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FIRST EDITORIAL

Bandyng “Traitor!” in the Senate.

By DANIEL DE LEON

To judge by the yellow journals of the land, from the lightest saffron to the deepest amber, the United States is presenting a remarkable contrast with Spain: While, in Spain, the country is torn by dissensions, here, with us, the spectacle is that of a united lump of humanity, nearly eighty million strong, perfectly at one, and thrilled from center to circumference, and back again, with the mutual admiration and mutual confidence of its multitudinous units. Indeed, the spectacle were remarkable, if it were true; but it is not true; and natural it is that 'tis not true, seeing the intense antagonism of class and sub-class that reign here, and that of necessity must reign in a country like ours where the capitalist system is rankest. The country does not present the spectacle of universal mutual admiration and confidence. Just the reverse; and the clash has broken out in Congress with such intensity that the yellow journals truly deserve credit for “skillfulness,” having succeeded, as well as they have done, in hushing up the matter, and keeping up their fiction.

On Monday, the 25th of April, the following scene took place in the United States Senate, as may be gathered from the *Congressional Record* published two days later:

Senator Butler, of North Carolina, had the floor; he and those who held with him flashed defiant looks at an opposite set, with Senator Hawley, of Connecticut, as its center. What divided the two? “Patriotism,” as each understood it. The former set, the one clustered around the Senator who had the floor, had earned its spurs by selling out the country to the Silver syndicate, and by shooting down the silver mine workers when they demanded better conditions; the latter set had earned its spurs by selling out the country to the Armor-Plate Trust, among others, and bayonetting the workers into submission. The Silver Syndicate brigade had not succeeded in being bought up by the Armor-Plate Trust; the Armor-Plate Trust had not succeeded in being bought up by the Silver Syndicate. As a matter of course the patriotism of each was at dagger's point with that of the other. Their mutual enmity burns hot—all the more as each is “on the make” in the war. With this background the performance that took place will be best understood.

Senator Butler, of the Silver Syndicate brigade, was speaking; he went extensively into the armor-plate swindle, and dilated very much in full upon the blow-holes that were sold to the Government by the Armor-Plate Trust; so as not to be charged with indefiniteness, he went into details, specifying the ships in detail and the parts of each that were armored with blow-holes. He was proceeding at this rate, when sudden interruptions came from the Armor-Plate Trust brigade, with Senator Hawley as its center. The interruptions gained in frequency and violence, until Senator Hawley screeched out:

"I must protest against this. If privately the Senator of South Carolina should write a communication to the Spanish Government disclosing the defects as to certain armor plates, and pointing them out, he would be (pointing his finger threateningly at Senator Butler) GUILTY OF AIDING AND ABETTING TREASON!"

This shot, fired from the Armor-Plate Trust camp of patriotism, was answered by this other from the Silver Syndicate camp of patriotism with Senator Butler as the gunner:

"If anyone is GUILTY OF TREASON, it is those, INCLUDING THE SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT, who have stood as a partisan by the Armor-Plate Trust, and helped them to perpetrate these frauds on the Government, AND GET THEIR EXORBITANT PAY FOR DOING SO, thus ENDANGERING OUR SHIPS, THE LIVES OF OUR SAILORS, AND POSSIBLY TO HUMILIATE OUR FLAG."

"Treason!" bandied in the highest branch of Congress by traitors to their country, each of whom in his own way has done his level best to degrade our people in the interest of his own sub-class of capitalism, and is now pulling his way to make all he can out of the war, throws not only the proper light on the capitalist "patriot," but throws into relief the utter impossibility of oneness in the capitalist camp—even in time of national danger.

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

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