

The Food Bill is, essentially, a measure that would deserve the undivided support of Congress as an act giving the President and the Food Administration the greatest possible latitude in the vigorous prosecution of that group of American profiteers who are coining gigantic profits from the hunger of the masses. But even in this almost revolutionary measure we find a clause, which may, by interpretation, be construed into a prohibition of all strikes and labor uprisings in those fields of industry that are employed in the production of the necessities of life. The strong protest of the few progressive people in Congress did not prevail—the dangerous clauses were insisted upon and labor is threatened with fines and penalties as soon as it asserts itself against exploitation.

The most nefarious piece of war legislation is the so-called Espionage Law. For this act does not—as would be proper and justifiable—provide for severe penalties for spies and espionage, it does not simply place the law concerning enemies of the country on a war basis. It attempts—and results have already shown how effectively—to stifle all anti-war propaganda and peace agitation. It aims its hardest blows against the “enemies within,” the anti-war Americans, the Socialists and Internationalists. Comrade Fred Krafft of New Jersey, a party member who as a delegate to the St. Louis convention signed the compromise minority resolution, and later wrote and spoke for it in the party press and at party meetings, was found guilty under a provision of this law and sentenced to five years imprisonment and a heavy fine, because he was alleged to have said something in a public speech that was regarded as “treasonable.” Twenty-seven Socialists of South Dakota were found guilty under the same act and sentenced to imprisonment from one to five years for the crime of signing a petition to Congress for the recall of the conscription act. And more than two score of similar cases have been reported during the last three months.

Another especially pernicious paragraph of the same law is title xii relating to use of the mail. It declares unmailable every publication of any kind (including a letter) which violates any of the provisions of this act, and every publication of any kind containing any matter advocating or urging treason, insurrection,

or forcible resistance to any law of the United States. Whoever attempts to use the mails of the United States for the transmission of any matter declared by this title to be non-mailable shall be punishable by not more than five years in prison, a fine of not more than \$5,000, or both. The Postmaster-General, who is the Czar over everything that appears in print, upon whose decision depends the mailability of every newspaper or periodical in the country, whose opinion as to what does and does not constitute treason is final, has become not only the High Inquisitor, but Judge as well over the freedom and the liberties of the American people. The more the war progresses, the more will the fiendish claws of this piece of legislation become apparent.

The discussion that took place in the Senate when the Revenue Act came up for a vote was enlightening. The administration bill had been so careful not to hurt the big interests by too heavy taxation, that even Congress rebelled. Senator La Follette brought in a wonderfully illuminating minority report showing the gigantic war profits of the big monopolies and war profiteers, a report that caused a sensation throughout the country and forced an unwilling Senate and an even more unwilling House to adopt an average increase of the taxrate of about 12 per cent. It may be mentioned in passing, that the war industries of Great Britain pay a tax that is equal to 80 per cent. of their war profits.

The vials of wrath that were poured out upon the head of La Follette in the capitalist press—and in the resolutions adopted by such unquestionably patriotic bodies as the Chambers of Commerce of New York, Pittsburgh, Chicago and Boston, to name only a few of the real American and public spirited organizations,—was aroused much more by this minority report with its convincing figures of patriotic exploitation than by the St. Paul speech, which but furnished the ostensible motive for their attacks.

The “Trading with the Enemy Act” would not call for comment had not the astute politicians performed the admirable feat of saddling upon this seemingly technical war