

BROADSIDES

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The Flag Superstition.

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AN item on the first page of the *Milwaukee Sentinel* says:

Clarence S. Darrow, the well-known Socialist lawyer of Chicago, created considerable comment recently when he refused to rise in his seat while "The Star Spangled Banner" was being sung in the Silver Grill restaurant of a leading hotel in Spokane, Wash. Among the many who took dinner at the time at this restaurant was C. W. Mott, general emigration agent of the Northern Pacific road, who was in Milwaukee yesterday. Mr. Mott, like all other guests of the hotel, and the restaurant was crowded at the time, was greatly incensed over the action of Mr. Darrow.

"Out West people dine more in restaurants than here in the East," said Mr. Mott yesterday, in speaking of the incident. "Under the circumstances it was but natural that the Silver Grill was crowded. The orchestra had just finished a selection from 'Tannhaeuser' when a young woman stepped forward to sing 'The Star Spangled Banner.' As a fitting prologue the orchestra struck up a medley of national airs that made the blood of each one of us tingle, and when the strains melted into 'The Star Spangled Banner' every one arose in his seat as a mark of respect to our flag. All except Mr. Darrow. He was seated at a table with an associate who arose like the rest of us, but Mr. Darrow remained seated. His friend apparently pleaded with him to rise also, but he shook his head.

"The incident did not pass by unnoticed. Suddenly a woman

began to hiss, and before the next second had passed hisses came from every part of the room, but Mr. Darrow paid no attention to it. Others called to him to rise like an American, true to his country, but he remained undisturbed to the end amid all the excitement.

"Mr. Darrow is considered the archangel of Socialism in this country. If that is their principle of love and gratitude toward the flag that protects them at home and abroad, it seems to me that the people can do no less than crush Socialists wherever they may appear to spread their doctrine of hatred and discontent. Socialism is a serpent gnawing at the root of the nation."

I have not the pleasure of knowing C. W. Mott—although I do know that he used to live in Milwaukee and was considered a "good fellow," whatever that means.

But I do know Mr. Darrow. And, therefore, I believe I am safe in saying that Clarence Darrow has more brains than all those present in the Silver Grill combined—"Charlie" Mott thrown in to the bargain. Darrow is one of the best lawyers in America.

Yet Clarence Darrow is no "archangel of the Socialists." In fact, he is neither an angel nor a Socialist. He is the man who wrote the famous booklet "Resist Not Evil." He is a "philosophic anarchist" and so considered by everybody, including himself.

Clarence Darrow is not now, and never was, a *member* of the Socialist Party.

But what he did at the Silver Grill is surely not to his discredit. And I believe I might have done the same myself—coming as he did from the trial of W. D. Haywood and seeing what "patriotism" means in Colorado and Idaho.

And what is patriotism at the present time? Today, if ever, patriotism may be considered the "last refuge of the scoundrel."

John D. Rockefeller is a patriot. August Belmont is a patriot, Tom Ryan of New York is a patriot, Sherman Bell and ex-Governor Peabody are patriots, Richard Croker *was* a patriot until he expatriated himself.

The "yellow dog fund" was a patriot fund, and so is the Republican campaign fund. Every big thief, every great exploiter, every huge leech sucking the life blood of the people is a patriot. He will tell you so himself.

And he is protected by the flag, by the star-spangled banner. He is protected not only in life and limb, but also in his stolen possessions.

* * *

But the common workingman, the proletarian, is not protected. He does not have anything, so he does not need any protection. He owns nothing of the country, not even enough of it to build a house on for himself and family.

"This flag" cannot protect the home of a man who owns no home.

And as for his life and limbs—the owner of the factory "insures" himself against any accidents that might befall the man. The man has to fight it out in the courts.

And the flag has nothing to do with it.

And the worker never goes abroad except as a sailor, a stoker or fireman, or a stowaway.

So I cannot see where the principle of love or gratitude of workingmen toward "the flag that protects them here and abroad" should come in.

Yet I will say that the proletarians in general are patriots in the *highest sense*.

They not only build the cities, railways and workshops, but they also protect them against fire and flood. And it is the working class that furnishes the soldiers, or at least the overwhelming majority of them. It is the working class that has to do the fighting, although they have nothing to do with the declaration of war.

If the railroad managers and the bankers and the capitalists should have to do their own fighting, a war would not last long.

And it is no more than right that the workmen as a whole should love their country as a whole. They will inherit it as soon as they make use of their brains for themselves. They have created these cities with their magnificent palaces, museums, libraries, art institutions, schools, etc., and by right these belong to them, and not to the capitalists.

This brilliant culture of our country—art, education and literature—is by right an inheritance of the white race.

And a nation that will own its country again will be a nation that will have a real reason to become patriotic again. And I hope that America will be among the first.

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The flag fetich is silly when it is not hypocritical. And it is hypocritical when it is not silly.

It is a remnant of feudal barbarism, when it represented the feudal allegiance of the vassal to the "coat of arms" of his lord—usually emblematic of some carnivorous beast or some bird of prey.

I despise every fetich. The green flag of the prophet Mohamet, or of Ireland, is as dear to me as the red flag of the Socialists or the star-spangled banner. A flag is a piece of dry goods that one can buy for 75 cents in any department store.

It is the *idea* that is *behind* it that is to decide whether the flag is worth following or not.

And just now the stars and stripes cover all sorts of oppression, misery, prostitution, graft and exploitation of women and children, not to mention the exploitation of millions of men.

This flag is now the coat of arms of the meat trust and the oil trust and every other trust. It is the banner of E. H. Harriman, Tom Ryan, August Belmont, Chauncey Depew and Tom Platt of New York.

* * *

And as for the silly custom of getting up whenever the "Star Spangled Banner" is played—that was imported from the old country. There the officers and their women—legal or illegal—stand up in the cafe or in the German "Wirthshaus" whenever "God Save the King" or "Heil Dir im Siegerkranz" is played.

Ten, twenty or thirty years ago, before our plutocrats and our middle class traveled so much in Europe this custom was not practiced in our country.

It is a shoddy imitation of a feudal custom—just like the "coats of arms" on the carriages of our millionaires.

I personally would just as soon get up when the band plays "Hiawatha" or "Hail, Hail, the Gang is All Here" as for the Star Spangled Banner. "Hiawatha" stands for a good time, the Star Spangled Banner stood for hell

in Colorado and stands for the same thing in Pennsylvania and other places.

If they want the workingmen to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner, long may it wave,"—then this must become again "the home of the *free* and the brave."

Tear the flag away from Simon Guggenheim of Colorado, who has openly bought his seat in the Senate, and return it to the people. And the people will love it again.

* * *

There is a very serious aspect to all this.

The question is, what are we coming to? Here is the "general emigration agent" of a thievish road—the tool of a Harriman or a Jim Hill—having the criminal insolence to tell people that "Socialism is a serpent gnawing at the root of the nation." Whereas, as a matter of fact, the only persons who gave the sign of the snake were the "ladies and gentlemen" (including Mr. Mott) who hissed Clarence Darrow.

Quo vadis—plain American citizen?

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