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EDITORIAL

BERGER'S MISS NO. 5.

By DANIEL DE LEON

T WAS Thursday, April 27.—The bill under consideration by the House, in Committee of the Whole, was on the apportionment of Representatives in Congress. David J. Lewis of Maryland had the floor.

The gentleman, young in years, was still younger in point of Congressional experience. He started by saying so himself, and proved it by the college boy matter that he delivered, and the manner in which he delivered it. He ignored the bill under consideration and read a lecture to Congress on comparative parliamentary practice, giving, in regular political science seminar student's fashion, the palm to European nations for superior parliamentary methods. So dry was the delivery, so crude the treatment, that, so far, this was the only speech not accentuated throughout with applause by one side or the other of the House. Nevertheless this speech enjoys the distinction of being the only one that united the two factions of capitalist politicians. The solitary applause which it evoked is recorded not as the applause is usually recorded—"on the Democratic side"; or "on the Republican side"—but simply "Loud applause," which means applause on both sides.

What was the point scored by the new member of Maryland, to provoke such a demonstration?

Mr. Lewis had been explaining the European system of dividing parliament by lots into large "deliberative divisions," and arguing the superiority of the system over that which obtained in Congress. As "a characteristic illustration" of the operation of the European system in affording all the Members, "without regard to whether they are new Members or old," the opportunity to display their special capabilities, the gentleman cited "the instance of a very distinguished man of France," who, as every Member belongs to some section and is free to participate in the consideration of every measure referred to it, showed his surpassing eminence

from step to step, first with regard to a notable measure before his own section, next in the central section, next “as the man selected to steer the measure through the turbulent House of Deputies of France,” until “he was next heard of throughout the world as Briand, the prime minister of France, although belonging to an extremely minor party, with very radical feelings and opinions, and in a country that respects property as much as we do here.”

This was the climax that unified the warring clans of capitalist politicians in “loud applause”—and that was the psychologic moment for a Socialist to break in with, “Will the gentleman yield for a question?” Probably the presiding officer would not have needed to ask the gentleman from Maryland whether he yielded to the gentleman from Wisconsin. In all probability the gentleman from Maryland, cockish and cocksure, would have anticipated the presiding officer with a courteous: “I do, with pleasure,” whereupon Berger should have proceeded:

“Is not the gentleman from Maryland attaching prime importance to an immaterial, and overlooking the essential cause in the case? Is not the cause of Briand’s elevation to be found in the double circumstance of France being so stirred by the breath of the Socialist Revolution that the capitalist class of the country felt desperate, and, in its desperation, did what ruling classes often do in such conjunctions—throw a tub to entertain the whale; and in the further circumstance of Briand’s being an Anarchist, not a Socialist, that is, just the kind of a tub from which was expected that it would gratify the Revolution and yet betray it, as Briand did? Does the gentleman from Maryland fail to catch the note of the identical strategy in this country, notwithstanding there is not here in vogue the parliamentary system which he praises so highly? How does the gentleman account, for instance, for the recent establishment of a Department of Commerce and LABOR, and the same being placed in the hands of some plutocrat or other? Or does the gentleman fail to detect the physiognomy of Briand in the multitude of ‘labor-leaders,’ pets of the National Civic Federation, who are elevated into political jobs by our powers that be? In short, is not the parliamentary system under which a Briand was elevated, merely a matter of form, the essence being the purpose of leading the electric spark of the Revolution into the ground?”

The “loud applause,” that united the Republican and Democratic

Representatives upon the bestowal of praises upon Briand by the “gentleman from Maryland,” would have been X-rayed by such a question, interpolated by the “gentleman from Wisconsin,” and the flash would have illumined many a dark corner in the land, to the clearing up of the path for Social Emancipation. But—as hitherto—the “first Socialist in Congress” “muffed the ball.”

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