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EDITORIAL

JUST TWO PASSAGES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

FROM a long article, rather too long to be reproduced in these columns at this time, written by Martin Fuchs of Milwaukee—until recently an ardent supporter of Berger's Wisconsin Social Democracy, a supporter now no more, having lost all hope that the Berger venture can ever pull itself out of the anti-Socialist and small traders ruts in which it is now stuck fast—we shall reproduce two passages.

The article appears in the German organ of the Socialist Labor Party, the *Volksfreund und Arbeiter-Zeitung* of February 22. The two passages chosen are chosen because of the Milwaukee inside workings of Bergerism that the passages afford.

One passage is this:

“The ‘Freie Gemeinde’ (Free Forum), for instance, which held meetings almost every Sunday in the course of the winter, at which speakers were secured at from \$10 to \$30, was poorly attended. Likewise with the lectures in the Ethical Hall, which were held at the same time every Sunday under the auspices of an admirable organization, the Ethical Society. Altho’ able lecturers were secured, such as learned men from Universities located in large cities, the hall generally exhibited wide empty gaps. At both places—Ethical Hall as well as Freie Gemeinde—admission was absolutely free. But all that mattered not: people preferred to go to the Social Democratic party meetings and party festivals where beer, noise and phrases were dispensed. The most disgraceful exhibition, however, transpired at the School Election. The writer is of the firm opinion, and he hopes he does not herein stand alone, that the school is one of the most important institutions that can be thought of. There the young plants are trained for the garden of humanity. It all depends upon the nature of the soil whether the plants will be poisonous or balmy roses. ‘Give me the school and I will give you the future man.’ Reaction recognizes the fact, hence, it bends its whole

mind and efforts towards obtaining control over that most important of institutions. Hence, also, do the church associations in this land go so far as to found schools at fabulous expense in order to withdraw the youth from the liberal-religious influence of the State. In view of all this one should think that surely the Social Democracy would put forth strong efforts to carry its candidates for School Directors at the School Election. Nevertheless, from among a large number of places that were to be filled, the Social Democracy made no efforts to capture them all; the party set up candidates for only about one-third of the offices. What was the reason? Simply this: The offices of School Directors are purely honorary; no salary is attached to them. The Social Democracy explained it had not enough members with sufficient leisure to fill unpaid-for offices. But I know quite positively, and my information is drawn from reliable sources, that the Social Democracy of Milwaukee numbers among its members many citizens who are well off, even affluent. This notwithstanding, when the schools are concerned, the offices are discounted, they have no salary attached; whereas, when well paid offices are concerned, such as Aldermen and Supervisor, there always is a large number of candidates at disposal. Catch on?"

The other passage runs thus:

“Educational agitation, as carried on in this city of Milwaukee, is utterly unsatisfactory. An example should be taken from Belgium, which with its ‘Maison du Peuple’ has rendered valuable services. In that Socialist building are to be found almost all the newspapers of the world, in almost all languages. Would it not be possible to establish a public Socialist Reading Room, where the workman can read articles on current events which he could understand more easily than deep books on Socialism, written in a dry style such as are sold at Brisbane Hall at relatively dear prices? As I have convinced myself by personal observation, the book stand in that Hall pays more attention to the business principles of the Social Democracy than to enlightenment. I received ocular demonstration thereof. A man, whom I know very well, was one day reading a book which he could not afford to buy. After he had been reading in the book for a little while, the salesman behind the stand tore the book out of his hands with the words: ‘These books are for sale, and not to be read.’ Such a method may square well with a business, it does not square with educational agitation.”

Martin Fuchs is a character sketcher of no mean powers. Who is there who does not see sketched by the two passages the profiles of the Bergers, the Hillquits, the Spargos, the Hunters, the Mikkelsens, the Ghents, and the rest of the S.P. small-

trader business fry in the very act of sincerely decrying the Socialist Labor Party as “unpractical” and “impossible”?

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