

EDITORIAL

## MODERN UTOPIAN SOCIALISM.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE Milwaukee *Social Democratic Herald* of March 25 has a signed article by Victor L. Berger in which—commenting upon the slump of the Social Democratic vote in his city at the primaries for the School Board election, and the victory of a ticket which received the support of the Roman Catholic churches—he condemns the Roman Catholic bodies for seeking to get control of the School Board. The argument is that upholders of the Roman Catholic regime, being foes of the American school system, have no more business on the School Board of American schools, than Liberals, Protestants and other opponents of the Roman Catholic regime have to try to run Roman Catholic schools.

The theory here advanced is false.

In the first place, parochial schools are voluntary and private, not public institutions. Being private, none but their supporters have, at least theoretically, a right to interfere. The public schools, on the contrary, are, as their name indicates, the concern of all the citizens, to be run by them, according as to the majority may seem fit.—This convicts Berger's theory of not being founded on fact.

In the second place, opposition to the public schools is no argument against their opponent's seeking to run them. Leastwise does such an argument befit a Socialist. The Socialist is opposed to a large number of public institutions in the land, and openly does he seek to wipe them out, at least remodel them radically. If Roman Catholic opposition to the American school system is just ground to censure Roman Catholic exertion to obtain control of the Boards which govern the schools, then the Socialist is barred from seeking to obtain control of Legislative, Executive and Judicial offices, all of which govern institutions that Socialism opposes.—This reduces Berger's theory to an absurdity.

But, more important than to "show up" Berger as unsound in fact and

reasoning is the purpose of the above analysis. It is made simply in order to illustrate thereby a far more serious defect in Bergerism.

At the late St. Louis convention of the A.F. of L., Berger being a delegate, he did not once raise his voice against, on the contrary, with his silence he implied consent to the admission, as fraternal delegates, of clergymen representing nothing but religious organizations, one of these delegates being Father Peter E. Dietz as the representative of the American Federation of Catholic Societies.

Construing together his attitude towards Roman Catholic bodies with regard to School Boards, and this attitude towards Roman Catholic bodies with regard to Trades Unions, it follows that Berger holds the Unions in slight esteem, in an esteem so slight that he is perfectly willing to see them captured by an element which he justly considers so dangerous to progress that he justly calls upon “every workingman and every workingwoman, and every liberal minded citizen” to “do his or her duty on election day” so as to “keep our schools free from the domination of the priests,” and “save this country from a relapse into the darkness of the middle ages.”

Even the International Socialist Congress—swayed as it needs must be swayed by European economic conditions that do not yet enable it to see, as we can see in America, that, useful, important, and necessary tho’ the political movement of the workers is, their economic movement is pre-eminently necessary for the revolutionary act and the establishment of the Socialist or Industrial Republic—even the International Socialist Congress proclaimed at Stuttgart the equal necessity of the Union and the political party in the Socialist Movement. This notwithstanding, Berger’s Trades Union attitude, as officially proclaimed at the St. Louis A.F. of L. convention, and there put into practice, gives up the Unions as a serious proposition, and strikes a route whereby every workingman, won for the Socialist Political, is lost to the Union Movement; and he supplements his grotesque economic attitude with one equally grotesque politically. In the same breath that, contrary to the International Congress, he strikes an attitude which imputes supreme and sole importance to the Political Movement, he is seen in the March 25 issue of his paper smashing the principle of political rights by denying these rights to another, the Roman Catholic political organization on a matter of public concern.

Utopian Socialism originally, was, however visionary, yet the beautiful ideal of minds which, though great, yet lacked the material facts upon which to plant themselves and from which to reason. Modern Utopian Socialism, or Bergerism, is a salmagundi of blindness to facts in existence and of unreason. It is a mess of contradiction, of contradiction with itself, to the extent of itself—while pretending to be a Working Class Movement, ignoring the importance of guarding the economic organizations of Labor from Dark-Ages influence and of promoting their revolutionary sense; and itself—while claiming to be a carrier of Freedom, advancing the tyrannical political theory of the Dark Ages which clipped the citizen's freedom of political dissent and expression.

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