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EDITORIAL

EFFICIENCY?

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THE grooves of capitalist thought are not widely diversified, as capitalism proudly claims, but few and intertangled. They are like criss-crossed ruts in a frozen wagon-road, occasionally crooked, it is true, but all running in the same direction. Hence, in rolling down these grooves, it not infrequently occurs that capitalist thoughts collide, and, as happens in the domain of astronomy, the previously dark and unnoticed bodies become, by their impact, a source of light.

Such a light-giving clash occurred on the 10th of this month in the United States Senate. There not two, but three capitalist thoughts came into violent collision, and the result is light.

Roosevelt in his thrilling-enough-for-yellow-covers retort to those who exposed his use of Federal patronage to assist Taft into the chair, characterized the leaders of the anti-Taft conventions as men “whose character and capacity are such that they have not been regarded as fit to be appointed under this Administration.”

Into this bombastic arraignment of the “outs” by the spokesman of the “ins,” Senator Foraker stuck a neat pin, when in the Senate chamber he rose to reply to it. By copious illustrations from recent and current White House history, Foraker showed that fitness entered very little into certain appointments of Roosevelt, or rather that fitness in the Chief Executive’s eyes consisted in—ability to perform work?—moral and business integrity?—No; in being “in sympathy with the Administration”—this quoted from a statement of Loeb’s.

Then and there the two capitalist thoughts, Roosevelt’s and Foraker’s, crashed into each other, and revealed the fact that office holding, when it is a matter of Presidential appointment, depends on standing in with the ring, on being part of the machine. Efficiency or qualifications cut no figure—stand-pattism is what is wanted. What sins of omission and commission, what condonance of crime that

means under present day capitalist government, should not have to have space wasted on it. What a ray of light the revelation should shoot into the mind of the fond believer in the purity of civil service.

But greater than the ray of light resulting from the encounter of these two thoughts was the whole flood of illumination from the collision of these two with a third, which followed hard in the rear of Roosevelt's statement that only the unfit were out of office. That third thought is the idea begotten in capitalist iniquity and born of its lawlessness, that "effective men are not Socialists," that "Socialism is the philosophy of failure," that "Socialists are down and outers tricked out in scientific garb," etc., etc. The capitalist being a creature of crime, only criminals can become capitalists. Men too honorable, too decent to commit the thousand and one acts of moral obliquity required of the modern man of business, are debarred, by their very uprightness, from becoming "successes." To brand these men as "failures" is as false as to brand the non-officeholder, debarred by his lack of "sympathy with the Administration," as unfit. Roosevelt's statement so branding them is a clinker from the same mental crucible which produced the other directed against Socialism. Neither thought could be or move without the mutual support and assistance of the other. In the clash with Senator Foraker's third thought, the absurdity of both stands revealed.

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

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