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EDITORIAL

FREE LUMBER VOTED DOWN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

BY an emphatic vote the Senate voted down free lumber. Not the fact itself, but the HOW, renders the event significant.

Whether lumber, or anything else that is good to have, is “free” or not, every man who is posted knows it is “free,” not to the working class; it is free only to the capitalist class—just as “free silver” would have been. Accordingly, all the declamation of those Senators who demanded free lumber “in the interest of workingmen whose home could then be built” must be discounted as just so much clap-trap. All the same the issue of “free lumber” raised a specific issue—the issue of whether there is or there is not a Democratic party in existence.

Last year’s national platform of the Democratic party contained this sentence:—“We demand the immediate repeal of the tariff on pulp, print paper, LUMBER, timber and logs, and that these articles be placed upon the free list.” This clause was a sort of underscoring of what is supposed to be the distinctive feature of the Democratic party—a tariff for revenue only, meaning a low tariff, if at all any. With such a general program solemnly adopted in national convention; with such a specific article—lumber—emphasizing the whole program, the spokesmen of the Democracy took the field—Senators and Representatives, and the candidates for these and all other offices, together with all the leading lights of the party—and solicited the support of the voters. This notwithstanding, the Senate majority against free lumber had a contingent of not less than seventeen Democrats—a majority of the Democratic delegation in the Senate.

At an early period in the debate, the Democratic Senator Bacon of Georgia, summoned to remain true to his party’s pledges, coolly declared his contempt for party platforms, they being gotten up “in a hurry over night.” Senator Bacon, though a traitor to honor, obviously is not to the Democratic party.

Which amounts to proving—the Democratic party is dead.

Capitalism must have its political expression. That expression is the Republican party. The “common people,” meaning the small capitalists, have nothing more to say. Their economic power has become too small to reflect a political body. Recent national elections tended to prove the fact. The conduct of a majority of the Democratic Senators on lumber removes all doubt. When the gangrene of dishonor creeps into a body the jig is up with it.

Of far reaching social importance is the fact laid bare by “free lumber voted down” with the help of a majority of Democratic Senators. It matters not whether lumber comes in free or not—it matters nothing to the proletariat. It does matter a good deal that the head of the capitalist political comet has shed its tail, and now gyrates in the political firmament in single glory—unchecked.

Such a state of things is big with evil—evil because, as yet, the disorganized economic and, consequently, political state of the proletariat leaves top-capitalism with a free hand in all directions.

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