

EDITORIAL

BORAH OR “THE SUN”?

By DANIEL DE LEON

SENATOR William E. Borah of Idaho having stated, in the course of his recent speech to the Pennsylvania Society: “With political power in the hands of the majority and wealth in the hands of the minority, the supreme test of the Constitution is yet in the future,” the New York *Sun* took exception to the statement, arguing that the “few great fortunes” amount to nothing “by the side of the accumulated and accumulating wealth of the majority.” The *Sun*’s article closes with this paragraph:—



WILLIAM E. BORAH
(1865–1940)

“Senator Borah seems to be the victim of a phrase.”

Somebody surely is. Is it Borah or the *Sun*?

Placing the figures at their lowest the proletariat of the land makes up at least 60 per cent of our population. “Devil’s Advocate” tho’ the *Sun* is, the paper will hardly venture to claim that “the accumulated and accumulating wealth” of the majority makes up a fatter heap of wealth than that of the 40 per cent minority. Such a claim would be too clumsy. Devil’s Advocates are too cunning to expose themselves like all that. They must resort to some dust for cover. The word “majority” in the *Sun*’s sentence, together with the candor of its statement that there are “a few great fortunes,” offers the cover under which to juggle.

No doubt the “great fortunes” such as those of the Astors, the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts and the Goulds are not numerous. No doubt the individuals who hold these fortunes are only a “corporal’s guard.” No doubt, finally, the wealth held by this minority, does not overtop the wealth of all the other citizens of the land. Does it follow that wealth is in the hands of the majority? Not unless one is the victim of a phrase—the “majority” phrase, or term.

Not a nickel of the wealth of any of the wealthy people who rank below the Astors, etc., in affluence will butter a single slice of bread of that at least 60 per cent proletarian majority of our population, or buy a single slice of bread upon which to spread the butter. As far as that 60 per cent majority is concerned, the wealth of the below-the-plutocratic minority is as non-existent. To bracket that 60 per cent proletarian majority with the below-the-plutocratic minority, and impute to the proletarian majority a wealth that they do not possess is a trick kindred to the trick of horse thieves who conceal the stolen animals by turning them loose among the horses which they did not steal.

Already there is a majority of the land that is practically wealthless. That large numbers are daily added to these, and that even larger numbers feel steadily driven to the ragged edge, off which they will have to jump into the proletarian class Bull Moosia is the political weather signal of, a weather signal that is emphasized by the tell-tale figures of the late poll of the two parties that fly Socialist colors, and both of which more than doubled their poll of 1908. The under-tow of the coming storm has long been felt. One of the devices to stem it was the "Majority" term. It was a jugglery intended to cause the poor to imagine they shared the wealth of their plunderers. It was a twin brother of that other device known as "Average," by which poor people were averaged into the possession of wealth that they did not have. Many were duped by the phrase. Among the dupes there were not a few of the dupers themselves, who succumbed to the illusion of their own sleight-of-hand. Senator Borah has obviously pulled himself out of the number.

Not so the *Sun*.

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