant, the Senator said:

“We have been busy with material things, making money, building railroads, sinking mines, occupying land; busy with trade and the development of resources. All this was good. But finally we became so busy with real things that we forgot ideal things; so busy with results that we forgot methods. Development of resources too often became exploitation of resources; trade too often became trickery; government too often became graft; building industry too often became juggling with industry; the praise-worthy spirit of gain by fair methods too often gave way to the evil spirit of gain by any methods.

“When we stopped the robbery of the Nation's forests, the robbers called it paternalism; when we stopped the sale of poisoned food and diseased meats, the sellers called it Socialism; when we are trying to stop stock juggling, criminal rebates, and the like, the jugglers call it a raid on prosperity; when we try to stop government by graft and politics by purchase, those who grow rich by graft or get high places by purchase call our work interference with private affairs in the one case and assault upon respectability in the other case.”

And then the Senator launched out on an extensive and resounding

denunciation of the evil of child labor, which is dwarfing every fiber of millions of the nation's infants in the mill, mine, and sweatshop, and demanded that it be relieved—by legislation.

A marvel of legislation would be that law which could prevent a constitutionally weak body from having dizzy spells, pains in the back, skin eruptions, or other painful and annoying ailments. Likewise would that be a wonderful legal enactment which could of itself prevent disorders, crimes, and counter-crimes in a society whose health was constitutionally deranged. The forest stealing, poisoning of food, stock juggling, political grafting, and last but not least, the child slavery on which Senator Beveridge laid his greatest stress, are not local complaints. They are but the local and kaleidoscopic procession of symptoms which all declare the constitutional unhealth of present day society. In other ages society was afflicted with the constitutional plagues of foreign usurpation, of feudal brigandage, of kingly autocracy, of chattel slavery. These afflictions have been in their turn purged forever from the body they had fastened upon. The constitutional plague which today, in America, has run its roots down deep into the vitals of the race, is the private ownership by a few of the means of production which the many need to live by—capitalism. Abolish that, and all the symptoms will vanish of themselves. Albert J. Beveridge, as a member of the U.S. Senate, the “Millionaires’ Club,” as it has been dubbed here in America—the “Central Committee of the capitalist class,” as Marx has proved it to be, should be aware of the fact. The Senator has his nose against the granite wall.

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

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