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EDITORIAL

SECOND SERIES—BERGER FLUNK NO. 2.

By DANIEL DE LEON

AT the January 8 session of Congress Representative Jefferson M. Levy of New York expressed his emphatic disapproval of the investigation which the House had been conducting of the Steel Trust. The reason for the disapproval was that many persons had lost their employment as a consequence of the activity of the Steel Committee. Asked by Representative Augustus O. Stanley of Kentucky, the chairman of the Committee, how many men had been thrown out of work for the reason given, Representative Levy answered: "At least 25,000."

The Congressional autobiography of Representative Levy proudly conveys the information that the gentleman is "a nephew of Commodore Uriah P. Levy, a distinguished naval officer of the last generation, who was mainly instrumental in the abrogation of flogging in the United States Navy."

Us seems that Representative Victor L. Berger should by this time be familiar with the "history" of his fellow Representatives, at least as traced by themselves in the Congressional collection, known as the Congressional Directory, and of which his own autobiography is a component part. Us seems, furthermore, that Representative Levy's obvious purpose was to thrust a spoke into the wheel of an investigation which was shedding precious light upon the manoeuvres of some of the leading Pillars of Capitalist Society, hence, upon some of the most powerful vampires on Labor's flanks, and that the spoke was thrust under the pretext of wishing to safeguard workingmen, "at least 25,000" of them. Upon these two combined grounds, us seems that it was incumbent upon "the only Socialist in Congress" to "butt in," right there and then, by any of the several parliamentary methods that are available, and, holding up Representative Levy's autobiography, and reading the passage quoted above, suggest:

"Is not the gentleman from New York going back upon his collateral ancestor, Commodore Uriah P. Levy, 'the distinguished naval officer of the last generation

who was mainly instrumental in abolishing flogging in the United States Navy? The investigations that preceded and led to the abolition of the barbarous practice of flogging aroused at the time much opposition. While from hardly a source did there come a word of direct approval of flogging, was not there considerable argument presented against its abolition? And what was the purport of that line of argument? Was it not, in substance, that, unfortunately, the crew that enlisted before the mast was recruited from so hardened an element that nothing short of corporal punishment could insure discipline? And what was the line of the counter-argument, the argument that finally prevailed? Was it not, in substance, an argument made by the light of the maxim of jurisprudence, ‘None shall be allowed to profit by their own wrong’? Was it not the elaboration of that maxim—the showing that to persist in an act, admittedly wrong, on the ground that wrongful conditions demand its continuance, was against public policy? Was not the argument that finally triumphed, in substance, the declaration that, flogging being indefensible, the conditions that had induced its adoption should be abolished, beginning with flogging itself? Are not the circumstances parallel? The gentleman from New York has not ventured to defend the Steel Trust practices as proper, any more than did the opponents of his uncle dare approve of flogging. Yet, upon the same principle that his uncle’s opponents sought to perpetuate flogging—‘existing conditions’—does the gentleman from New York now seek to prevent the continuance of the Steel Investigation, and thereby seeks to perpetuate the Steel Trust practices. What is that principle? ‘Existing conditions’—the ill conditions that can throw out ‘at least 25,000’ industrious men as a consequence of an attempt to fumigate a den of thieves. Is not the gentleman from New York going back upon the high ethic and civic plane, that his uncle planted himself upon in the last generation, when the gentleman from New York, in this generation, has not a word in favor of uprooting the social conditions that can castigate ‘at least 25,000’ workingmen as a consequence of an endeavor to stop improprieties which the gentleman himself, by his silence, admits to be such?”

But Berger flunked.

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