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EDITORIAL

FLASHLIGHT FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.

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PEOPLE are sometimes apt to wonder at the vicious violence of the patriotism that some people display towards the Socialist workingman. Socialism furnishes the general principle by aid of which the conduct of such adversaries may be surmised—their private interests. The exact reason, however, the exact nature of the “private interest” in each instance remains concealed. It is a feature of these “patriots” to keep their pockets dark. But now comes the Secretary of the Treasury, and, driven by the approaching spectre of Dame Deficit, makes a report suggestive of possible economies. One page in that report is worth all the others. It is the page that contains a tabulated list of the ports in which the customs expenses exceed receipts. The list furnishes the total receipts, the expenses (mainly salaries), the number of Government employees, and the cost of collecting one dollar at each of these ports. The list is worth studying. From it the fact transpires that the Government keeps 106 customs employees in 46 ports, in all of which it costs more than \$1 to collect \$1 of customs. The details are veritable eye-openers, little short of amazing.

The port of Beaufort, N.C., leads the list of wonders. There it costs the Government the snug sum of \$973.73 to collect \$1. How busy the two placemen are there held,—for which work they receive \$1,509.23 salary—may be judged from the fact that the total annual receipt at the “port” is the vast sum of \$1.55. The thought of two able-bodied men collecting a salary of \$1,509.23 for taking charge of \$1.55 is ludicrous enough to recall the account given by Artemus Ward of a Government mail coach somewhere in Indiana, manned by ten men, and gloriously rolling into town with the ten employees holding just five letters—two to each letter. The lowest port on the list, Portland, Ore., costs the Government \$1.03 for every \$1 collected;

\$20, \$30, \$40 and even \$50 expenditure to collect \$1 are numerous. Annapolis, Md., entails an expenditure of \$85.49 for every \$1 collected, while Eastern, also in Maryland, comes nearest to Beaufort, by showing a cost of \$119.29 for every \$1 collected.

Does it need any effort of the imagination to picture these placemen, these pillars of “individuality” and their sponsors, red with rage at the “paternalism” of Socialism—the Movement that decrees that he who works shall live, and he who can and won’t shall starve? Does it need any profound scientific knowledge to sound the depths and shoals of the “patriotism” flung at the Socialist’s face.

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

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