

## THE COMMUNIST

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### The Elections

THE political campaign this year, while ordinary in itself, occurred under extraordinary conditions. The campaign as such possessed no vital issues; but circumstances imposed issues upon it,—issues, however, which appear incidentally and not consciously.

One fact stands clear in the recent campaign: in spite of opportunity for mobilizing revolutionary issues politically, there was no such mobilization. The Communist Party did not participate in the elections; while the Socialist Party campaign was more than usually a petty bourgeois campaign about humanity, milk, democracy and such issues. The campaign and the elections were of the regulation cheap political character.

Another fact that stands clear is that the revolutionary surge among the masses, expressed in dynamic strikes, did not express itself politically, could not express itself since there was no real opportunity for expression, and since, moreover, the revolutionary surge of the masses is still economic and has not yet acquired a political revolutionary consciousness.

But there is still a third fact, and that is: the mass of the voters are reactionary. In New York City, where a number of Socialists were elected to public office, they are typical reactionary blatherskites—and this is another expression of reaction, much more dangerous than an outright capitalist vote.

The re-election of Governor Coolidge in Massachusetts on the issue of stern repression of the recent police strike in Boston has evoked the congratulations of men all over the country, including President Wilson and other Democrats, who consider the re-election a victory for "law and order". The police strike was considered an assault upon "law and order". Governor Coolidge's uncompromising policy of breaking the strike was enthusiastically approved by apologists of Capitalism, and his re-election against a candidate who mildly favored the police is considered a blow "at Bolshevism."

And, peculiarly, the election is generally considered by the capitalist press as a repudiation of Bolshevism. Repudiation—in what way?

Bolshevism was not represented in the elections—surely the Socialist Party did not represent Bolshevism!

But still the bourgeois take flattering unctious to their souls and sigh happily about the defeat of Bolshevism during the recent campaign. This comes from the inherent bourgeois idea that electoral majorities are the final indication of class power.

Electoral majorities, however, are not the final indication of class power. The capitalist press claims a great victory for Capitalism in the recent elections; but in spite of that American Capitalism was never as near a crisis as it is at this moment. Not votes but social forces are the determining factor.

This superstition concerning electoral

majorities afflicts the Socialist Party as well as Capitalism. Precisely as the capitalist press is trying to prove by means of percentages that the Socialists were beaten and bourgeois reaction conquered, so the Socialist Party is trying to prove also by means of percentages that Socialism made enormous strides onward. The Socialist Party is developing the percentage conception of the revolution.

But these experts in percentages are mere froth upon the surface of events. They are not in contact with reality, with the dynamic forces that shape social and political developments. They are afflicted with the "parliamentary idiocy" scored by Marx, which imagines that destiny is determined by an electoral majority and resolutions in parliament.

The revolutionary Marxist, in considering the social topography, the measure of development of the revolutionary movement, pierces through parliamentary forms and electoral illusions. It is the play of social forces behind these forms and illusions that must be analyzed in order to appreciate the revolutionary "lay of the land."

The electoral majority secured in the recent elections by the "parties of order" will encourage them to repress still more, and this repression must necessarily hasten the proletariat's awakening to revolutionary consciousness.

This electoral majority will not mine coal for Capitalism, nor produce steel, nor prevent the workers from securing out of life itself the courage and inspiration for more aggressive struggles against Capitalism.

The votes and public offices secured by the Socialist Party will not alter that party's reactionary character. A fact will hasten its development into an open party of petty bourgeois progressivism and laborism, thereby hastening the workers' realization of the necessity for Communism.

At this moment the most vital, and potentially revolutionary tendency, is the strike movement of the workers. This movement, developed out of the economic circumstances of Capitalism, is a real menace to the dominant social system. But the revolutionary importance of this strike movement is not in its direct threat to Capitalism, but in its influence upon the ideology of the workers. The American Federation of Labor, under the pressure of Capitalism and the militant workers, is rapidly approaching disintegration, thereby accelerating the impetus toward industrial unionism. The fact that these strikes clash with the power of the state is developing a political consciousness among the workers, and preparing conditions for the political strike of the masses which is more vital and powerful than the largest electoral majority.

The strike is being broadened and deepened, the workers moving toward the concept of mass action. The impulse for the revolution comes out of the mass struggles of the proletariat, out of its actual clash with Capitalism and the state in its mass strikes,—not out of electoral majorities.

This mass movement of the workers is acquiring feverish speed and larger consciousness: the electoral majority of Capitalism can not stop its onward sweep. To impart to this strike movement a larger and more conscious character, to develop out of its circumstances definite revolutionary demands, to develop the understanding and action of the political general strike—it is this task that calls the revolutionist to action, it is upon the measure of fulfillment of this task that we can gauge the maturity of the American proletariat for action and the conquest of power.

### The Right to Strike

THE law-and-order game is producing many wierd pranks of law and order nowadays. In fact the law-and-order moralists can no longer keep pace with the performance. We have come to the time when the law-and-order fangs are cutting too deep into the flesh to make any successful pretence of purposes other than gigantic piracy and suppression of the masses.

Note the clumsiness of the efforts to defend the use of the courts and the army and all the prestige and influence of the Federal government against the coal strike.

The *Chicago Tribune* draws the line between the lawful strike and the unlawful strike as a division between strikes in "purely private, nonessential industry" and strikes in "essential industries".

The *Chicago Daily News* marks the distinction as between a number of "free men, in the absence of a contract voluntarily entered into" choosing to leave their work and a combination, with organization and leaders, which conducts a general strike with the intention and known effect of paralyzing industry.

In other words, a strike is lawful when it is small, of no particular consequence, and of no threatening aspect to the general capitalism. But it is unlawful when it is organized so effectively that it can tie up an entire industry. And the degree of unlawfulness apparently increases—it is unlawful conspiracy, according to Mr. Taft—"when enormous combinations of workmen deliberately enter upon a countrywide plan to take the nation by the throat."

Undoubtedly the general strike will be illegal. The business of law-and-order is to make everything illegal and immoral which is contrary to the fundamentals of the private property exploiting system.

But the general strike will happen just the same. Capitalism will compel the general strike, or a series of general strikes, just so surely as capitalist ethics will brand any such strike as a criminal conspiracy. When the "enormous combinations of workmen" really do "take the nation by the throat"—what then? Why, they will quickly realize that the overwhelming degree of suffocation is on the part of the working class, and they will relax the grip, but not entirely. That part of the national life, in institutions and practices, which compels the general strike, will be held by the throat and choked to death.

Revolution—upon this all jurists agree—is a law unto itself. The Communist revolution will inaugurate a system of Law and Order founded upon the needs of expansive human life. The law-and-order of Capitalism is founded upon the needs of investment for profit.

Between these two systems is the transition period of the class struggle. Until a certain day the working class, in its mass manifestations of power, will be compelled to act under the cloud of the law or in direct defiance thereof. Upon the next day the present sanctified processes of labor exploitation will become the most serious of crimes.

This does not prove that Might is Right. It only proves that Might is Right at certain times and under certain circumstances. There is a profit right and a life right; there is a profit might and there is a life might. Communism as a goal is the social expression of the life right. Communism in action is the social expression of the life might the action of the great working masses, bursting asunder the chains of slavery to Capital.