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EDITORIAL

BERGER'S MISS NO. 28.

By DANIEL DE LEON

PROUD of his own and fellow Democrats' achievements, in the line of cutting down expenses by the abolition of superfluous House offices, Representative A. Mitchell Palmer of Pennsylvania narrated in his speech on the floor of the House, on May 9, how his committee began by abolishing six superfluous House Committees, thereby saving \$6,000; and further by cutting the House police force down from 21 to 10; by reducing the Capitol police force from 72, many of whom "soldiered on their job," down to 36; and by sweeping away, wholesale, a raft of offices which had been carried along on the rolls and the incumbents of which performed no manner of work—Assistant Stenographers to Committees, an Assistant Doorkeeper, a clerk to the Doorkeeper, nine messengers under the Doorkeeper, two telegraph operators who "sat by silent telegraph machines" since the installation of the telephone, two night watchmen, a string of laborers, an Assistant Journal Clerk, and mass of other "sinecurists, aggregating a saving of \$228,745.26."

So proud of his work was Mr. Palmer that he asked several times for an extension of time, and, not satisfied with that, asked, and of course obtained, consent to extend his remarks in *The Record*. Mr. Palmer was evidently delivering himself of a campaign document to be used at next year's Presidential contest. The document is expected to contribute quite considerably towards helping the Democratic party to victory. The party's record for "economy and retrenchment" is to one of the campaign slogans, to capture the Labor Vote.

By May 9 Victor L. Berger's leave of absence, used by him to exhibit himself in the North, had expired. He was back in Washington; presumably also (he is entitled to the benefit of the doubt) in his seat in the House. There, and for nearly an hour, he heard—agreeable to the fraudulent, yet catchy theory that Labor pays the taxes, hence, that retrenchments in government are tantamount to putting money in the

workingman's pockets—the detailed amounts reeled off that were to be “saved to the tax payer”; and the insult was aggravated by the transparent expectation that the Democratic victory would be brought about by the workingman voters thus trepanned, and, moreover, rejoicing over the sacking of rafts of their fellow proletarians, at whose expense, almost exclusively, the \$228,745.26 were saved to the capitalist class only.

Of the many provocations to cause the Socialist to breathe the disinfecting breath of Reason into bourgeois Unreason, and of Rectitude into bourgeois Duplicity, the speech, and the arguments, both stated and implied, of Representative Palmer surely were not the slightest. Speech and speaker should have been riddled on the spot with the logic and the ridicule that they exposed themselves to:—

“Is not the gentleman from Pennsylvania rather hasty in his conclusions? Even if, indeed, Labor paid the taxes, is the wholesale dismissal of workers calculated to endear his party to the Labor Vote? Has the Democratic party forgotten the lesson of 1896? Its Presidential candidate was the most brilliant Presidential orator since Henry Clay, or Douglas. Yet every speech that Bryan made before workingmen audiences lost him the support of most of them. It is a mathematical proposition, founded upon obvious human impulses. Mr. Bryan's argument was: ‘Make the “Common people,” the middle class, richer, and from their abundance you will have an amplex. Their interests lie with the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1. According as your employer's interests are promoted will you promote yours.’ Seeing that the top-capitalist or plutocratic class preached to the working class the identical theory that Bryan preached to them: ‘According as your employer's interests are promoted will you promote yours’; seeing that the interests of the plutocracy lay with goldbugism; finally, seeing that to every 1 employe whom the middle class hires, the top-capitalist hires 1,000;—seeing all this, it followed that the credulous Labor Vote went, and had to go, overwhelmingly for McKinley, and left Bryan stranded.

“I would like to ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania what essential difference, if any, there is between the tactical blunder of Bryan in 1896 and the Labor-discharging policy of the gentleman from Pennsylvania as affecting the Labor Vote. Top-capitalism is luxurious. As such it attracts dependents in large numbers, and

provides for them. The unemployed, according to ex-Speaker Cannon himself, number to-day not less than 3,000,000. If capitalism is to endure, whom are the vast majority of these jobless people more likely to support at the hustings and elsewhere—the party that swells their ranks by retrenchments, or the party that will reduce their numbers by jobs, though the jobs be useless?”

There was a variety of ways to breathe this disinfecting breath into the House. It was not breathed. The “first Socialist in Congress” may plead in explanation that the gentleman from Pennsylvania showed scant courtesy to interrupters, and refused to yield. That is true. But would the gentleman from Pennsylvania have displayed equal discourtesy towards one, who, as the “gentleman from Wisconsin” said of himself, is not taken for a joke in Congress, but is taken seriously?

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