

EDITORIAL

## BERGER AS CORNER GROCER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HE question presented by “Two Letters,” published in this issue’s correspondence,<sup>1</sup> is not the trivial one of a slip of the tongue, pen, or memory. It is a question of vastly deeper and broader scope. It is a lesson in the psychology of Socialist party Officialdom-and-Press.

Over a year ago, Judge Hanford, now Judge no more, cancelled the naturalization papers of Leonard Olsson, a member of the Socialist Labor Party. The reason assigned by the Judge was that Olsson’s political views were “subversive of the Constitution which he had sworn to uphold.” The dull brains from which so stupid, to say nothing of its highhandedly illegal nature, an act proceeded imagined they had “scored a point,” and flashed the news across the land. This was the undoing of the sapient Judge.

Judge Hanford had been a sort of Archbold on the bench. The indignation that his highhanded conduct against Olsson evoked was speedily utilized by the numerous bourgeois interests whom he had outraged with partisan rulings. They raised the hue-and-cry in Congress, and steps were taken for the impeachment of the corrupt magistrate. More long-headed than Archbold, who insisted upon a trial, Judge Hanford resigned. The bourgeois interests were satisfied with Hanford out of the way. They were not after a principle; they were after material benefits. And there the case of Hanford ended.

Among the loudest in Congress—whether he led, or followed, in the demand for Judge Hanford’s impeachment matters not,—was Victor L. Berger, “the first and only Socialist in Congress.” Among the loudest in Congress—whether he led, or followed, in expressing readiness to drop the impeachment proceedings against the

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<sup>1</sup> [Appended, page 3, below.—R.B.]

Judge, the instant the Judge resigned, matters not,—was the identical Berger.

The bourgeois physiognomy of Victor L. Berger was sharply drawn by such conduct. A Socialist sticks to principle. The principle of the sacredness of citizenship, impiously violated by Judge Hanford, was at stake. That bourgeois Congressmen, men not interested in the principle, should let up on Hanford when he indicated his readiness to step down and out,—that was in the fitness of things. That a Socialist should say: “Me too,”—that was a misfit. The misfit told of the misfit of the name of Socialism upon the anatomy of a Berger; the misfit betrayed the bourgeois anatomy under the Socialist cloak of Working Class aspirations.

“Two letters” exhibit Berger in the specific bourgeois niche that the man belongs in—the corner grocer, who sands his sugar, waters his molasses, and falsifies his weights. Believing there was none present at the Brooklyn meeting to suspect his auto-puffs; ready to humbug his hearers; withal basically uninformed on the subject, yet ready to deal out his sanded sugar and watered molasses; Berger falsely set himself up as a man appealed to by S.L.P. members when Olsson was disfranchised—and gets himself exposed for the trick.

Leonard Olsson has been rehabilitated in his citizenship; Judge Hanford has lost his seat on the bench; the medieval principle which the corrupt magistrate sought to set up has been knocked down;—for all this, small thanks to corner grocer Victor L. Berger, whom no S.L.P. man was ever so ill-informed as to think of appealing to, and whose cave-in in Congress greatly endangered the final triumph of Olsson, although the cave-in greatly contributed to the popularity of Berger among, and to earn for his recall by the proletariat of Milwaukee the sympathy and sorrow from the rest of the bourgeois representatives at Washington.

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CORRESPONDENCE

## TWO LETTERS.

### I.

To the *Daily* and *Weekly People*:—Comrade Boris Reinstein's article in the *Daily People* of March 2nd, under the heading "Socialist Party Politicians. Side-lights on Unity and on Social Democratic Party's Gains by Disfranchising Socialist Labor Party Voters in Wisconsin,"<sup>2</sup> gives rise in my mind to a question concerning a statement made by Victor L. Berger a month ago during a lecture he delivered in Brooklyn under the auspices of the People's Forum. The lecture was delivered on Sunday afternoon, February 2nd, at the Brooklyn Masonic Hall.

Berger was speaking of his experiences as a Socialist in Congress and among other things spoke of the Leonard Olsson case and of his "impeachment of Judge Hanford, the federal Judge who had caused the revocation of Olsson's citizen papers. But it seems that Berger could not resist taking a slam at the Socialist Labor Party while speaking about Olsson. Here is Berger's statement, word for word as I copied it down at the time: "When they arrested Olsson who was a member of the so-called Socialist Labor Party and the I.W.W., Detroit faction, after he had been making a denunciatory speech in which he had been saying all kinds of things about me, I WAS THE FIRST ONE HE APPEALED TO WITH HIS CASE."

Being a member of Section Tacoma of the Socialist Labor Party and a resident with Leonard Olsson at the time he was disfranchised, of course I know that Berger's remark about Olsson's "arrest" was extreme carelessness since Olsson was not arrested; BUT IS THERE ANY TRUTH in the latter part of the statement, to wit: "I was the first one HE APPEALED TO WITH HIS CASE," meaning of course, appealed to by Olsson, or the "so-called Socialist Labor Party," of the I.W.W.?

C. M. Carlson.

New York, N.Y., March 2.

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<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> [Boris Reinstein's article "Socialist Party Politicians," etc., will be found appended to De Leon's editorial for March 5, 1913, "The Fight in Wisconsin."—R.B.]

## II.

To the *Daily* and *Weekly People*:—In reply to the letter of Comrade Carlson concerning Mr. Victor L. Berger's statement that I appealed to him when denaturalized by Judge Hanford, I will say that Mr. Berger's statement is absolutely false. Neither I nor Section Tacoma, or any other Socialist Labor Party body appealed to Mr. Berger or anybody else. The statement about me being arrested is not in accord with facts, either, as I was not arrested. Furthermore, disfranchisement proceedings were not started against me for any statement made at a street meeting, but for opinions expressed in the Pierce County Superior Court, when I appeared there as a witness for Charles Olsen, an applicant for citizenship.

Leonard Olsson.

Tacoma, Wash., March 19.

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