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EDITORIAL

Hawley's Wooden Nutmeg

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General Joseph R. Hawley, United States Senator for Connecticut, has hit upon an ingenious plan to “remove the existing social friction,” and thereby to “bring about prosperity.” His plan has the additional merit of being simplicity itself. He recognizes that this talk about “classes” sharpens social distinctions, breeds unrest and saps confidence. He calls it Socialist perverseness. Remove the cause, he argues, with exceptional logic, and the dire results will cease. Whereupon he proceeds to apply the principle thusly: “Let the workingman and the capitalist be called workingmen; then there are no classes; we all become brothers.” Of course—hocus, pocus, presto! all class distinctions cease, and happiness will reign on earth.

We have read many a funny story about the wooden nutmeg industry. The plan on which it proceeded was truly Hawleyan; indeed, it was invented in the General's own State of Connecticut, who knows but by some pious ancestor of his. The inventor reasoned thus: “The reason I don't get along as well as I might, could, would and should, is simply owing to the perverseness of botanists in not calling my hickory shrubs *Myristicae Moschatae*; if they only did so, then my hickory shrubs would produce sweet-scented nutmegs. Remove the cause, and the dire results will cease. I shall call my hickory shrubs *Myristicae Moschatae*; I shall hew them down; I shall shape their stems and branches into oval nuts; I shall call these nutmegs; the botanic distinction between them and the fruits of the *Myristicae Moschatae* being thus wiped out, the two become equal, whereupon I shall be as prosperous as I might, could, would, and surely should.” The clever schemer forthwith set his plan into operation; wooden nutmegs began to infest the markets; the swindler got along better for a while; but the swindled suffered, and when the swindle was detected there was an end to prosperity.

Just so with Gen. Hawley's plan. Nothing the General-Senator ever undertook could have been half so easy as for him, in a recent debate in the Senate, for instance, to have referred as “workingmen” to the railroad barons, who do no manner of useful work, yet whose stealings from the Post Office appropriation he was zealously protecting, and thus to lump them together with real workingmen—the Post Office

employes—a rise in whose wages he was as zealously opposing. Surely nothing is easier than to call a loafer a “worker,” or a leech the “brother” of his victim. But would such a sleight-of-tongue change facts? Gen. Hawley should look back to the fate of his prototype—the wooden nutmeg genius. Hickory staves, cut and chiseled into nutmeg shapes, remained hickory wood; the schemer only profited, and that only for a while; but his very profit will only work an intensification of the social evils, just as if a wolf were to disguise himself in sheep’s skin. The fraud would soon be discovered and there we would be—just where we started from.

The capitalist is an idler, living on the plunder of the workers. That fact nothing can disguise or conceal; nor can any phrase long suspend the irrepressible conflict that rages between the two. Class distinctions must continue, social unrest must increase until the idler class is overthrown, and that social system is reared where no deceptive phrases will be needed to establish the fact that all who live are workers—seeing that all who don’t work will live only on the headstones of their graves.

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

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