

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 11, NO. 320.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MAY 16, 1911.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

BERGER'S MISS NO. 3.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON last April 20, the Republican Congressman J. Hampton Moore of Philadelphia occupied the floor in the delivery of an extensive speech against the Farmers' Free List bill.

The speech was of the regulation Republican high tariff style. In regulation Republican fashion the gentleman stood forth against Free Trade on the ground of its "baneful effects" upon the "wage earners." It is a part of all such harangues to picture the prosperity of the wage earners which Free Trade menaces, and would utterly destroy. That part was not failing in Mr. Moore's speech. It was a conspicuous feature thereof.

By the half hour—Mr. Moore must have spoken longer than three hours—proof was produced, statistical and otherwise, of the affluence now enjoyed by the wage earners under the Republican Administration. Among the proofs, Mr. Moore cited his own city of Philadelphia and, more particularly, the Savings Fund Society of Philadelphia which receives "no more than \$500 from any one depositor in any one year"; which, he added, now rejoiced in "more than 276,000" depositors, "the owners of \$111,000,000"; and in which number of depositors, he stated, "wage earners predominate." To back up his statements, Mr. Moore read from "a table showing the occupations of the depositors who opened accounts with the society during 1910"; and he rattled on at this rate till his voice gave out, and he "inserted without reading," a long list of capitalist concerns, in the bonds of which funds of the Saving Fund Society are extensively invested, and from which bonds a shower of prosperity redounds to the preponderating number of wage earner depositors in the shape of interest—all in demonstration of the wage earners' present prosperity.

At this point Victor L. Berger should have broken in for a question. Such an act would not have been disorderly. It would have been strictly in keeping with

parliamentary usage in both House of Congress.

There is hardly a speech made in Congress but is interrupted with many a question. The Speaker, or whoever is at the time acting as presiding officer, usually asks whether the gentleman from So and So, naming the State from which the member who has the floor hails, will yield for a question to the gentleman from So and So, naming the State from which the member who wishes to ask the question is accredited. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the gentleman from So and So who has the floor courteously yields for a question. It was the cue of the "first Socialist Congressman" to say:

"I should esteem it a favor if the gentleman from Pennsylvania will enlighten the House, and myself in particular, upon the figures that he quotes. He has produced a tabulated statement officially issued by the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, giving the *occupations* of last year's depositors, these being 46,340 in number, and 15,836 thereof wage earners, male and female. The tabulated statement omits, however, to indicate the *amount* of deposits that these wage earners have to their credit. I would like the gentleman from Pennsylvania to give me the figures under that head. Neither the number of wage earner depositors, nor the statement that \$500 is the maximum that any one depositor is allowed to deposit in any one year, give any intimation as to the *amount* that these wage earners have to their credit, hence as to the degree of prosperity that they enjoy. The gross figures that the gentleman from Pennsylvania has recited from memory on the present status of depositors and deposits in the said Saving Fund Society—276,000 depositors, and \$111,000,000 deposits, without specification of the amount owned by wage earners,—leave me still worse in the dark, upon the points that I wish to be enlightened on, than the official figures for last year which he read off. The gentleman from Pennsylvania states that 'wage earners predominate' in the 276,000 present depositors. Even if the 'predomination' be a predomination of only 1, it would follow that there are this year 138,001 wage earner depositors—a phenomenal increase of at least 122,165 wage earners, or nearly nine times as many as last year, giving them a preponderance that they did not then have, and all that during the last sixteen months, fully six of which have elapsed since the overthrow of the Republican party at the polls, aggravated, from the gentleman's standpoint,

by the still more prosperity-subversive event of the election of a Socialist to this house over the head of a previous Republican incumbent. I wish the gentleman from Pennsylvania would explain this sudden and phenomenal rush of wage earners to the Saving Fund Society, and specify the share they own in that \$111,000,000 gross deposit.

“If the gentleman from Pennsylvania will indulge me just a minute longer, I would like to add to this question a further elucidation that will enable him to explain the point completely, as it bears directly upon the prosperity of the wage earner, resulting to him through his savings bank deposits. It is argued that the deposits of the wage earner, so far from benefiting, do him positive injury. The average wages of the wage earner in Philadelphia are, according to the latest figures obtainable (1905), \$546.52—a figure too small from which to make ‘savings.’ If, from so small a wage, the worker does make any ‘savings,’ the amount tho’ trifling, in each individual instance, will, in the aggregate, amount to something. The amount, say, of savings by the at least 138,001 workers, who, according to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, constitute the preponderating class of depositors in the Saving Fund Society of his city, would be a figure of respectable proportions. That amount, or any considerable portion thereof is not available to anyone of the said wage earner depositors—they lack collaterals for raising loans from the Saving Fund Society. The aggregate deposits are, however, accessible to capitalists. These deposits are frequently borrowed by capitalists to ‘improve’ their plant with improved and, therefore, labor-displacing machinery. Hence, it is argued, that the wage earner depositor, who pinches himself against a rainy day, and also in order to increase his income, does, in fact, hasten the arrival of the rainy day, and throw himself out of work. His mite towards the aggregate deposits of his class, it is argued, returns to him in the shape of a privately owned machine that knocks the bread out of his own mouth. From which it would follow that the larger the share of the Philadelphia wage earner depositors in that \$111,000,000 with the Saving Fund Society, by all the thinner thread would their prosperity be hanging. I would like the gentleman from Pennsylvania to explain these points.”

It does not matter what answer “the gentleman from Pennsylvania” would flounder over. The question could be put, the bolt shot in less than four minutes. It

would be a message, delivered under the resounding board of Congress, that would reverberate into the shacks and the tenement pigeon-holes where the workers of the land are huddled: it would enlighten them: wipe away many a certain cobweb that now stuffs their mind, and mightily contribute towards the realization of Socialism—all of which, in the interest of the emancipation of the Working Class, is a tip herewith suggested to the “first Socialist Congressman.”

THAT a “lone Socialist” CAN do—and vastly more valuable would that be than, in Congress, to keep silent, and, out of Congress, deliver speeches on what one Socialist CAN NOT do.

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Uploaded March 2012

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