

The French General Elections

By Robert Dell

(From The London Daily Herald)

MOST of the British Press has described the result of the French General Election as a victory for "Moderate Republicanism." The Republicanism of the motley crew of Nationalists, Clericals, and other reactionaries, who have enlisted under the banner of M. Clemenceau, is, indeed, Moderate, both in quantity and quality, but this is not a victory for moderation. It is the victory of extreme reaction. The election has placed the destinies of France in the hands of Chauvinists and militarists of the type which made France a menace to Europe during a great part of the nineteenth century. It means social and political reaction at home and an aggressive policy abroad.

M. Clemenceau has been a wrecker throughout his political career. When he was Prime Minister for the first time he broke up the "Bloc"—the Coalition of the Left—and disintegrated the Radical Party, which has since declined steadily in power and influence, and is now reduced to nullity. Now that he is Prime Minister for the second time, he has completed the discredit of French parliamentary institutions and disintegrated the bourgeois Republic. For this general election will be the death-blow to the present regime. It has created a situation from which there is no issue other than those of open reaction—a coup d'état leading to a military despotism or revolution.

Inevitably, the result of the election will strengthen the revolutionary and anti-parliamentarist elements in the French proletariat. I should not be surprised at a demand from a large section of the Socialist Party for the entire withdrawal of the Socialist Deputies from the Chamber as a protest against an electoral system which is a caricature of representation. M. Millerand is mentioned as the probable successor of M. Clemenceau in the Premiership. Formerly a Socialist, he has been for years the hope of the Reaction. He is a hardworking man of despotic temperament, lacking vision and any real qualities of statesmanship, and destitute of tact. Just the man, in fact, to precipitate the inevitable crisis.

The complete results of the election are not yet known, but 586 Deputies have been elected out of a total of 626 and the remaining 40 results cannot affect the situation. The respective political labels are as follows:—

	Gain	Losses
Republicans of the Left.....	123	36
Radicals.....	57	7
Socialist-Radicals.....	78	85
Socialist-Republicans.....	26	7
Socialist.....	65	37
Dissident Socialists.....	6	—
Progressists.....	125	—
"Liberal Action" (Catholics)....	73	42
Conservative.....	32	—
	586	

Most of these labels mean nothing. The "Progressists," the Clerical "Liberal Action" and the "Conservatives" are all supporters of M. Clemenceau, and would all be considered reactionary by the most extreme British Tory. There is no parallel to them in English politics. The "Conservatives" are the rump of the old Royalists. The success of these parties is the most significant thing about the election. The Government majority includes more than 200 avowed reactionaries, who will almost certainly demand concessions to the Church as the price of their support. This is the most reactionary Parliament elected in France since the National Assembly of 1871.

The "Socialist-Republicans" are a little group to which M. Poincaré and M. Briand belong, whose opinions do not differ from those of the Radicals and Socialist-Radicals.

All these groups, like the "Republicans of the Left," are divided into supporters and opponents of M. Clemenceau, so that it is impossible to say the exact number of the Clemencist Coalition, but it is probably about 450. The "dissident Socialists" are the Social-Patriot deputies recently expelled from the Socialist party.

This result has been obtained by an electoral system deliberately designed to deprive the proletariat of its due share of representation. Its author was one of the most sinister figures in French politics, the tailor's son Jeroboam Roths-

child, alias Georges Mandel, who has been M. Clemenceau's evil genius for many years. M. Jeroboam Rothschild has for the moment succeeded in his design. The peasants have combined with the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, as on more than one occasion in the 19th century, notably in 1848 and 1871. On the one hand they were frightened by the bogey of "Bolshevism"; on the other hand they were bribed by exemption from the income-tax and from the laws against profiteering. But M. Jeroboam Rothschild's success will be his ruin and that of the French bourgeoisie. The proletariat will not sit down under the injustice inflicted on it, and the first concession to Clericalism will enrage the peasants. The heterogeneous majority, agreed in nothing except hatred of the proletariat, must either go definitely to the Right or fall to pieces.

An example of the way in which the system has worked may be found in Paris and its suburbs, where the Socialists polled one-third of the votes and have less than one-fifth of the deputies. The following table will make the situation clear:—

	Votes	Deputies elected.	Just proportion.
Clemencist Coalition.....	5,715,508	36	29
Socialists.....	3,578,585	10	19
Bourgeois Opposition.....	797,544	7	4
Royalists (Action Française).....	324,127	1	2
Various other lists.....	179,749	0	0
	10,595,513	54	54

It is difficult to discover the exact number of voters for each list, but, taking the averages, about 380,000 electors voted for the Coalitionist lists and about 250,000 for the Socialists. The total number of effective voters in Paris and the suburbs was 813,216; there were more than 20,000 spoiled papers.

