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EDITORIAL

A JONAH TO NINEVEHITES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the course of his argument, urging the advisability of raising the rates on large incomes, Senator La Follette addressed on last August 27 words to his colleagues in the Senate that recall the efforts of Jonah to the Ninevehites. The important passage of the speech will be found elsewhere in this issue.¹

Senator La Follette made no exceptions, but sweeping, justly sweeping of all large fortunes was his branding of these heaps of wealth as “mighty fortunes, accumulated largely in violation of law,” and his lashing of the holders of the same as double and habitual parasites who should be “compelled at last to pay the tax they have heretofore evaded.” Nor was the Senator’s estimate of the posture of a swelling majority of the people towards his Republican colleagues less trenchant. “A new day,” said he, “is coming in this country,” and the people “will retire more and more men from the Senate of the type” of those under whose protecting wings Top Capitalism has been holding high carnival.

This is not the first time that mighty truths were told in the Senate. Twenty-three years ago Senator Ingalls of Kansas let himself loose. But Ingalls was a charlatan. None of his colleagues could take him seriously. It is otherwise now. La Follette is a man of different type. He is hated and feared by his colleagues—feared and hated as much as the presence of Jonah was hated and feared by the men of Nineveh that could not discern between their right hand, and their left hand.

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¹ [See “La Follette’s Speech,” appended, page 2.—R.B.]

LA FOLLETTE'S SPEECH

DELIVERED BEFORE THE SENATE ON AUGUST 27.

[The below is the important portion of a speech delivered by Senator La Follette in the Senate, August 27, and his passage at arms with the Taft reactionary Senator Gallinger of New Hampshire.]

I do not want to speak critically or harshly, but most of those who have argued against the amendments presented this afternoon to increase the income tax upon great wealth are those who have always been opposed to an income tax of any kind. When the opportunity offers to equalize these burdens, I regret, Mr. President, that there should come a line of division on the Republican side, emphasizing differences which I had hoped to see disappear. A new day is coming in this country. If the Republican Party will not see it, then, Mr. President, its place will be taken by some party that will see it.

Mr. Gallinger.—Mr. President—

Mr. La Follette.—I yield to the Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. Gallinger.—I was about to suggest, Mr. President, that this is not the only vote upon which there was a line of division on this side of the Chamber and as to which no fault has been found.

Mr. La Follette.—No, Mr. President; and some of those votes will be analyzed before we have finished here. I am going to take occasion to say to this side of the Chamber that a new accounting must be made in the application of the principles to which we are devoted.

Mr. Gallinger.—Mr. President, the Senator from Wisconsin has made the same assertion, sometimes in the nature of a threat, heretofore. It is not going to alarm those of us who do not agree with the Senator in his economic views.

Mr. La Follette.—Oh, I do not expect to alarm anybody, Mr. President. I said to certain associates of the Senator from New Hampshire six or seven years ago, when I appealed in vain to them to pass a law to ascertain the value of the railroad property of this country, that their refusal to heed the demand for a correction of grave abuses would result in permanently vacating many seats on the Republican side of this Chamber. My warning was scorned, and a goodly percentage of those gentlemen have disappeared from their places upon this side and many of their seats are occupied by men who realize that legislation must adjust itself to the new industrial conditions of this country.

U. S.—I shall knock you out of that also. I shall knock out the Bishop's claim that the income tax is of great benefit to the workingman.

B. J.—You can't do it!

U. S.—We shall see. Does the working class pay the taxes?

B. J.—Hem—hem—doesn't it?

U. S.—No; it doesn't. Taxes are paid out of that portion of the wealth which, altho' produced by the working class, never finds its way into the workers' pockets, but is plundered from them in the shop. Taxes are, accordingly, paid by the capitalist class out of the profits that it sponges from the working class.

B. J.—Granted. That only goes to prove that the tax on incomes will not come out of the pockets of the workers.

U. S.—Correct. Now, answer me further—What is that income tax to be devoted to? Is it to be devoted to alleviate the trials of the workers, or, perchance, to be devoted to starting plants of production in which the workers will not be plundered slaves? Tell me!

B. J.—N-n-n-o. The tax is not for any such purpose. Why, the tax is to help out the revenue of the Government.

U. S.—Just so. Now, if your Knights of Columbus training has not wholly made chop-meat of your brains and thinking faculties, you will perceive that you have contradicted yourself egregiously. In the same breath that you claim the income tax will greatly benefit the workingman, you admit that the tax is for revenue, and, being for revenue, if it is at all to be a relief to anybody, it cannot possibly be a relief to the working class, which pays no taxes; but must be a relief to the capitalist class, that is, to that portion thereof which, not being of Top Capitalist rank, cannot evade, but must pay the tax.

B. J.—But Bishop McFaul—

U. S.—Had better stick to his theology. Theology and economics do not mix.

Mr. Gallinger.—If the Senator will permit me further—

Mr. La Follette.—I will.

Mr. Gallinger.—It is true that some Senators have disappeared from this side of the Chamber and some have disappeared from the other side; and it is equally true that the Republican Party has been put out of power by some men who sympathized with the Senator from Wisconsin in his extreme views.

Mr. La Follette.—Mr. President, since the Senator from New Hampshire refers to it, I will say that the Republican Party has been put out of power by the people of this country who are in accord with the views which I am now expressing, and they will retire more men from the Senate of the type of the Senator from New Hampshire before we finally dispose of these issues.

Mr. Gallinger.—Mr. President, the Senator from New Hampshire is not a bit alarmed. The Senator from New Hampshire may go out voluntarily; but if the people of New Hampshire choose to elect another man than myself the Senator from Wisconsin need not grieve over it, for I certainly shall not.

Mr. La Follette.—Well, I did not say

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tinuation of the present Congress of the United States, and does it not accredit the political State with a power which we of the Socialist Labor Party have constantly maintained lies in the integrally organized Industrial Union? In other words, are we to enforce the fiat of the ballot with the ballot?

Arthur E. Reimer.

Boston, Mass., August 28.

LA FOLLETTE'S SPEECH.

(Continued from page four).

to the Senator from New Hampshire that I should grieve over it, if he is sending that sort of a response from me.

Mr. Gallinger.—If the Senator wishes to make this a personal issue, I will suggest to him that I shall not grieve any more than he will, whatever happens.

Mr. La Follette.—No. Well, now, that we have adjusted these personal matters, I may return to the amendment under consideration.

Mr. President, I want to say to Senators upon the other side that this is a matter, it seems to me, of supreme importance. You are about to establish an income-tax system for the Federal Government. The course of politics has thrown that great opportunity into your hands. Establish it upon principles that will appeal to the sense of justice of the people of this coun-

try. I well understand that there are many Senators on both sides of the Chamber who think that these mighty fortunes, accumulated largely in violation of law, can be better dealt with under an inheritance tax that shall prevent the dead hand from exerting a controlling influence upon the life of the generation that is to follow; but I say to you, Mr. President, that it is a mistake not to tax these great fortunes and make them bear their share according to the full measure of their ability to do so. The income tax offers an opportunity to do it. It should be supplemented by an inheritance tax. Together they will help us to attain that end which our fathers thought they were guaranteeing to us when they provided forever against the law of primogeniture and entail.

Mr. President, I can not hope, in view of the experiences which we have had here, that the amendment which I have offered will be adopted. I understand that those in the majority have started upon quite another course and that they will go through with it to the end; but I do hope that they may consider it worth while to take this provision of the bill and the amendment which I have offered back to their committee room and give it consideration, to the end that these enormous incomes may be compelled at last to pay the tax that they have hitherto evaded.