

EDITORIAL

BERGER'S MISS NO. 6.

By DANIEL DE LEON

REPRESENTATIVE SYDNEY ANDERSON, high tariff man from Minnesota, had the floor on Thursday, April 20.

The speech that the gentleman delivered on the occasion bore the earmarks of careful preparation. Figures in abundance, citations from previous Republican Presidents and other authorities were marshalled in solid columns against the proposed Canadian Reciprocity bill as disastrous to the Nation, and a bill calculated to draw the working class into the vortex of calamity.

The burden of the speaker's argument was that the farmer is the center from which and whom prosperity, or adversity, radiated, and that the bill would make havoc with prosperity from prosperity's starting point.

In order to illustrate his point, Representative Anderson said:

"It might be pertinent to inquire in this connection where it is that the prosperity expert gets his facts. Does he go to the factory and inquire what men are employed, and at what wages? No. He goes out to the farm and learns that the crops are well put in, that the weather conditions are good, that there is no prospect of drought, that the chinch bugs have not devastated the crop, and he comes back and makes the report, and the factory owner increases his product, raises the wages of his men 5 per cent, and adds 20 per cent to the price of his goods, because he knows that this year the farmer will have the money to buy a pair of felt boots, a new overcoat, build a new hog house, and buy his wife a new spring bonnet."

Instantly the voice of Victor L. Berger should have been heard:—

"Will the gentleman yield one brief minute? The point he has just made regarding the genesis of a rise in wages is so pregnant, and, so far as I know, so novel, that it should not be impaired by lack of explanation and proof. I would like the gentleman from Minnesota to cite at least one instance of wages being raised

voluntarily by the manufacturer, and as a consequence of good crops. So far as I know, wages, that is, the price paid by the purchaser of labor-power, are raised voluntarily by the employer not any more than any other purchaser voluntarily offers a higher price for the article that he purchases. So far as I know, and the manufacturers in this House will bear me out, wages are not, surely not habitually, raised but upon the demand of the workers, backed by an actual, or the prospect of a good, healthy crop of strikes.”

Had the “first Socialist Congressman” put in this “lick,” and not once more “missed stays,” then the estimate he recently gave out himself to the effect that he was not considered a joke, but was “taken seriously” by Congress, would be an inspiring reality, instead of being the rip-roaring thing that the statement actually is.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org