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EDITORIAL

ST. BERNSTEIN.

By DANIEL DE LEON

WE have demonstrated in previous issues that the Social Democratic vote, recently polled in Germany, powerful in numbers and shown to be still more powerful by later returns, was a mighty step forward toward the overthrow of the Imperial political system, but that, and inevitably, it was not a Socialist vote.¹ The demonstration was made—as is the wont of and behooves the



EDUARD BERNSTEIN (1850–1932)

organ of a self-respecting party, that has no interests but those of truth to subserve—with documentary proof, and that of the very highest character. The manifesto—issued by the highest authority in the German Social Democracy, the party's delegation in the Reichstag, and bearing the signature of all of the members—with which the campaign was there opened, was reproduced in full in these columns in a careful and conscientious translation. As shown, Socialism, both in point of argument and space, was conspicuous by its absence. Space and argument were devoted to issues, burning, indeed, and all-essential to semi-feudal Germany, but typically bourgeois, radical bourgeois. Only at the end, occupying but a few lines and markedly a “non sequitur” from what preceded, appeared some Socialist phrases, a mere declamatory “fanfarre finale.” The demonstration was complete.

Since then, Edward Bernstein, no less a personage than one of the signers of that manifesto, and himself re-elected at the late election, has in express language supplemented our facts and confirmed our conclusion. In the July issue of the

¹ [See “The German Elections,” *Daily People*, June 18, 1903.—R.B.]

Socialistische Monatshefte Bernstein has an article dealing with the election. In the course of the article the following passage occurs.

“It is not the ‘incredibly wild agitation of the Social Democracy,’ which papers of Richter’s party [bourgeois liberal] are writing about, but, ON THE CONTRARY, the incredibly stale policy of slandering the Socialists, pursued by Richter’s press, that inflicted upon that party its deepest wounds.”

Bernstein then proceeds to elaborate the point, and clinches it with these words:

“That policy has . . . compelled an increasing number of bourgeois voters to give their vote to the Social Democracy WITHOUT THEIR BEING SOCIAL DEMOCRATS THEMSELVES.”

In so far as all this concerns Germany, its rehearsal is of little interest at this season. Having once stated the facts, the matter could be dropped until the not distant day when events now sprouting up there, will have ripened sufficiently to re-point a moral and re-adorn a tale with them in these columns. But the sequence of events above run through have a certain, a peculiar interest in this country also.

In this country there is a party variously styled “Social Democratic” and “Socialist.” The patron Saint of the party is Edward Bernstein. They hold with him in all his disagreements with Marx, especially touching the middle class and the working class. With him they pin their faith on the middle class—the “intellectuals”; with him they hold that Marx idealized the working class; and with him they look upon the working class as just matchless stuff for food for cannon—to vote them into office. Of course, with him they pronounce themselves Socialists. He is their “beau ideal”; actually their patron Saint. Him they worship. It so happens, however, that, much as they would like to drag the American movement down to the backward political development of Germany, they live not in Germany, but in America. Here, it is to their interest to make the recent German Social Democratic vote appear as an up-to-the-hilt Socialist vote. And so they have held, written and declaimed. From the mosquito flats of New Jersey to the Japanese quarter of wood-paved alleys of Seattle, they have been shouting at the top of their voices that every

one of the 3,000,800 votes given to the Social Democracy of Germany were given by men who had become Social Democrats.—And now comes their patron Saint, St. Bernstein, and kicks their milk-pail over.

What patron Saints have done to their devotees, when these have slided back, the chronicles of miracles are full of. But what should be done to a patron Saint by his devotees when he leaves them in the lurch?

Something should be done to St. Bernstein.

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