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EDITORIAL

## THE CLOVEN HOOF PEEPS OUT.

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**I**N view of the visible drawing together, now going on, between the remnants of Populism, the Hearst movement and the rational elements of the so-called Socialist party, certain utterances of ex-Senator Marion Butler of North Carolina are of much interest, and not a little significance.

The ex-Populist Senator, who is chairman of the National Populist Committee, being asked some questions on the probable stand of Populism at the next Presidential election made a series of utterances. He said:

“The main feature of the platform will be national ownership of the railroads, the means of carrying on commerce for which the Constitution provides Government control.”

In other words, the element for which, in a broad sense, ex-Senator Butler speaks is, intellectually and aspirationally, behind even the Revolutionary Fathers. Framers of constitutions and builders of states ever are subject to the economic limitations of their times. As such, the Revolutionary Fathers were not and could not be Socialists. Neither the hugeness of the means of production nor the plentifulness of the wealth then possible could open the vista of Socialism. But the bourgeois element that made the Revolution and reared this Republic found themselves in such exceptionally favorable conditions that their aspirations were purer and their vision clearer than was the case with the revolutionary bourgeois anywhere else. Hence more than one of their utterances and institutions form direct links in the social evolutionary chain. One of these institutions is the clause in the Constitution that confers upon the Federal Government the POWER TO REGULATE COMMERCE. This expression is a bud of the Socialist rose, now unfolding. It matters not that the present and developed bourgeois can not conceive

of “commerce” without “cheating”; it matters not that the two terms are wholly synonymous in his own mind. His perverted notions do not alter facts. Commerce does not necessarily imply the sale of both the article and of the purchaser. It has come to mean that in the bourgeois world. It does not mean so in its essence. Commerce means exchange of value for value, of service for service. The proper exchange of these things is impossible except in the Socialist Republic. Though hampered by the economic conditions of early bourgeois society, the Revolutionary Fathers projected themselves far into the future when they vested the Federal Government with the power to “regulate commerce.” The clause is born of the instinctive sense that competition is national suicide, and must be eventually put an end to. That clause is the first legislative enactment in existence that squarely looks to the Socialist Republic. It implies, not the national control of any one branch of industry, like the railroads, but the collective ownership of all the land needed on which and all the capital requisite with which to produce and exchange wealth. In other words, it implies the abolition of classes and the reign of Socialism.

Having missed the meaning of the Federal Constitution, it is not strange that Populist Butler goes further in his error, and that he puts upon that Constitutional clause an interpretation abhorrent to the spirit and the knowledge that gave it birth, but wholly in keeping with the immoral spirit of full-blown capitalism. He says:

“The stockholders of the railroads, I am sure, would welcome such Government ownership. **THEY WOULD GLADLY EXCHANGE THEIR STOCK WITH DOUBTFUL DIVIDENDS FOR GOVERNMENT SECURITIES WHICH WOULD GIVE THEM A CERTAIN INCOME.** I do not believe that **THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HESITATE TO PAY FOR THE WATER IN THEM.**”

Here we have in full view the bourgeois cloven hoof of “national ownership,” which all parties, except the Socialist Labor Party, are more or less favoring. “Dividends,” that is plunder from the railroad operators is to be guaranteed to the stockholders, and the plunder is to be intensified by making even the watered stock, that shameless capitalist swindle, the basis of fuller dividends! Not only are the people to pay the railroad kings for the actual stolen property that these hold; the people are to pay them for their inflated robberies, and the people are to pay them a

premium, dividends, thereon!

Chairman Butler utters a superfluous utterance when he closes his declaration with:

“This Government ownership of the means of transportation should not be confounded with Socialism. It has no relation to Socialism.”

Indeed it has no relation to Socialism—nor to the clause in the Constitution either, authorizing the Government to “regulate commerce.” Neither the one nor the other contemplated the reduction of the American people to serfs of the capitalist globe {glebe?}.

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