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EDITORIAL

## BERGER'S MISS NO. 14.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HERE is in the House of Representatives a “gentleman from Connecticut” with whom “accuracy”, “preciseness”, “facts and figures” are a specialty. The gentleman from Connecticut has been nicknamed by one of his colleagues “Mr. Danbury Hats” from the circumstance that his District takes in the hat town of Danbury, and he, more than once, approved himself the watchdog of Danbury hat manufacturers. The gentleman’s name is Ebenezer J. Hill. From these introductory remarks it will have been perceived that Mr. Hill is a Republican—a protectionist Republican—a high tariff man.

On May 4 Mr. Hill broke the Democratic party on the wheel of his facts and figures. Maintaining that the Payne-Aldrich tariff was a revision downward; reminding his Democratic colleagues that they had been howling throughout the country against the Payne-Aldrich tariff as “revision upward”; and holding up to them more recent documents, issued by their own Ways and Means Committee, from the statistical tables of which it appeared that the Payne-Aldrich tariff was revision downward; Mr. Hill climaxed this art of this argument saying:

“Are we, as Republicans, not entitled to a retraction of all statements heretofore made about upward revision and repudiated pledges?”

Had Mr. Hill stopped then and there, the gentleman would have given himself no blank for a Socialist bolt. The Socialist can have applause only for every Republican politician who nails the duplicity of the Democrats, the same as he has applause only for every Democratic politician when they nail their Republican competitors. But Mr. Hill did not stop then and there. Obedient to the fatality that pursues the Republican as well as the Democrat, the gentleman from Connecticut had to go further.

Having tied the Democrats fast to the stake, so fast as to be justified in de-

manding of them a retraction, Mr. Hill proceeded to elucidate, and thereby endeavor to justify the Republican's pretense of his high tariff's being for the protection of American labor. Not once, but twice, Mr. Hill proclaimed with admiration the Republican tariff theory to be the equalization of wages between this and competing countries, "the measure of protection" being "the difference in the cost of production at home and abroad."

This was the Socialist's opportunity, in turn, to tie fast to the stake the Republican Representative.

The difference of COST, meaning, of course, wages, between this and competing countries, is and can be no criterion. If German workingman John Doe, receives \$1 a day, and American workingman Richard Roe receives for a work day of the same length \$2 a day, it does not follow that Richard is better paid than John. A number of things, things that the statistician, the man of "facts and figures," is wide awake to, come into consideration. These things fall under two heads:—

Under the first head comes the consideration of the "cost of living"—\$1 in one country may go as far as, if not further than, \$2 in another. The importance of this fact is known all about by the Republican "gold bugs," who, fifteen years ago, correctly argued against the "free coinage" craze, showing that an increase of wages, through an increase of coins called "dollars", would by no means signify an increase, and might even signify a decrease, in the goods, or necessaries purchased thereby—2 50-cent dollars" had no higher purchasing power than 1 100-cent dollar.

Under the second head of things to consider is the productivity of labor here an in competing countries. If German workingman John Doe receives, \$1 a day for making two pairs of, say, \$1-shoes, and American workingman Richard Roe receives, say, \$2 a day for turning out, say, 10 pairs of shoes, it would be equivalent to saying that the German receives back  $\frac{1}{2}$  his product while the American receives back only  $\frac{1}{10}$ , and is the worse paid of the two, the more extensively plucked.

The detailed facts that fall under these two heads being rather involved; moreover, seeing it would take too long to recite them from market and other reports; the Socialist in Congress would simply allude to them curiously, as the theoretical preparation in his process for tying up the "labor protecting" Republican. More effectively than by reciting the details under these two heads, he would pro-

ceed to tie up Mr. Hill by reciting certain facts that flow from, prove and illustrate the economic theories pointed out.

The Socialist would mention the large number of protected articles of American manufacture sold abroad, in competing and in non-competing countries, at a lower price than they are sold here—hats (the product of Mr. Danbury Hat's) our own special pets; locomotives; Waltham Watches; boots and shoes; bicycles; sporting goods; textiles; firearms; boilers; kitchen ware; etc.; etc.; etc.

This list overthrows all pretense of the tariff being intended to equalize wages between this and competing countries for the protection of American labor. The recitation of this list could have been done easily. The denial of its correctness would be as impracticable a flying in the face of facts, as would have been the denial, by Mr. Hill's Democratic colleagues, of the facts that he marshalled against their veracity. It was the duty of Victor L. Berger, a duty he owed to the proletariat of the land, to have requested Mr. Hill to yield; stated these reasonings and facts; and, following the example of "the gentleman from Connecticut," asked:

"Are not the workers of the United States entitled to an apology for the oft repeated incorrectness of this talk about the tariff being intended for their protection as equalizer of wages between the 'highly paid' and the 'pauper labor' of other countries?"

Berger would have had no difficulty in inducing "the gentleman from Connecticut" to yield to "the gentleman from Wisconsin." For one thing, "the gentleman from Connecticut" is the pink of tolerant courtesy; for another, the interest shown by the House in his speech was so slight that he himself observed there were "more people in the galleries than on the floor": gladly would he have seen the occasion enlivened by a question from the "first Socialist in Congress." It was not so. "The first Socialist in Congress" remained mum—or was he equally delinquently absent from his post?

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