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"CONTACT WITH THE MASSES"

We are not yet sure whether the confusion which exists on this question in the ranks of the leaders of the "minority" and the C. L. P., is deliberate or unconscious; perhaps, true to their Centrist character, it is a mixture of both. For, it seems, that the "theoreticians" from those groups both agree in their confusion on this question, and in their attack upon the Communist position, as enunciated by the C. E. C. of the Communist Party of America. In the May 15th issue of the "Communist Labor" a particularly stupid article appeared which, frankly taking the Center position, first attacked the S. P. position and then the C. P. ("majority") position. That it failed dismally in both attempts goes without saying. Perhaps that was why the "minority" theoretician came to the rescue in the latest number of the fake "Communist" issued by Damon & Co., in an editorial entitled "Lenin vs. the 'Majority' Group."

There is nothing like trotting out Lenin when you wish to prove yourself an honest-to-good Communist, or, rather, when you wish to prove your opponent is not. With this uppermost in their minds, Damon & Co. carefully search for some phrase or sentence of Lenin which, taken by itself, may tend to prove their point. They tried it in Mass Action, but it proved a boomerang; this time they try it in a sorry attempt to prove that "contact with the masses" at the expense of sacrificing Communist principles and policies, is in line with the teachings of Lenin. When this fails, no doubt they will try to prove that Lenin also agrees with them on "shop branches," or their attitude to syndicalist organizations like the I. W. W., which do not, as yet, accept the basic principles and policies of the Third International. Who knows? Centrists are a peculiar lot, leaning now to the Right and now to the Left, but never long enough in one direction to get on speaking terms with either.

Principles, to them, in any concrete situation, are either to be held in reserve or to be bartered for certain "concessions." Therefore the "minority" take a purely "barter and exchange" point of view with regard to Communist principles and tactics. In the Left Wing split last year with the S. P., their attitude was, sacrifice Communism but get the membership of the S. P.; in the consequent split between the remnants of the Left Wing (C. L. P.) and the Communist Party, the "minority" were and are willing yet to sacrifice principles in order to effect immediate "fusion." In the present split between the "majority" and the "minority" of the C. E. C. of the C. P., they "held their principles in reserve," but split on the purely formal ground of refusing to obey a decision of the C. E. C.; forsooth, because certain members of the "majority" of the C. E. C. were "crooked," "self-seekers," "international politicians," etc., etc., Ad nauseum. Principles only developed after they were smoked out of their hole. And as they are developing the cleavage becomes wider and wider.

In this particular editorial of theirs it is instructive to note the manner in which they distort the very basis of the discussion and then go on to prove that Lenin agrees with them. Incidentally, in order to prove that Lenin is diametrically opposed to the "majority," they necessarily distort the position of the latter.

The editorial in question nowhere holds that contact with the masses is to be spurned, as the "minority" phrase-mongers try to make out. On the contrary, it points out, sufficiently clear to anyone who has eyes to see and a mind to think with, that no contact with the masses is both undesirable and fatal to a Communist Party. We quote:

"The secessionists believe that subscribing to the three fundamental and basic policies of the Third International, namely,—Proletarian Dictatorship, Mass Action and Soviet Power, is sufficient in itself upon which to build a Communist movement in this country. The next step in their opinion, is to procure 'contact with the masses'—to give the Communist Party a mass character—'to relate it up with the immediate and everyday struggles of the working class.'"

"With which we quite agree. The difference comes in when the problem is tackled, when the manner of adapting Communist tactics is applied to the given situation. No Communist is foolish enough to want to keep the party detached and isolated from the masses. That way lies stagnation and failure. The S. L. P. is a striking example of such decay. But, likewise, one must beware of the danger that lies in trying to come to the masses at a time when the masses—due to apathy and inertia before the full reaction to capitalism appears—are not receptive to the message of Communism. This is the very rock upon which the Second International was smashed to pieces. This is the lesson which the Third International has learnt—and learning, guides its course away from this dangerous shoal."

The above is a real extract from the above editorial, not merely a sentence torn from its context which may be twisted this way and that by phrase-mongers and adventurers of the type of the Centrists of the "minority group."

Here is predicated the very question at issue between the "majority" and the "minority." Not "contact with the masses" is the issue, but the kind of contact—that is the issue. The "minority" by deliberately distorting the issue convict themselves of ignorance or willful deceit, or both.

How can there be any question of the desirability of getting contact with the masses? Why, the very organization of the Communist Party, its "legal" character in the eyes of the law, its underground machinery, is based upon contact with the masses. For the entire membership, with a few isolated examples, are workers, class-conscious workers, engaged in industry, and who carry Communist propaganda in the shops, factories and mines. To whom do its leaflets and proclamations go to, if not the masses? For whose consumption is it intended, if not the masses? Every act of a Communist Party is related up to the every day struggles of the masses."

Such a charge against the "majority" is the silliest kind of rot, intended to conceal or ob-

scure the real issue.

We repeat again, for the benefit of the Centrists, the only question at issue is the KIND OF CONTACT WITH THE MASSES. There we disagree and fundamentally.

