

EDITORIAL

BERGER'S MISS NO. 27.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ON a previous occasion we commented upon the miss scored by Victor L. Berger in the baked-owl-like silence in which he joined his Republican colleagues during the first hour of the speech delivered by Representative William G. Brantley of Georgia on June 8, despite the, towards the working class, brazenly false theory set up by the Georgian. It is our painful duty to enter a second miss scored by "the first Socialist in Congress" on the same occasion.

In the course of the second hour of Representative Brantley's speech, several Republicans seem to have recovered their breath. Ex-Speaker Cannon led the way in breaking ice.

Representative Brantley was boasting of the "astounding" increase of wealth during the decade of 1850 to 1860, that is, under a Democratic tariff. Ex-Speaker Cannon broke in with: "Will the gentleman yield right there?" The gentleman having answered, with pleasure, the following dialogue ensued:

"MR. CANNON.—Will the gentleman tell us that, after we have lived as we have from 1860 to the present time, the wealth of the United States has increased from \$1,600,000,000 in 1860 to \$125,000,000,000 in 1910?"

"MR. BRANTLEY.—Mr. Chairman, I have not the figures before me, but if my friend states that those are the figures, I am not prepared to take issue with him. He can incorporate them with his speech."

"MR. CANNON.—But I wanted to get them in at this point."

"MR. BRANTLEY.—Unfortunately, I have not the figures before me."

"MR. CANNON.—But I state that that is so."

The ex-Speaker's purpose was obvious. If, under a Democratic tariff, the increase of wealth was "astounding," then the Democratic tariff is a good thing; and if, under the Republican tariff, the increase of "the wealth of the United States" was

decidedly more astoundingly “astounding,” than the Republican brand of tariffs must be a better thing. Representative Brantley was knocked out—knocked out on a double falsehood, that closely concerns the working class.

It is not true that the wealth of the United States was 125 billions in 1910.

As to the figures, they are violently inflated. Facts came out before the Investigating Committees of this very special session of Congress that the plant of the now Steel Trust, estimated at the already highly inflated value of \$130,000,000, rose over night by the “value” of \$300,000,000, and was sold for and bonded in that amount; and that the sugar refineries of the now acting president of the Sugar Trust, valued by him at \$500,000 were within shortly “consolidated” with the Trust for \$900,000. Even before this special session, the Congress Committees of recent years have been unearthing secrets of the formation of a large number of gigantic syndicates and trusts, proving in all instances the issuance of stocks and bonds in sums fabulous in themselves, and all the more fabulous when their ratio to the actual capital invested is considered. And even before these investigations, the railroads, accused of issuing watered stock, have been “educating” the people with extensive literature that admits and justifies the watering process.

All this is called “capitalization,” that is, a mortgage upon the future and probable yield of Labor’s toil. It is not wealth in existence, it is the wealth which, in increasing quantity, the increasing productivity of Labor is expected to yield.

As to the 125 billions, or whatever amount of wealth there is actually in existence, being “the wealth of the United States” that may or may not be, according as “the United States” is interpreted. If the words mean what they are supposed to mean, the people of the country, the words are false. As well say “the people of the United States own the villas on the Rhine and on the Riviera which our capitalists are purchasing,” as say, even by the remotest implication, that the people own the present billions in existence. The billions are wealth “of the capitalists” which may at any time be used against the United States if by so doing the billions would yield larger dividends.

When ex-Speaker Cannon interrupted Representative Brantley, he declared he wanted to get his figures “in at that point.” The working class of America, at that point—the point where the ex-Speaker misrepresented the economic and social

status of the people with colossally false figures and loud phraseology—thundered into the ears of the “first Socialist in Congress” that he be wise and get *their* facts “in at that point.” But the silence was unbroken, and the only word there spoken was the whispered words—“Miss No. 27,” whispered by the sorrowing Genius of Socialism that hovered over Mr. Berger’s seat, hopeful, expectant, and once again, as so often before, took its flight with drooping head.

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