

EDITORIAL

## BERGER'S EVIL INFLUENCE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**IS not the firmness, which comes of conviction, systematically acquired, that causes Victor L. Berger to “return to the charge” in his advocacy of the gun. In returning to the charge Berger but illustrates the law of mechanics which compels a body, out of equilibrium, fatedly to fly to the opposite extreme.

Berger's position hitherto has been what is known as “pure and simple ballotism.” The ballot was the sole thing needed. It, properly wielded, and, of course, in numbers sufficient, was to cause the walls of the Jericho of capitalism to crumble. Such a posture was that of the pendulum up in the air to the left. It represented a violation, or violent disturbance, of the laws of Nature. The ballot never did, nor never could accomplish a revolution. The ballot's inestimable value, at revolutionary epochs, ever has been to recruit the physical forces necessary to perform the revolutionary act of “taking possession.” The political organization lacks such power.

So unnatural a posture as that of “pure and simple ballotism” inevitably reacts upon its holder in some grotesque manner, such as to incite the chimera of “guns and rounds of ammunition,” in order to supplement the ballot—and there the pendulum swings again, clean up into the air; but now at the other extreme.

If this were all, one might wait patiently until the pendulum has settled down to normal. It happens, however, that, in social movements, such aberrations, as the Berger pendulum is manifesting, are promoters of serious consequences.

“Physical force” is generally understood to imply the violence of destructive force. In European countries, where military knowledge is general, “physical force” naturally suggests organization; so long as the physical force organization is not there practicable no harm comes. In a country like ours, on the contrary, where

military knowledge is not a popular feature, there “physical force” does not naturally suggest organization. Where “physical force” does not suggest organization it inevitably leads to thoughts of individual acts of violence. The consequences are the dynamiter; the exploiter “by installments,” or, more plainly “theft”; and, from step to step, the “bum.”

And that's what comes from starting wrong. Started wrong, Berger is driven by the very law of his initial error to put his foot into it, ever worse and worse, whereas had he started right he would be realizing to-day that, not “guns and founds of ammunition,” but the integrally organized industrial body of the land is the one force available and all-sufficient.

The motto that is applicable to the emergency is, not the one behind which Berger is seeking shelter—“an armed people is a free people.” The motto applicable to the case is: “An industrially organized people is a free people.”

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

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