We are opposed to that "contact" which implies that the Communist Party must remain silent on the question of "fostering systematically among the masses" the tactic of Mass Action and the "inevitability of a violent revolution."

We are opposed to that "contact" which implies that the Communist Party should adapt its propaganda to try to win into its ranks masses of the workers politically immature, in the pre-revolutionary, propaganda stage of the organization.

We are opposed to that "contact" which implies that the Communist Party should "unite" with elements who only accept the principles of the Third International but refuse to accept its policies; in other words, those who accept principles in words but reject them in action.

We are opposed to that "contact" which implies that "unity" and "large numbers" are necessary and essential in order to have "contact with the masses."

We are opposed to that "contact" which is based upon a fusion with elements who differ with us in principles and tactics.

We pointed out in our editorial in question that this cry of "contact with the masses" was just an American Centrist adaptation of the old social-patriotic cry of "we must not isolate ourselves from the masses." Every compromise, every betrayal perpetrated by the Second International was always justified on the ground that "we must not isolate ourselves from the masses." We pointed out the danger of such a policy in the Communist movement, and cited some European examples of to-day.

Needless to say the policy of our Centrists of the "minority" and the C. L. P. is instinct with compromise and opportunism which must lead eventually to betrayal. They are not seeking "contact with masses" in order to win them over to Communism. They are seeking "contact with the masses" in order to make Communism palatable to the masses,—to "sugar-coat" it; to make it palatable to the syndicalists, mensheviks and anarcho-mensheviks,—alike to those of them who are opposed to it consciously, as well as to those who do not understand it as yet, but, who, if they did, would have nothing to do with it.

And like their prototypes of the Second International the "minority" are already justifying their present conduct and method of propaganda by claiming that they seek "contact" with the masses."

As if the C. E. C. does not! But the kind of contact the C. E. C. seeks is that based only upon uncompromising Communist principles and tactics. All other "contact," no matter how nicely it may be camouflaged carries the seeds of compromise, opportunism and betrayal with it.

POLITICAL ADVENTURERS AND CHARLATANS

As the split between the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party and the "minority" develops, more and more proof comes to hand that Damon & Co. are nothing but a set of political adventurers and charlatans,—Centrist in character and tendency, and unprincipled in their actions.

One important fact comes to light through the printing of unity negotiations in the "Communist Labor" of May 15, which is typical of all of Damon's & Co. actions throughout,—both before and after the split.

On April 22, the "minority" sent a letter to the C. E. C. requesting the opening of unity negotiations, for the purpose of holding one convention of both factions. No mention was made of holding this convention together with the C. L. P. In fact, in this letter and the subsequent one on May 5 (both printed in the last issue of The Communist), there is only reference to "one party convention." Also, in verbal conversation with our Acting Secretary Bunte, Damon & Co. explicitly stated in effect, that for the present the C. L. P. Comrade Bunte's question, relative to the "three cornered" convention.

That the above letters were merely so much dust thrown into the eyes of the membership is now definitely proven. They never intended to agree to one party convention—THEY DID NOT WANT TO COME TO ONE CONVENTION WITH THE C. E. C. On April 22, Damon & Co. sent simultaneously a letter to the C. L. P. also requesting the holding of a joint convention in which the inference is contained that the "minority" represents the whole party and that the C. E. C. no longer exists as an official body. To this letter the C. L. P. responded immediately, although two letters from the C. E. C. requesting information regarding the status of the negotiations were entirely ignored. Note what transpired afterwards between the "minority" and the C. L. P.: "Several meetings were held between the representatives of the C. L. P. and representatives of the 'minority' group as represented by At these conferences agreement was reached to to negotiate with the 'majority' group of the C. E. C. of the C. P., those who attempted to file desires." (Italics ours.)

A more brazen piece of trickery could not be imagined on the part of so-called "Communists." This is "secret diplomacy" with a vengeance. Damon & Co. have evidently taken a leaf out of Soviet Russia—an olive branch in his negotiations with a dagger in the other. Obviously, the letters to the C. E. C. were intended to appease those who sided with the "minority," but were never intended to be carried out.

Even assuming the possibility of a three-cornered convention from the "minority" point of view, and impracticable in view of the split in the Communist Party on principles, and the necessity of clarifying the party position, both in the convention and in the membership after the convention,—how could such a "joint convention" be held when the "minority" and the C. L. P. had agreed beforehand NOT TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE "MAJORITY" GROUP OF THE C. E. C.?

The only logical conclusion we can draw from this mess of chicanery, lies and double-dealing is that Damon & Co. want to sell out the Communist Party to the C. L. P., effect "unity" event-Debs" of the social-patriotic S. P. and blossom out into a united Centrist Party of America camouflaged under the name of Communism.

