

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 5, NO. 279.

NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 1905.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

GOOD FOR BERGER!

By DANIEL DE LEON

MR. Victor L. Berger is a National Committeeman, a National Executive Committeeman, a Wisconsin State Committeeman and a Milwaukee local Committeeman of the Socialist, alias Social Democratic, alias Public Ownership Party; in short, Mr. Berger is a thoroughly representative man of his political concern. Mr. Ernest Trautmann is a fellow-member of Mr. Berger on the National Committee of the said party. Upon the motion of Mr. Trautmann, Mr. Berger was called upon to explain certain of his acts. The acts were specifically stated and documentarily proven. They amounted to charging Mr. Berger with promoting political fusion with capitalist candidates, that is, political corruption, in short, with a betrayal of the working class. Sometimes it is on small occasions, other times on great, that the real stature of a man unveils itself. Whether the occasion was small or was great, the gigantic stature of Victor L. Berger unveiled itself on this occasion. A mediocre intellect would have worn off its teeth seeking to gnaw through the coils of the net of the Trautmann accusations. Not so Berger. He wipes jauntily aside documents and charges, and, along with these, the issue raised by Trautmann; he dives to the bottom of the question, and brings up that!—the Trades Union Question.

Good for Berger!

This is what he says:

“Trautmann is simply bitter, because I refused to endorse his plan of splitting up the national trades union movement.”

In other words, the real rift in the Berger party, lies much deeper than the Wisconsin scandal. That scandal is but the political manifestation of evils that lie deeper down. The real rift is on the Trades Union Question.

A political party that can shield a scab-herding concern such as the A.F. of L.; a political party that can echo the Gompers-Belmont vaporings about “splitting the trades union movement” in defense of a body whose existence, as clearly enough indicated by the Chicago Manifesto, keeps the working class torn in fragments; a political party whose press makes it a point to act as a resounding board for the calumnies that the Belmont-Gompers combine hurl at any and all bodies that seek to put an end to the A.F. of L. abuses; a political party that, accordingly, either ignorantly or corruptly, ignores the real mission of the economic organization and acts as a handmaid in the keeping of Labor divided against itself;—such a political party rests on quicksand, it is riven at its base, and the men who compose it are bound to be divided, from bottom up. Evidently, Ernest Trautmann stands on one side of the issue, Berger on the other and scabs side; evidently the feelings between the representatives of two such opposing sides cannot be “sweet.” And Berger deserves credit for going to the bottom of the difference.

In doing so Berger has rendered a positive service to the Movement. He illustrates the Socialist Labor Party principle that a political party that claims to be Socialist is but the reflex of the economic organization on which it is planted. Berger thereby poses the issue where it belongs.—Log-rolling with capitalist candidates is the genuine political expression of the economic log-rolling with Civic Federations. To raise a hand against the former is to raise an impious hand against the latter; and vice versa, to assail the latter, as the Trautmann element does, is to split up the so-called Socialist party.

Good for Berger! It will be none of his fault if the National Committee of his party sits down hard on the Trautmann proposed investigation, and refuses to stab at its vitals the party committed to their charge.

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

Uploaded December 2007

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