

# "Has It Been Worth While?"

"Harold Lord Varney" of The Communist Party  
(THE POLITICAL OBITUARY OF Y. F.—"COMMUNIST")  
By A—W.

(Continuation.)

To begin with the second part of our article—we owe an apology to Y. F. In the last issue of the "Communist" we called him a "former editor," which since has proven not to be so. He still continues not only as "theoretician," but also as editor.

Having recently resigned (just before the split) from the editorship of the official organ of the Party, he re-united with the "minority" in an editorial capacity the moment they split away from the C. E. C. Anyone who takes upon himself the unpleasant task of looking through No. 5 of the slanderous sheet published by the "minority" group, which they have the audacity to call "The Communist,"—official organ of the Communist Party of America, (1) but which, by no means, can and should be confounded with the real "Communist," the authoritative, Official Organ of the C. P. of A., published by its Central Executive Committee,—will be immediately convinced that its (fake "Communist's") actual editor (to distinguish between him and the "Acting Editor") is our "Harold Lord Varney"—Y. F. himself.\*

With the exception of a "statement" by D. Damon and a report by L. Fraina, practically the whole issue is written by Y. F. One article is openly signed by him, another, an unsigned leading editorial article entitled "Communist Party Criticism" is nothing but a mild rephrasing (editorials, you know, and especially unsigned ones,—must of necessity be "mild") of the "criticism" contained in the article "Has It Been Worth While?" of which this presentation is an analysis. As to the rest of the articles,—well, we leave it to the reader to decide who wrote them. Of one thing we are certain however,—nobody will be over-anxious to claim their authorship...

Let us now return to the article in question. Nothing can better illustrate and more conclusively prove our assertion of Y. F.'s tendency toward opportunism, his opportunistic, purely revisionist attitude toward Communism than his own utterances and pronouncements in reference to the Communist movement in this country in general, and to the Communist Party of America in particular. The general trend of all his utterances and pronouncements is so well familiar to us from the works of Edward Bernstein—the father of revisionism,—and other European revisionists dis-satisfaction with and scoffing against, the Party's, and Party leaders' "dogmatism," and what they called "orthodox religiousness." (It is well to remember that the distinction between "orthodox Marxism" and "revisionist Marxism" or "revisionism" dates back to the publication of Edward Bernstein's famous book "Evolutionary Socialism"). In this regard, very characteristic of our author, and very significant, being a typical revisionist statement, is the following citation from the above-named editorial article ("Communist Party Criticism") in the 5th,—but counting from the split, the 2nd—issue of the fake "Communist":

"In the United States there has been largely an acceptance of Socialist science as a system of dogma and absolute faith, rather than as a method of analysis." (Italics ours.)

The very "tests of the worthwhileness of a party," which apparently are the main, if not the sole, object of his article and the chief idea of his "criticism," are but another—a "home-made" name for what in Europe has been called "revisionism..."

But we do not even need to go as far as Europe to illustrate the opportunistic and revisionist character of our author's utterances and statements. For every statement of his we can quote a parallel, substantially similar in sense and meaning, and often almost exactly worded, statement of some more or less known American social-opportunists, or "revisionists." Our author's spiritual and philosophical affinity to those social-opportunists, and that he thinks and speaks practically in the same terms as they do,—will be conclusively proven to the reader.

5. Summing up—the main points in our author's "indictment" against the Communist Party are:

1.—The Party is "orthodox" and "religious." To this accusation he comes back over and over again throughout the whole of his article:

"We have suffered a great deal to the detriment of the Communist movement in this country by the imposition of a religious attitude of fatal inevitability upon the whole process. A few indefinite slogans have served like halcyons at a revivallist meeting. Hell has gaped before us in all its fearfulness, even more terrifying than the portrayals by Billy Sunday, the hell of being the minutest fraction under one hundred percent. Bolshevism..."

"The Communists, lo and behold, were the bearers of a new revelation! And ever since the Summer of 1919 we have had an official Communism in the United States which proceeds by incantations, counting of beads, incantations to the East, jubilees of phrases and slogans, pictures unending to Bolshevism—to a Bolshevism consisting of a mysterious compound of words and ritual which could only be known to its high priests!"