That this seems to have been the intention of the Centrist leaders of the "minority" and the C. L. P. (having first attempted to win the membership of the C. P. over by fraud and deception) is further evidenced by an unguarded

INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICIES OF ENGLAND.*

By KARL RADEK

The English bourgeoisie is preparing for a campaign against the working class. The cleverest and most far-sighted bourgeois statesman of England—Lloyd George—understood that not by oratory and not by petty concessions would he be able to keep the workers from revolution,—and that the bourgeoisie cannot agree to the workers' demands. He understood that any concession granted by the government to the working class, at this stage of the movement, becomes a starting-point not for sops of one kind or another but for the possession of the means of production. If men of the kind of Admiral Fisher, or former Secretary of War, Lord Eiden, are still hoping to hold back the working masses with the assistance of Hendersons, MacDonalds and other leaders of the opportunistic Labor Party—Lloyd George understood that the Labor Party, after having obtained the power, would find itself captive of the radical working class elements, which will compel it to go further than it really wants. If some of the liberals still carry the hope of holding the masses back by concessions—the great majority of the bourgeoisie are uniting under the banner of the most merciless resistance to the working class.

The barometer of English social life indicates storm. The magnates of industry are preparing to resist the workers' demands by lockouts, they are organizing White (technical) Guards for breaking up strikes, for service in the necessary state enterprises and in case of great riots. This is openly spoken of in the leading bourgeois papers in London and in the industrial centers. Experts in English politics consider two possibilities; either all this will lead to an open conflict after a series of economic conflicts—beginning with a general strike, which may take the form of a general battle between Capital and Labor in England, or, at the critical moment of danger the tendency of concessions will once more gain the upper hand—the Labor Party will take over the helm of government in order to pacify the workers. Only to the extent that the masses leave the opportunistic Labor Party will the issue come to great collisions between the two contending forces.

Whichever of these two possibilities we consider the more probable does not change the problem in substance. In any case the acuteness of class antagonisms in England has developed to such an extent that they speak of revolutions already.

That being the case, there arises before us the question of the significance of that turn in the foreign policy of England which manifests itself toward Soviet Russia. How can it be explained that at the very moment when the English bourgeoisie is preparing itself for the decisive struggle with her own working class she should be ready to compromise with the birth-place of a "revolution"—with Soviet Russia? Is it not a contradiction, showing the insincerity of English peace talk? Is it not another instance of English cunning? Concerning the question as to whether the capitalist government of England intends to conclude a permanent peace with us, there is no doubt that we have to deal with a manoeuvre—the English government is not preparing for peaceful relations with Russia. But when we come to the question, not of England's distant plans, but whether it wishes to live in peace with us during the present period of its policy,—this question must be answered in the affirmative. There is no doubt that the English Government is trying to come to an agreement with the Soviet Government and to establish peaceful relations with it. This policy by no means contradicts the internal policy of England directed against her working class, but, on the contrary, is closely connected with it. During the struggle of England against Soviet Russia, between the period of the October Revolution and the breaking up of German Imperialism, predominated not the social aspect but the desire to crush a power, in which English Imperialism saw a possible ally to German Imperialism. However absurd it should appear, there is no doubt that the English Government had seriously shared the fear of the capture of Russia by German capitalism, with the tacit or open connivance of the Soviet Government. The English bourgeoisie did not believe in the permanency of the Workers' and Peasants' regime in Russia. Only when the victory over German Imperialism had freed English Imperialism from those fears, when the end of the war and the

(Continued on page 8.)

* Italics are ours.—Compare this point of view with the similar point of view on the "capitalist peace" with Soviet Russia, expressed by the Amsterdam Bureau of the Third International in several of its statements reprinted in The Communist, by Comrade Fraina in his report to the Party (Communist, No. 4) and by Comrade S. Rutgers in his letter to Comrade Martens reprinted in this issue. Ed.

admission made by Eugene V. Debs in The Call of May 30, announcing his formal acceptance as presidential candidate on the S. P. ticket: "The extreme Communists denounce me as a traitor. That doesn't matter; I shall not denounce them. I have telegrams from Ruthenberg, Ferguson and Wagenknecht urging me to refuse the nomination. Margaret Prevy was here last week. She did not tell me what to do, but advised me to do as my conscience dictates."

It would be interesting to know what these telegrams contained for one thing, and when and on whose authority they were sent out for another. Of one thing, however, we are quite certain—that the entire move was a concerted plan to win Debs, and with him the "left elements" of the S. P. to bolt and join the "united party" of the "minority" of the C. P. and the C. L. P.

Only when this move failed for the time being, did the C. L. P. reluctantly plead with their membership "whose love for Debs overshadows their loyalty to Communist principles" to please leave the party, or else they might be expelled. But we notice that "The Toller," official organ of the C. L. P. of Ohio (the home of the C. L. P. though defying the pitiful squeal of their Central Executive body. Of course, we might suggest that the C. E. C. of the C. L. P. should resign, because of its evident divergence in views with their membership (a course they themselves suggest when such a condition arises in a party); but that would be "rubbing salt into the wound," and so we refrain.

However, the circumstances decidedly tend to prove that this was the scheme in the minds of the "minority" and the C. L. P., and also explains the otherwise utterly incomprehensible actions of Damon & Co., in splitting away from the C. E. C. and the party just before a con-