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EDITORIAL

SECOND SERIES—BERGER'S FLUNK NO. 1.

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WITH the "Dollar a Day" pension bill for the veterans of the Civil and Mexican Wars on the order of business, the House of Representatives resolved itself on December 12 into Committee of the Whole.

Positive objections to the bill there were few. The opportunity for thrillingly patriotic speeches, offered by these pension bills, is too good to be fought. Congressmen who have nothing to say on most anything else seize the opportunity hysterically, and revamp their school orations; others hasten to make themselves solid with the "soldier vote"; even Southern Members often fall in line to furnish evidence that the day is gone by when the Southern Democrat could not "be trusted" with the Nation's legislation.

Representative John A.M. Adair of Indiana, in charge of the bill, opened the game by throwing the ball to Representative Thomas W. Bradley of New York; who, after quoting Daniel Webster, pitched the ball to Representative Michael E. Burke of Wisconsin; who, after reciting some poetry, swung the ball to Uncle Joe, the ex-Speaker, who juggled with it dexterously for a while and then rolled it over to the next; and so on. Despite the speech in opposition and "in the interest of economy" by the Tammany Representative John J. Fitzgerald, the best of temper and the most amicable relations marked the conduct of the debaters, Republican as well as Democratic. The amendments they offered were offered in friendship, not enmity.

At a point when amendments were raining, Representative Victor L. Berger rose and also offered an amendment. His amendment was to tack to the pension bill before the House the Old Age Pension bill which he presented during the extra session of the Congress.

Credit where credit is due. Whether the parliamentary war horses of the old parties were prepared or not, with instantaneous and common accord they made a

move that was of matchless parliamentary strategy. Representative Charles L. Bartlett of Georgia (Democrat) raised the point of order that the amendment was "not germane to the bill," but "reserved" insistence upon a ruling, and Representative James R. Mann of Illinois (Republican floor leader) asked "unanimous consent that the gentleman from Wisconsin be permitted to address the committee for five minutes" on his proposed amendments. The consent was granted—off-hand.

We all know the profundity and sublimity of the bourgeois' ignorance on economics and social questions. We all know the enthusiasm with which these gentlemen, at all available opportunities, patentize and record their ignorance in the most exquisite of diction. Let not{,} however, the fact lead to unwarranted conclusions. However ignorant the bourgeois, he is gifted with instinct, a quality that often stands in lieu of positive knowledge. Our bourgeois Members of the House of Representatives no doubt lacked the knowledge requisite to inform them that Mr. Berger's Old Age Pension bill, now offered as an amendment to the veterans' pension bill, is a proposition that can not possibly accrue to the benefit of any but a small percentage of 60-year old indigent workingmen, seeing that most workingmen die before they reach that age. Our bourgeois Representatives no doubt lacked the knowledge necessary to inform them that Mr. Berger's proposition would be a boon, not to workmen, but to broken down bourgeois, broken down in the struggle for their share of workingmen's hide{s}, and that of this element fully 95 per cent. of the indigent 60-year olds is made up. To realize these facts, our bourgeois Representatives are too ignorant. They are caught by the proposition's verbiage about its being in the interest of the working people. They believe it. But their instinct told them that the thing to do was to allow proposition and proposal to be made an exhibition of. And they acted accordingly, with admirable dexterity.

In the course of Mr. Berger's 5 minutes his proposition stood contrasted with the bill before the House. The bill before the House offered \$1 a day to the men who had served full terms of enlistment, four years at the most; Mr. Berger's proposition offered an average of 30 cents to the 60-year old workers who had served at least ten times as long a term, indeed, a life time. Contrasted with Mr. Berger's bill, the House bill was boundless generosity; contrasted with the House bill, Mr. Berger's looked like the proverbial "30 cents."

The 5 minutes exposure being over, Representative Bartlett called for a ruling upon his point of order. The scene that followed was, in a way, still more humiliating to Socialism.

A man may be well grounded in economics and all that appertains to social science, yet know next to nothing of parliamentary practice. When, however, one who claims to be a Socialist allows himself to be sent to Congress; when moreover, such a Socialist's conception of Socialism is pure and simple parliamentarism;—then the least that can be expected of him is that he be familiar with the weapons of that arsenal, with the manoeuvres on that field. Mr. Berger must have known that the point of order would be raised against him, and have prepared himself. Even if he did not have sense enough to foresee the parliamentary move, as a pure and simple political Socialist he should have been ready to meet the point of order. Indeed, the raising of the point of order was a dangerous manoeuvre. It could and would have recoiled upon its raiser, were Mr. Berger fit for his post. It matters not how ungermane to the motion an amendment may be. Under the usages of Congress the ungermanest of amendments—"riders"—have been tacked to motions. Even if the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole had sustained the point of order out-of-hand, it would have been Mr. Berger's cue and duty instantly to appeal from the Chair to the House and overwhelm the adverse ruling with precedents in his favor. But the bourgeois parliamentary war-horse in the chair, on to Mr. Berger's unfitness, forced him to drink to the dregs the cup of exposure that they had forced to his lips. Agreeable to the parliamentary practice of the House, the Chair did not decide the point of order out-of-hand. "Does the gentleman from Wisconsin," the Chair blandly asked, "desire to be heard on the point of order?" The gentleman from Wisconsin did not. To be heard on the point of order he would have had to be of sterner metal. He caved in. He caved in completely. "Mr. Chairman," he submissively said: "I admit that under a strict construction the amendment is not germane."

Socialism is not science only; Socialism is not theory only; Socialism is virility, mental and moral. Mr. Berger flunked. It was a double flunk. The gentleman's bourgeois colleagues seem to be onto him. First, and unanimously, they manoeuvred his bill to a place where it was made, with all the eloquence of silence, to present a "30-cents" appearance, and then they made the proposer himself look still

cheaper—unfortunately also the Socialist Movement which he is supposed to represent.

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