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EDITORIAL

CONGRESSIONAL GLEANINGS—A FUNERAL DIRGE OF POLITICAL GOVERNMENT.

By DANIEL DE LEON

MATTER for close reading and thorough digestion is the speech delivered in the Senate by the junior Senator from Ohio, Theodore E. Burton, on last June 24.

Mr. Burton is a scholar, he has read vastly, and he is an observer. Pity that, with such qualities and opportunities, the gentleman succumbs so completely to the bourgeois weakness of shallowness that, despite the vast array of facts he adduced in this instance, he was unable to see to the bottom of the issue he was handling.

The bill on the tapis involved appropriations for conservation. Senator Burton opposed the same. The argument he presented was not the pasteboard argument of economy. The Senator seemed to realize that the question involved was a broader and deeper one. What that question was he failed to grasp, and his speech assumed the aspect of a lamentation. In fact it was a funeral dirge of political government.

The Senator demonstrated that expenses were growing over the head of the government. In the course of the last ten years alone the appropriations had doubled, and now exceeded a billion. The Senator also proved that the increase was not “automatic” in nature, simply a keeping of step with the country’s growth. The Senator showed that the increase was due to “the widening sphere of the government,” and he lamented the fact with cogent proofs of the widespread political corruption that accompanied the “widening” of governmental sphere.

The bourgeois statesman stands before the present critical evolutionary stage of society as blindly as one who, ignorant of the conditions of birth, would stand before a child a-borning, when the navel-string has not yet ceased to operate, and the lungs and stomach have not yet begun to perform their functions.

Fatedly political government is being transformed into industrial government. The one-time functions of political government are gradually betraying their inadequacy; new functions are becoming necessary to the central directing authority of society; the new functions are generally incompatible with the old; the transition from the old to the new state of things involves a revolution; instinctively the bourgeois habits of thought, if not bourgeois class interests, recoil before the new; a conflict arises thereupon between the more and more impossible Past and the forcefully, irresistibly approaching Future;—and the bourgeois statesman, unable to understand, laments; unable to see forward, looks backward, and thereby prolongs, by clinging to the impossible Past, the very evils he bemoans.

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