

EDITORIAL

## THE MILWAUKEE ELECTION.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**V**ICTOR L. BERGER has a signed article in the Milwaukee *Social-Democratic Herald* of the 10th of the current month, which closes with expressions of disappointment at the result of the election of the 6th in his municipality. The head of the Social-Democratic ticket, the candidate for Alderman-at-large, was returned at the top of the polls, beating both his Republican and Democratic opponents by a safe plurality of about 900 votes. That should be cause for joy, and would be with one of less political sagacity than Berger has been developing. He justly looks at the totals. Already last year the Socialist party vote in Milwaukee fell below the vote of four years before; on the 6th last year's reduced poll of 17,496 dropped below one half—to 8,574.

Considering the fate of the S.P. poll in Milwaukee is the fate it has been meeting last year and this in almost all the industrial centers of the land, beginning with New York; considering furthermore that the S.P. leading claim to practical wisdom is its vote-catching capacity; considering, above all, that Berger is the one deservedly prominent figure in the S.P., and actual pace-setter for his party's policy;—considering all this the election returns in Milwaukee are well calculated to cause him disappointment.

But this is not the only feature of the Milwaukee election, nor, perhaps, the one of supremest general interest.

Indeed, the circumstance that, although the S.P. vote dropped over 50 per cent., both the other parties' votes dropped so very much more heavily that the S.P. candidate triumphed, is a circumstance in itself suggestive of the question, WHAT IS UP?

In the signed article, above referred to, Berger says—“in all or nearly all of the Roman Catholic churches in Milwaukee—and there are many of them—there was an anti-Socialist ticket given out on the Sunday before election”; “he [the priest] told

them [the women of the congregations] that it was their duty toward God and their church to go out and vote together with their husbands and friends of that Anti-Socialist ticket”; “he [Joseph Donnelly] sent out innumerable circulars with a story to the same effect, signed by prominent Roman Catholics, pointing to the church as the ‘bulwark against Socialism’” etc., etc.

If this is thus, then Milwaukee, together with Wisconsin, is in the condition of Italy and such other European countries where a clerical party is in the field, de facto though not by name. If this is thus, then the problem that faces the forces of progress in those countries confronts also in Wisconsin any political movement that makes for civilization, with the practical consequence that, in Wisconsin, as in those European countries, the Socialist Movement would by necessity be constrained to drop its Socialism into the rear until it would have settled the antiquated and bourgeois issue that sweeps creeds from the domain of political functions, and to the domain to which they belong, the domain of strictly private concerns. Finally, and worst of all, if this is thus, then an abyss, which does not yawn at the feet of most of the European countries with a clerical political party, would be yawning at the feet of Wisconsin.

In most of the European countries, afflicted with a clerical political party, there is virtually only one creed. The conflict with the political manoeuvres of such a creed are not calculated to rekindle the various politico-religious animosities of old that civilization is happily through with. Accounts once settled, in the only way that they inevitably must be settled, with such a political creed, the issue is at end. Not so in a country where the creeds are numerous. The conflict, that the political manoeuvres of any one of the provokes, would insensibly arouse the wrath of other creeds, the volcanoes of which have been lying dormant. In the course of the conflict, these until then dormant volcanoes, would start boiling and setting—at first against the creed whose political meddlesomeness had started the row and had to be brought to order—and then?—and then many a one of the reawakened volcanoes, according to their powers, would step into the activity of the one it had just contributed to silence, and, once silenced, would seek to emulate it. And the trouble would have to be gone all over again. It is the fatal law of creeds. Wisconsin, a State in which there are other and populous creeds, would be facing this exceptional danger.

The avoidance of such a danger must be the effort of every clear head in

Wisconsin The issue would now be with the Roman Catholic Church. It must not be forgotten that, however individuality-destroying the Roman Catholic political machine may be, and however deep the sigh of relief from the chest of civilization when that power was finally broken, all other creeds, soon as any of them had the chance, did the identical thing. If their sphere of devastation of individuality did not extend as far as with the Roman Catholic Church it was not out of self-control. The will was their; only the power lacked. The conduct of the Jewish Church, when barely settled in its asylum at Amsterdam, against Spinoza need not be more than referred to; the polity of the Presbyterian Church, soon as in the saddle and as long as it maintained its power, of dictating the cut of men's, women's and children's dresses, the style of combing the hair, the names to be given by parents at the baptismal font, the literature permissible, etc., etc., and even the exercise of the powers of a domiciliary police in the privacy of the home, is a page of history that should be vivid in all men's minds. The performances of the Puritans in Massachusetts, immediately they escaped persecution themselves at home, drips blood. And so on, down the line to the last creed of the list—whenever the chance offered itself.

It is to be hoped that either Berger's information reached him in exaggerated form; or, if accurate, that the guilty priests and their lay supporters, for their country's {good} and the good of their own organization, in so far as it is religious, will pull in their horns betimes, take back-water, and learn the lesson they are being taught in France, Italy and elsewhere, where the power of their fraternity, once controlling, now lies shattered.

Whichever the side from which the Milwaukee election is contemplated—whether from the side of S.P. vote-catching policy, or from the side of clerical interference with politics—it furnishes food for thought.

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