\* Thus, on its very surface (not to speak of its contents) the fake "Communist" published by the "minority" group,—or, rather, what is nearer the truth,—by former Executive Secretary Damon,—carries two lies. Lie No. 1—an announcement that it is the "Official organ of the C. P. of A." Whatever one may say with regard to Damon's pretension to still style himself "Executive Secretary of the C. P. of A." or even with regard to his appropriation (or expropriation?) of party funds,—calling the pitiful and slanderous sheet published by him "Official Organ of the C. P. of A." is the most shameful, unheard of and brazen lie... Lie No. 2—Damon's signing as "Acting Editor" of the fake "Communist," while its real or actual Acting Editor (beginning with No. 5) is Y. F. Perhaps Comrade Kasbeck, who considered it necessary everywhere and on every occasion to officially and publicly announce that he has "nothing to do and nothing in common" with Langley and Y. F., and that he, right from the moment of the split refused to come out in company with them,—perhaps Comrade Kasbeck will be better able than anyone else to shed some light on the reasons of concealment from the readers (and we dare to presume, even from the membership of the "minority group") the name of the real editor of the fake "Communist." Has it not been "worth while" to conceal the real editor, because, otherwise,—had Damon made public that his editor is Y. F.—he would have risked losing not only his membership, but even the last and only "asset" of his—small as it is—"official family"—Comrade Kasbeck?

"The Communist Labor Party came into being alongside the Communist Party as the confused protest of the Left Wing against its absorption into this religiosity of word-Bolshevism..."

Do we need to reply to, and refute all this mad, nonsensical prattle of a man, who, apparently "lost his faith," and now,—as is the case with "lost renegades,—vehemently attacks his former "religion"? Do we need to elaborate upon, and prove that what he,—in his intellectual, petty-bourgeois stupidity and inability to understand the working class psychology, judging perhaps by his own psychology while in the Communist Party,—takes for "religiosity" and "religious attitude," is nothing else than the class devotion of class-conscious workingmen and workingwomen to their cause,—to what for them is not simply a "mental and spiritual self-satisfaction," but the cause of their emancipation from the yoke of capitalism? Of course not!

We shall limit ourselves to just one more quotation: "...The Socialist Party does not take the theological position as to the unpardonable sin. It is precisely because the Communists insist upon a well-nigh religious orthodoxy as to the mode of revolution; it is because they insisted and still insist, that revolution must proceed as it did in Russia, that we have severed relations with them..." ("What Call Readers Think,"—N. Y. Call, May 8th, 1920.)

The author of the above quotation is no one else than David P. Berenbourg—notorious "Right-Winger," former editor of that equally notorious "Socialist," late organ of the New York "Right-Wingers" during their bitter fight against the "Left Wing" in the spring of last year. The reader can see that our "Communist"—Y. F., is in good, respectable company!... We are almost certain that in such company he will not feel as lonesome as he does among Communists...

2.—Now as to the above-quoted accusation in "dogmatism."

Here also should be listed his accusations against the Party for its disposition to use the "vague sort of phrases" ("jubilees of phrases"), "undefined slogans" and "ready-made principles." This accusation is repeatedly indulged in by all the "leading minds" of the "minority group." Here again our author finds himself in good company:

"The revolutionary phrases and stereotyped dogmas of the past are also insufficient, for the new world cannot be ushered in by brain splitting abstractions." (Henry Fruechter in an article: "Shall We Work or Go on Talking?" in the N. Y. Call of May 25th.)

"The question then was whether the Socialists of America would remain true to the fundamental principles and methods... rejecting the suicidal compromises of the extreme right as well as the sterile revolutionary phrases of the extreme left..." And again: "It is vital and indispensable... that our party be preserved... not as a party of mere patch work reforms, or yet as a party of sham revolutionary phrases..." (From the speech of Morris Hillquit at the S. P. Convention.—N. Y. Call, May 9th, 1920.)

"The war is over and we should discard phrases and talk sense... We cannot reach the worker with Marxian phrases..." (Morris Hillquit in opposition to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.—N. Y. Call, May 12th, 1920.)

"We cannot afford to be emotional dogmatists." (Oneal in opposition to Dictatorship of the Proletariat.)

"We should use as few revolutionary phrases as possible. Let us discard the Marxian verbiage that has become so hackneyed by continuous repetition in the last thirty years..." (From an article: "Let Us Drop the 'Revolutionary Jargon,'" by Victor L. Berger.—N. Y. Call, May 9th, 1920.)

So much for "dogmatism" and "phraseology." In his zealous attack upon "hair-splitting doctrinaires" and "feverish talk-conspirators" our "Communist" finds himself in company with Morris Hillquit, James Oneal and Victor Berger!... Really, is it not a touching "unity"?

3.—The next accusation is that in its "religious fervor" the Communist Party became "an institution for the holding of ritualistic incantations to the Russian Revolution." (1)

This "untimely" revolution, you see,—and for that matter—not only Russia, but also the German and Hungarian revolutions, has spoiled all the plans and expectations for a "sound," "healthy," "analytical" and "forward-looking" development of the revolutionary Socialist movement in the United States:

"The adventure element—with the revolution in process in Russia, in Germany, in Hungary—was so alluring that none stopped for questioning or analysis."

