

EDITORIAL

## THE BUYING OUT CHIMERA.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**V**ICTOR L. BERGER is extremely incautious in using the historic illustrations which he is doing, in order to justify his Socialism of proposing to buy out the capitalist class.

If the plan, proposed before the French Revolution, of buying out the property of the nobility and the church, had been put through, there would have been a transfer of property from one, the existing, the feudal, to another, the oncoming, the bourgeois, Ruling Class. Private property that property was; private property it would have remained. Theoretically, such transfer was possible; and a class revolution, the overthrow of feudalism by purchase by capitalism, was not theoretically impossible. There was no absurdity in the conception. The essence of the private ownership of a necessary for production—the exploitation of a Ruled Class—remained undisturbed. It would have remained, altho' somewhat altered in form, in the hands of the old, and would have been preserved in the hands of the New Rulers thenceforward one and the same Class.

Similarly when in the Forties and Fifties the proposition arose in this country to buy out the slaves as a means of removing the then existing social friction. The proposition came, not from the slave, but from the bourgeois North. There was no absurdity in the notion. Theoretically it was possible of execution. It would have been, as in the instance of the French proposal, a method by which two subdivisions of the Ruling Class would have saved each other much trouble and annoyance, and yet preserved their Ruling Class predominance.

The problem is wholly otherwise today.

The issue today is the emancipation of the Working Class; that demands the placing in the control of the Workers the necessaries for work and wealth-

production. The solution of the modern problem excludes the possibility of the continued existence of a Ruling and economically predominant class of any sort whatever.

Under such circumstances, the Buying Out Proposition amounts to DUPLICITY—duplicity, either towards the Capitalist Class, or towards the Working Class:

If the proposition means it honestly by Socialism and the Working Class, then the purchase money can preserve none of the powers money possesses today—it can not enable the holder to enjoy wealth and live without work—it would be the proverbial schoolboy’s “leather medal”—it would be a mockery, a fraud upon the Capitalist Class. Can the Capitalist Class be caught in the trap?

If, on the contrary, the proposition contemplates no duplicity towards the Capitalist Class, then the Working Class would continue to be an economic slave class, compelled to forego a part of the wealth it produces in exchange for the money that it needs and which the Capitalist Class was confirmed in the possession of through the purchase of its plants; and the Working Class would have been jockeyed. Can the Working Class and Socialism be caught in that trap?

There is only one other alternative left. If the Buying Out Proposition does not involve the moral turpitude of duplicity on the part of its proposer, then it involves fatuous, fathomless Ignorance, and is the wildest-eyed chimera that fathomless, fatuous, Ignorance ever aborted into light.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded February 2016

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)