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EDITORIAL

## BERGER'S MISS NO. 21.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**O**N May 22d the aggressive representative of Law and Order, and of Republican plutocracy, Representative Edgar D. Crumpacker of Indiana, looked like a stag at bay, barely had he been speaking twenty minutes.

The initiative and referendum?—Why, devices of disorder! The recall of Judges?—why, an obvious scheme of Anarchy!

Representative Crumpacker was laying about him at this rate with such and similar “arguments” against the “attempted inroad upon constitutional government” when he was set upon by a number of his colleagues—Ben Johnson of Kentucky; Frank Buchanan, the “Labor” member from Illinois; Philip P. Campbell of Kansas; Scott Ferris of Oklahoma; H. Robert Fowler of Illinois; and a number of others. These did not even ask whether “the gentleman from Indiana” would yield. They simply “butted in” with suggestions and questions.

With such an example of tolerance on the part of the speaker on the floor, and with such a virtual invitation to “come one, come all!” one should think that the “first Socialist Congressman” would have felt the whole Socialist Movement tugging at his coat not to allow the challenge to go unaccepted by him.

Boiled down to their substance, Representative Crumpacker’s arguments amounted to denying the fitness of our “cosmopolitan population,” spread over go vast an area as our country, and among whom there was “a great diversity of ideals, social and political,” with “material interests of various sections often antagonistic in their legislative wants and needs,” to be entrusted with anything that approximated direct legislation.

With such a declaration of principles, on the part of Representative Crumpacker, amounting to a slap in the face of the democracy that Socialism advocates, and with such a challenge, as above indicated, to deny the slapper’s premises, Victor L. Berger was in duty bound to break in with the question:

“Does not the gentleman from Indiana’s position amount to saying that the theory of the Constitution, as the Constitution now stands, is false? The theory of the Constitution is that the officers, entrusted with government, are human, therefore fallible. The theory advanced by the gentleman from Indiana implies their infallibility. If that is not the theory implied, then the gentleman from Indiana is, by his argument, laying the foundation, or the approaches, for the total overthrow of the Constitution and its supplanting with another which shall proceed upon the theory of the infallibility being the badge of the citizen the moment he is elected to office—a revolution backward, theocracyward.

“Moreover, does the gentleman from Indiana realize the full import of his allegation that the country consists of antagonistic sections, and of the conclusion he draws therefrom, to wit, that therefore, the power to recall Judges must be withheld from the people? If this means anything, it means that the denial of democracy, a wrong, is to be justified by the existence of a shocking state of things—a Nation divided against itself. Sound reasoning, healthy statesmanship would not justify a wrong, and seek to perpetuate it, by reason of the existence of {a} shocking state of things. Healthy statesmanship would seek to remove the existence of the shocking state of national conditions, and thereby remove the excuse for undemocratic principles.

“I would like to inquire of the gentleman from Indiana whether he considers antagonism of interests the desirable thing for a Nation; and, if not, how can capitalism avoid the evil?”

But the acceptance of the challenge, and the counterchallenge that would have thrown a flashlight upon the jungle conditions of capitalist society, together with the civilized conditions that Socialism urges, and thereby helped disabuse the abused of the land by spreading the light from the elevated platform of Congress,—all that failed to be forthcoming.

Where was Berger when this opportunity presented itself? Was he in his seat, or out of his seat? If out of his seat, where was he, and doing what? If in his seat, was he asleep or afraid?

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