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EDITORIAL

## THE DEFEAT OF BERGER.

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**T**HE facts that, so far, we have on the matter are the Associated Press despatches, confirmed by the local Socialist party press, and the telegram from the Organizer of Section Milwaukee, Socialist Labor Party, which has been published in these columns, to the effect that, while the S.L.P. vote increased considerably, the S.D.P. (Socialist party of Wisconsin) lost heavily in Milwaukee. This would seem to be enough upon which to proceed. Not quite so.

While there can be no doubt of Berger's defeat, in and of itself that may mean nothing, at least little. The Milwaukee *Leader*, Berger's paper, has made during the campaign much of the "fusion of the capitalist parties" against him; and outside of Milwaukee the S.P. press echoed the statement. On the other hand, the Wisconsin reporter for the New York *Evening Post* stated expressly that McGovern, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, repudiated the Rep.-Dem. fusion in Milwaukee, and caused a straight Republican candidate for Congress to be set up in Berger's district. If the latter information is correct, then there would be no "crumb of comfort" in Berger's defeat—there would, in fact, have been no fusion against him. Again, even if the latter information should prove to be incorrect, the mere fact of capitalist fusion would not be sufficient premises from which to draw conclusions. If Berger's vote in his district fell below the vote that he polled two years ago, fusion against him would lose much of its force as an argument. If, on the contrary, the Berger column increased, or, at least, retained its strength of two years ago, then there might be much consolation in defeat.

Being in the dark upon these premises, there remains, at present, nothing to judge by but the bare fact of Berger's defeat—a black-eye for the Socialist Movement.

Readers of *The People* need not be told that *The People* has all along maintained, and documentarily proved, that Berger's program was not Socialist:—

Old-age pensions, said to be for workingmen, when rare is the workingman who reaches the extreme old age that Berger's bill provides—that is not Socialism.

Pronouncements concerning the capitalist shifting of the burden of taxation upon the “assessable property” of the Working Class, when the distinctive badge of the workingman, as a class, is to be stripped of property,—that is not Socialism.

Etc.; etc.; etc.;—as lengthily set forth in the pamphlet *Berger's Misses*.

As to tactics, to move the impeachment of a judicial civic felon who presumed to disfranchise a Socialist, and then—the moment, the special set of bourgeois interests, whom the said judicial reprobate was hostilizing, had availed themselves of the opportunity to land with both feet upon the judicial malefactor, and caused him to vacate his seat—and then to drop the impeachment move—that is not tactics that denote Socialist fibre.

Etc.; etc.; etc.;—again, as repeatedly set forth in *Berger's Misses*.

The *Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress* record the incident when Jules Guesde, having enumerated the long list of objectionable acts by Jaures, turned to the latter and said: “I shall not call that your crime, but the consequences of YOUR conception of Socialism.” Similarly is our posture toward Berger. His conception of Socialism is not Socialist. It is bourgeois radical, in point of economics; it is bourgeois, not always radical, in point of tactics.

In view of these facts, how can Berger's defeat be considered “a black-eye for the Socialist Movement”—and, if so, were not the Milwaukee S.L.P. men guilty in that they promoted the defeat of Berger?

As to the first question—Berger has been advertised by the myriad bourgeois press as a Socialist. Whether the bourgeois press knew better or not, matters not to the issue. Inoculated by {the} bourgeois press, the mind of the overwhelming majority of our people succumbed to the virus. They look on Berger as a Socialist. They did not scrutinize. The term “Socialism” has acquired a certain standing. The overwhelming majority interpreted Berger's actions by the light of Socialism. Seeing that, as yet, that overwhelming majority is hostile to Socialism, the defeat of Berger is naturally interpreted by them as a defeat for Socialism. The added vigor, that

comes from the enemy's winning will be found an added force for Socialism to contend against.

As to the second question—the answer to the first is an answer to it. The irony of fate often, and at critical times, devolves upon the shoulders of the Socialist militant the adoption of a course that, for a time, works against himself. The task seems thankless; it is thankless—for a time. In the end, it is thankful, rich with success. Few things will contribute so much toward the scrutiny of Berger's program as his defeat. So long as the structural defects of a program, whose structural non-Socialism, if not even anti-Socialism, can be blurred and slurred over with what is popularly considered "success," the chances of correcting the defects are next to nil. This changes the moment that which is popularly considered "success" no longer lends a color to error. The Berger program having met with defeat at the polls, the popular mind is dieted to greater receptivity for the truth,—and this is the valuable service that the S.L.P., at large, the Milwaukee organization of the Party, in particular, have rendered to the cause of the American Socialist Movement.

Only in the event of there having been fusion against Berger, and of the column of his vote having suffered no loss, only then will the usefulness of Berger's defeat be greatly weakened. If, however, fusion or no fusion, the column of his vote declined, especially should it actually turn out that there was no fusion, then Berger's loss is Socialism's gain.

To the extent that Berger may really know what Socialism is, and desire its triumph, we expect of his geniality that—if not to-day, yet eventually—he will rejoice with us over his defeat.

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