

SENATORS AND CORPORATIONS.

A prominent member of the United States Senate introduced yesterday a bill providing for the punishment, by fine and imprisonment in the penitentiary, of any Senator or Representative who shall become the attorney or employé of a railroad company that has obtained a charter, or grants of land, or pecuniary aid from the United States.

This bill strikes at an evil that should be suppressed. For some days a bill relating to the lands granted by the people to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company has been the subject of debate in the Senate, and the course pursued by certain Senators has excited a suspicion that they desire to serve the company at the expense of the people. The foremost advocate of the bill, Senator DOLPH, of Oregon, is said to have been one of the railroad company's attorneys before he entered the Senate. The fact that he is laboring to secure the passage of a bill which is acceptable to the company and is opposing with all his might an amendment which would restore to the people the land which even at this late day the company has not earned, seems to indicate that the company and its interests still have a warm place in his heart. Mr. BECK's bill, to which we have referred, appears to have touched Mr. DOLPH on a raw spot. He arose yesterday to deny that he was connected in any way with the Northern Pacific or any other company that was interested in Federal legislation. He added that he would support Mr. BECK's bill. We shall look, therefore, for at least two votes in the affirmative when that bill comes up for action.

But if Mr. DOLPH's skirts are clear there are other Senators, we fear, whose incomes would be cut down by the enactment of such a bill. There are men in the Senate who are called "corporation Senators." A law like the one proposed by the Kentucky Senator might interfere with their perquisites. In March last a bill "forfeiting a part of certain lands granted to the State of Iowa to aid in the construction of railroads" was discussed in the Senate. The lands in question had been granted to the Sioux City and St. Paul and Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Companies in the days when such grants were made through the agency of States. Senator SPOONER, of Wisconsin—who found a place in his eulogy of the late Vice-President HENDRICKS for a defense of the spoils system and a sneer at civil service reform—took a prominent part in the debate, offering and supporting an amendment which was regarded by some persons as embodying legislation favorable to the Sioux City and St. Paul Company. Mr. SPOONER had been and was then counsel for that company, as we learn from an explanatory statement which he afterward caused to be published in the *Herald*. Two days after the close of the debate and the passage of the bill he filed a brief in the Supreme Court, as attorney for the company, in a case relating to the same question.

We do not mean to say that because he appeared as the corporation's attorney in the Supreme Court Mr. SPOONER served the corporation at the expense of the people. He explains that in supporting the amendment he was working for the interests of his constituents. But these facts show how Senators try to combine the duties of a legislator and those of an attorney. We believe that it is a legislator's duty to take up no outside work that will deprive his constituents and the people at large of any part of the service to which they are entitled. It seems to us that the position taken by Senator PLATT, of Connecticut, with regard to this aspect of the matter is the right one. Mr. PLATT is a lawyer, and when the promoters of a railway enterprise in his State expressed a desire to retain him he declined the fee on the ground that so long as he was a Senator of the United States the duties of that office would require his attention. This was his reply, although the Senate had not been in session for four months and would not reassemble for four months to come.

But if there is danger that a Senator's connection with a corporation will not only consume time that should be used for the people, but may also warp and twist his mind so that he cannot distinguish the interests of a corporation from those of the people, then such a bill as the one proposed by Mr. BECK should be enacted at once. An impression prevails that corporations—and especially those which have received land grants and other aid from the Government and are deeply interested in legislation—exert great influence in the Senate. It is the belief of a great many persons that the interests of the people have been sacrificed in that body for the benefit of such corporations, and that this influence is strong enough now to prevent the passage of bills that ought to have been enacted long ago. In the field of land grant legislation there are many examples that tend to confirm this belief. Bills like that which restored the Texas Pacific grant to the public domain are passed only when the pressure of public opinion becomes irresistible. The watering of the stock of railroad companies is a great and growing evil, but those who would like to apply a remedy have been unable at the present session to procure legislation to that end in the Senate. In many respects the Senate has drifted away from the people and toward the corporations. The enactment of Mr. BECK's bill may serve to counteract this dangerous tendency. At all events it embodies a principle that should be recognized and enforced by law, and it