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EDITORIAL

BERGER'S MISS NO. 12.

By DANIEL DE LEON

OF all polite Members of the House, Representative Frank B. Willis of Ohio is easily foremost. His is the politeness of the politician; aware of the changes of fortune; careful not to make an enemy; with a smile and a smirk for foe and friend; knowing what he wants and pursuing his interests, or obedient to his instructions, yet ever professing "great respect and admiration" for the adversaries whose interests he knows are as sordid as his own.

Mr. Willis gave an exhibition of his imperturbable and honied politeness on the 18th of May, when the bill to admit New Mexico and Arizona to statehood was called up, and he led the debate on the Republican side, holding the floor for over an hour. As Mr. Willis himself said of his speech, it was a "colloquy" rather than a speech—so many were the interruptions for questions to which he cheerfully yielded, the questioners being themselves frequently interrupted by other questioners, without objection on Mr. Willis's part. He said he enjoyed it.

Mr. Willis was firmly set against the recall of the judiciary clause in the constitution of Arizona. He raised no objection to the recall of any other officer. The recall of the Judges he objected to. He said:

"I believe it will make a weak judiciary when a man sitting on the bench, instead of considering the law and the facts, is put in the position where he has to find out what is being said about this proposition in the corner groceries and at the pink teas all over the county." The issue, according to Mr. Willis was whether the Judges were to be "independent and free to apply the law," or whether they were to be "the mere creatures of the passing gusts of public opinion."

Surely there was no danger of so polite and yielding a Congressman, as the gentleman from Ohio, refusing Victor L. Berger the opportunity of asking:

"Was not there, about 120 years ago, an element in this country who held lan-

guage like this:

“I believe it will make a weak legislature when men sitting in the Nation’s parliament, instead of considering the law and the facts, are put in the position where they have to find out what is being said of a proposition before them in the corner groceries and the pink teas all over the country. The question is whether the legislators are to be free and independent to enact the laws, or whether they are to be mere creatures of the passing gusts of public opinion. Nor, dangerous as that is, is it as dangerous an experiment as the creation of an Executive, subject to impeachment by such a dependent Legislature, and himself, instead of independently and hereditarily, and, consequently, unremovable, considering the laws and facts that would redound to the people’s welfare, put in the position where he has to find out what is being said in the corner groceries and at the pink teas all over the country, a mere creature of the passing gusts of public opinion.’

“And what did such language then, and its echo to-day import but fear of the people?”

Did the “first Socialist Congressman,” the reputed representative of the crowning revolution of all social revolutions, the revolution that is pre-eminently THE PEOPLE’S—did he voice the sentiments of THE PEOPLE on the occasion of the snobbish language used against it by the slick, the oily-tongued, the all-men’s friend Ohio politician? No, Mr. Berger once more illustrated the fact, quite naively, though unintentionally confessed by himself of his nullity in Congress.

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