In Paris itself no candidate obtained a clear majority of the voters, so that P. R. was applied in each of the three divisions. But the P. R. system adopted is so extraordinary that its results are far from proportional. Thus the six

dissentient Social-Patriots standing in Paris obtained only 191,481 votes altogether, and four of them were elected, whereas the Socialist party elected only 10 deputies for two million votes. The Social-Patriots are included in the table above in the bourgeois Opposition.

Where the system of block voting (*scrutin de liste*) operated alone, the results were still more extraordinary. In the suburbs of Paris the Clemencist Coalition polled 2,102,411 votes, and the Socialists 1,576,602, and the Coalition returned all the 14 deputies, because all its candidates were supported by more than half the voters. Some 110,000 electors are thus entirely disfranchised. In the Gironde the Clemencist Coalition also returned all the 12 deputies, although it was supported by about 81,100 voters out of a total of 159,014, so that its majority was about 3,000. In Seine-et-Oise all the 12 Coalitionists were returned, although only seven of them had a clear majority of the voters. The reason was that the five seats left over were not enough to go round on the system of P. R., so, under a clause of the law, they were all attributed to the list with the largest average. Very nearly half the voters were thus disfranchised.

In one case, that of Haute-Vienne, the Socialists carried all the seats (five), but everywhere else the block voting told in favor of the Coalition. As was anticipated in the "Daily Herald", the polls as a rule were light. In Paris and its suburbs about 74 per cent of the electors voted, but in other departments containing large towns the poll was much smaller. For instance, it was 64 per cent in the Nord and 65 per cent in the district of Marseilles. Undoubtedly a large proportion of the abstentions was due to anti-parliamentarism; it was expected.

It has to be remembered that the proletariat in France is in a minority. The rural population is about 48 per cent of the whole, and there is a larger proportion of persons living on unearned income (rentiers) than in any other country. Further, about a million and a half young men were killed in the war, of whom the great majority were workmen or peasants. The proportion of old men among the voters is therefore larger than it has ever been before. It seems probable that the Socialists polled the immense majority of the workmen that voted, and that a large section of the proletariat abstained from voting on anti-parliamentarist grounds.

What's in a Lie?

By Fritz Friedmann

Under the caption "What's in a Name?" the Communist Labor Party News prints the following item:

"Did you know that the official name of the Bolsheviks, the governmental party of Soviet Russia, is 'The Communist Labor Party Of Russia'? The Communist Labor Party of America is travelling in good company, thank you."

We thank you also—for that brazen lie! There has never existed in Russia a party which called itself "The Communist Labor Party of Russia". In its issue of October 25, No. 21, the official organ of the Russian Soviet Bureau, "Soviet Russia", published two documents in which the Bolshevik Party is repeatedly designated as "The Communist Labor Party." We knew most certainly that such is not the true name of the Bolshevik Party and therefore decided to send a letter of inquiry to the Soviet Bureau in order to clarify the question. In reply we received the following letter:

G-99. "Referring to your inquiry of recent date we wish to say that the official name of Bolshevik Party Of Russia is "The Party of the Communists (Bolsheviks)."

Yours faithfully,

(signed) G. Weinstein,

GWT Secretary of the Representative.

This letter shows at once that the Communist Labor Party News states a lie, when it declares that the Russian Party's name is "The Communist Labor Party". Moreover, the name of the Bolshevik Party is still different from the name even as given in the reply above. In his pamphlet "Who

are the Communists? (ON THE QUESTION AS TO THE NAME OF OUR PARTY)", on page 4, Comrade Steklov writes:

"Guided by the above mentioned considerations, the Seventh Congress of our Party held in January 1918 decreed to change the name of the Party to "The Russian Communist Party (of the Bolsheviks)".

This name also appears in some of Lenin's books. It also is mentioned in Bucharin's pamphlet "Our Program", which is sold by the Communist Labor Party of America under the false title of "The Program of the Communist Labor Party of Russia". This name, "The Communist Party of Russia", appears in most of the books of Russian authors and it is more than evident that this is the real name of the Bolshevik Party. Indeed, there is no plausible reason to have the term "labor" inserted in the name.

The falsification of documents, pamphlets and the distortion of the name of The Russian Communist Party is a new "tactic" of party propaganda. If that be the only means to get a foothold in the working-class movement of America, then we may assure the C. L. P. that they will have hard luck and remain what they actually are: a mere pretense.... We have no doubt that the really Communist elements attached to the C. L. P. at present will discover that they are in the wrong place and will soon find their way to the only real Communist organization in this country: The Communist Party of America!