

EDITORIAL

## BERGER AND UNIONISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**U**PON his return to Milwaukee from a lecturing tour through the East, where “he spoke at fourteen Universities and Colleges,” Victor L. Berger had himself interviewed by his home dailies, especially the *Journal* and the *Leader*, through the columns of which he says that “the A.F. of L. is dying of dry-rot,” and that “the I.W.W. never amounted to anything, except noise.”

If the A.F. of L. is dying, then the day is at hand when the space it now occupies will be vacant. If the I.W.W. is nothing but noise, then the day is already there when vacancy fills the space that the I.W.W. might, should, could, or would have covered.

With vacancy either way, what’s to happen?

Cultivate the vacancy? Leave the economic movement altogether out of the “cast” of the drama of the Social Question? That would be to turn the Socialist Movement into a side-paddle steamboat, with the paddle of one side “out of commission,” the paddle of the other side “in commission,” and, as a consequence, the boat gaily and swiftly, swiftly and gaily gyrating in a circle.

But no! Thou hast not read the interviews in full. Didst overlook the passages in Berger’s interview to the effect that the Trades Unions in America must adopt the European tactics of working hand in hand with the Socialist Movement?

Indeed, we didn’t overlook the passages. What can the passages imply but the setting up of other Unions, of a new brand of Unionism? And what does that mean but to incur the sin of setting up “opposition Unions”—the unpardonable sin in the gospels according to St. Victor? That is, of course, out of all question.

Nor is this the worst stump that one stumps the toes of his thinking tank against. If one at all considers the passages about European Unions, then is he

bound also to take cognizance of that other passage in the interviews in which a new economic organization is forecast, an organization “composed of the best elements of the A.F. of L. and the I.W.W.” This is a stunner. If the A.F. of L. is dying of dry-rot, can anything that is good be in part composed of chips of dry-rot? Or worse yet,—suppose that, in the case of the A.F. of L. some chips have not been reached by the dry-rotting process, what about the I.W.W.? According to Berger the I.W.W. does not exist at all, except in noise. Where is the “best element” to come from that quarter? The best element of noise? Is, accordingly, the new body to be composed of choice bits of dry-rot from one side, and choice notes of noise from the other?

Whichever way one turns the Berger interview, delivered after “fourteen Universities and Colleges” were addressed by the interviewee, one sinks knee-deep in the quagmire—either one is mired in Pure and Simple politicianism; or one is mired in the unforgivable sin of “opposition Unionism”; or one is mired in the mire of the reasoning that would frame together the true Union out of a combination of dry-rot chips and notes of sound.

If the subject, so jauntily handled by Berger, were one fit for treatment at a table with brimming glasses between, we could think of no more convivially jovial individual than Victor L. Berger with whom to discuss the subject between sips, alternated by deeper draughts. The subject is, however, too serious, too weighty, too grave, too all-embracing for treatment so light-headed.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)