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EDITORIAL

## GLEANINGS FROM CONGRESS.— ART. I., SEC. 8.

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“P ARTY lines were obliterated and factional fights forgotten” in Congress when, first, the Judiciary Committee of the House, and, subsequently, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, reported adversely to the Presidential recommendation for national regulation of the insurance business. The report of the Senate Committee, made through Senator Spooner, condenses the sense of both reports. It was this:

“The Committee on the Judiciary beg leave to report that it is the unanimous opinion of the committee that the Congress is without authority under the Constitution to supervise and regulate the business of marine, fire, and life insurance except in the District of Columbia, the Territories, and the insular possessions of the United States.”

The unanimity of the two reports and the unanimity of their acceptance amount to the abrogation of Sec. 8, Art. I. of the Constitution which provides that “Congress shall have power to regulate commerce . . . among the several States.”

In the bourgeois mind the word “Commerce” has acquired a meaning wholly colored by bourgeois methods. In the bourgeois mind “Commerce” is inseparable from “Cheating”; indeed, he considers the two identical. To him “Commerce” is but a system of mutual over-reaching. He naturally falls into that groove of false reasoning. False weights, false measures, adulteration of goods, flanked on both sides by systematic chicanery practiced upon the Working Class, switch his mind on the tracks of cheating, and the practice is thereupon carried on through all the ramifications of “business”—on the political as well as on the industrial field. Nevertheless, however natural “Cheating” may be to “Commerce” in the bourgeois estimation, cheating is but a perversion of commerce, and is not commerce at all.

Commerce means exchange—value for value. Indeed, Art. I., Sec. 8 of the

Constitution may be said to be the most remarkable clause of that remarkable document. If such a thing can be imagined as that the natural cheating and rioting instinct of the Capitalist Class will not throw itself across the path of the political movement of the Working Class; if such a thing can be imagined as that, elected by the Socialist Labor Party suffrage, the political candidates of the Working Class, on their way to take their political seats, will not find their path blocked by the rioting capitalists, and will peacefully occupy the political Government;—if such a thing can be imagined, then Sec. 8, of Art. I. of the Constitution will offer ample authority for the peaceful establishment of the Socialist Republic. That clause once enforced, all the other clauses drop of themselves. It would be as when the building being erected, the scaffolding shrivels and vanishes.

The “Regulation of Commerce” is the only function of civilized Government, or Administration. It is the “Regulation of Commerce” that the General Executive Board of the I.W.W. will be called upon to perform. That and nothing more. When the function of Government shall be limited to that, then the Socialist Republic will have been established. Sec. 8, Art. I. of the Constitution found its way into that document as a long ahead projection into the future. It was an aspiration, probably only vaguely perceived by its framer. As an aspiration, for which the country had not ripened, the clause lay virtually a dead letter. Now that ripened economic conditions render the clause ripe, the bourgeois rulers of the land unite instinctively in smothering it, aided thereto by their false motion concerning “Commerce.”

Many a bloody page of history is taken up with the narratives of the moves made by the feudal lords, once they had grown to might under the sheltering wings of the Crown, to lecture the Crown upon the “limitations of its authority.” The bourgeois of America, ripened into a Plutocrat, now seeks to lecture to the Sovereignty of the Nation upon the “limitations of its authority” towards him. He did so in the unanimous reports of the Judiciary Committees of the two Houses which repudiate Art. I., Sec. 8 of the Constitution.

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

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