

EDITORIAL

## WHERE LA FOLLETTE SLIPPED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A** FEATURE of an able man is that he is helpful, not only in that in which he is right, but also in that in which he errs. The errors of the addle-brained promote further brainlessness. The errors of a thinking mind promote clarification. With such people it is as with that most useful of domestic animals, the cow. She is helpful to man even in her diseases, through the vaccine. It so happens with Senator La Follette, and his recent great speech. One of the Senator's helpful errors occurs in the following passage:

"I will join in no denunciation of any honest business, whether conducted in Wall Street or elsewhere."

The error imbedded in this sentence betrays a mind, powerful otherwise, yet warped by mistaken habits of thought.

When Senator La Follette uttered the sentiment quoted above, it was as if he had said:

"I will join in no denunciation of any honest sport, whether conducted in a chess club or a gambling den";

Or as {if} he had said:

"I will join in no denunciation of any useful animal, whether it be a cow or a hyena";

Or as if he had said:

"I will join in no denunciation of any \$100 bill, whether it be genuine or counterfeit"; and so forth.

The man, whose habits of thought do not misguide him upon the subject of amusement, is well aware that a gambling den is inherently felonious, and the "sport" it affords is of a species wholly different from that of the amusement afforded by a chess club.

The man, whose habits of thought do not misguide him in zoology, knows that a

hyena is an unqualified pest, exactly the opposite of the cow, which, alongside of wheat is the staff of man's life.

The man, whose habits of thought do not blind him to facts, realizes without the need of being prompted thereto that a counterfeit bill has only the semblance of the genuine article and, therefore, is all the more mischievous.

Ditto, ditto in the matter of "honest business" and "Wall Street."

Honest business, or business, means the exchange of value for value, be it in material things or in service. Business is another word for "Commerce" in the sense in which the word occurs in Clause 3 of Section VIII of the Constitution. Business, accordingly, presupposes industry, thrift, honest dealing. Cheating, false measures, false weights, false standards, overreaching—none of these are features of business, no more than pimples and ulcers are features of the healthy human anatomy. Now then, Wall Street does not deal in value for value, whether in material things or service. The stock in trade of Wall Street is cheating, false measures, false weights, false standards, overreaching. Wall Street is a bunco steerers' gambling den. Wall Street is to honest business what a card sharp is to a chess player, or a hyena to a cow, or a counterfeit to a genuine bill.

Senator La Follette slipped badly when he lumped Wall Street with honest business. The banana peel on which the Senator slipped in this instance is the habit of thought which prevents him from realizing that Wall Street is the ultimate and inevitable result of the capitalist system of society. A social system that sets up the theory, "A free field for all, favors for none," yet gives the signal for the race under conditions such that the large majority of the racers start handicapped with wage slavery, or spavined horses, while a few start with full-blooded Kentucky coursers, and which insists, all along the race, that the inequality and the source thereof be kept up, considering such policy "a square deal," such social system, consciously or unconsciously, starts with the taint of fraud in its blood, and the day is bound to come that the taint gathers head, and blooms forth in the pestiferous ulcer of a Wall Street, producing the rank pus that the Senator has been so ably lancing.

The helpfulness of Senator La Follette's error lies in the warning it conveys against primal errors. Wise is the French saying—"Look out for the first false step."

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)