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EDITORIAL

## BERGER BEHIND COXEY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**C**RUSTY reactionary journals are pooling their grievances by joining in praises of “Gen.” Jacob S. Coxey, the Ohioite, who, about nineteen years ago, started the move of “petitions in boots” to march to Washington; which “petitions,” having reached the Federal capital, suddenly came to an inglorious halt before the signs “Keep off the Grass.”

Whether the above referred to limbs of reactionary crustiness treat with good natured contempt the milder forms of “Reform,” and keep their wrath either for the more virulent manifestations of “Social Uplift,” such as Bull Moosianism, and one-time Bryanism, or for the more deliberate manifestations of untrained Discontent which they have dubbed “Follies de la Follette”;—whatever the shade of reactionary crustiness, they have hit with surprising unanimity upon the plan of ridiculing the “Reformers” by extolling “Gen.” Coxey, and tracing to the “Gen’s.” pronouncements plank after plank and method after method adopted by these “Reformers.” The crusty reactionaries agree that the modern “Reformers” are but successors of the “Gen.,” himself the fountain head of all their Uplift efforts.

All this may, or may not, be so. But, whether so, or not, especially if so, there follows, from the analysis that “Gen.” Coxey’s pronouncements are being submitted to, that one, if not prominent, yet certainly notorious, Reformer must be excluded from the genealogy which starts with the “Gen.”; and that that notorious Reformatory figure, so far from having followed Coxey, falls many lengths behind him.

That single exception in the motley firmament of Reform is the Hon. Victor L. Berger, allegedly the “first Socialist in Congress.”

Coxey said: “The great issue, I believe, before the American people to-day is whether the railroads are going to own the Government, or the Government is going

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to own the railroads. I can show you plainly how you can buy up the railroads of every State and Territory, and pay for them"; and to this end Coxe provided for non-interest bearing bonds.

Here are four distinct pronouncements of principle:—

First principle:—The issue concerns the "American people." It does not concern any one class, say the Working Class. It concerns all classes.—So sayeth Berger, too. No class need fear him.

Second principle:—The issue is not whether a class, the Capitalist, owns the country. The issue is whether a portion of the "tax-gathering" Capitalist Class shall tax "the people," or "the people" shall tax that Capitalist portion—the same being "the railroads." The issue is not the absolute emancipation of the Working Class.—So sayeth Berger, too, at least by implication.

Third, principle:—The method for the solution of the issue is to buy out the oppressor.—So sayeth Berger in express words.

Fourth principle:—The method of payment is non-interest paying bonds.—Here Berger shows the yellow streak in his Reform anatomy; a streak so yellow, and which, extending from the base of the occipital bone at the back of his cranium, runs down his spinal column, and, arrived at the cauda equina, at the base of that, parts into two streaks, which, running down his two legs end at his heels,—a streak so long, so broad, and so yellow that it marks Berger a species different from the genus Coxe; away below the Coxe genus in the scale of Social Science.

While "Gen." Jacob S. Coxe is still as a consequence of his being at "the people" stage of social evolution, in the rudimental state of proposing to buy out the oppressor, he nevertheless has progressed to the point of paying the oppressor with non-interest bearing bonds. Berger, also at the rudimental stage of "buying out," has not evolved further. He "sticks fast in the mud" there. He would "buy out," not with bonds only, but with interest on the same, besides. The Working Class produced the railroads; these have been "legally" confiscated by the Capitalist Class; instead of overthrowing the Social System that legalizes such confiscation, and of establishing a Social System that condemns as illegally immoral the rewarding of a thief by buying him out, Berger is bent upon perpetuating the Political State; accordingly, he proposes buying out the Capitalist—and paying the gent interest to boot.

Victor L. Berger, if at all of the "Gen." Jacob S. Coxe family, is a sort of black-sheep; a cripple product, that limps and falls away behind the Coxe procession.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
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[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)