The results of these "alluring adventures" were simply "disastrous":

"A ready-made Bolshevism was super-imposed in this country upon a Left Wing movement of many years standing." (1)

You see,—that terrible Bolshevism again! Since its ascendancy in Russia, it leaves no one in peace and quiet,—all—"Socialists" as well as capitalists—are compelled to raise their voices against it.

The capitalist press complains that "Bolshevists imposed their will upon the sprawling country" (from an editorial in N. Y. World, May 31, 1920, on "Debs as a Bolshevik"), meaning "poor, suffering Russia"; while our "Communists" of Y. F.'s type, not being so "altruistic," confined themselves to "their own country," complaining that "Bolshevism was super-imposed in this country..."

Compare both complaints. Is there not a touching similarity in thought and even in language? Truly has it been said that "great minds" run in the same channel!"

6. "Ritualistic incantations to the Russian Revolution."—"The adventure element—with revolutions in process in Russia, in Germany, in Hungary..."—such statements demand little more than cursory attention from us, because these accusations, clearer perhaps than anything else, expose the real, common-place, petty-bourgeois, non-revolutionary,—counter-revolutionary, we should say,—position of their author.

All great revolutions,—The Great French Revolution of 1789, the European revolutions of 1848, the Paris Commune Revolution of 1871,—always were and remain the greatest inspirations and lessons for all suppressed and suffering humanity... Marx called revolutions—"the great locomotives of history..." Lenin insistently and repeatedly emphasized the necessity and importance of not only the minutest study, but even the "imitation"—as our "learned statesman," Y. F., would call it,—

of the Paris Commune; he himself and the Soviet Government "imitated" it to a very great extent,—especially during the first period, when making first steps in their work, before the Soviet system had been firmly put on "rails" and began to "move by itself..."

But our "learned statesman" sees nothing in all these revolutions but "adventure elements," and attempts to study and learn from them he scoffingly and venomously calls "ritualistic incantations!"

Our "political scientist" (this refers to Y. F.—please do not confuse "political scientist" with "international politicians," which, by no means, are the same thing),—our "political scientist," we are sure, will feel himself unjustly accused. "I am no less Bolshevik than anybody else,"—will he vehemently protest,—"to call me 'anti-revolutionist' is simply ridiculous; I was always, from my very birth, have been and still am for a revolution,—as a matter of fact for all kinds of revolutions (even for a "revolution" within the Communist Party, we hasten to add). What I am against is the 'super-imposition of ready-made Bolshevism' in this country, which is, by no means similar to being opposed to Bolshevism in general..."

If not in the words, he will most certainly use the same language, in effect. Which, of course, suggests a question: what is the difference between a good, "fit-for American Bolshevism" of Y. F.'s liking,—and a bad, poor species of Bolshevism,—"ready-made Bolshevism"?

The difference in question is plainly indicated by the very adjective: "ready-made," meaning Bolshevism "made in Russia," and "imported" into this country in a prepared "ready" form... Y. F. does not want such a "ready-made" Bolshevism,—made by others in a different country, "in a world of circumstances only dimly akin to those of 1919 in the United States." He has nothing against the name "Bolshevism" (especially because this name has acquired great popularity, promising to bring with it certain adherence and following), but he does not want Bolshevist theory, principles and tactics, built and formulated "in Moscow" to be "super-imposed in this country." He,—a "political scientist" himself,—wants to "discover" or if necessary, to "invent," to build and formulate them over again himself; he wants his own, "home-made" theories, his own "American brand of Communism," preserving only, because of its usefulness and practicability, a "foreign name..."

He is, in this respect not unlike Hillquit, Oneal and other "stars" of the S. P., who "are willing" to affiliate with the Third International, but do not want the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and other theories "coined in Moscow" to be "super-imposed on them..." He is even not unlike Victor Berger, who, in the above-quoted article "Let Us Drop the 'Revolutionary Jargon,'" expresses the same "thoughts,"—strangely enough,—stated almost in identical language. Says Victor Berger: "In order to accomplish anything at all we must cease to gaze upon Russia exclusively. We cannot transplant Russia to America..."

"For the new developments in Socialism—for models to pattern after—we must not look to Russia..."

"We cannot imitate Lenin..."

Yes, our "learned statesman" truly belongs to those "Centrists" of whom Lenin speaks in his article—"Problems of the Third International," the publication of which begins in this issue of the "Communist," when he says:

"The most dangerous—coming from the Berne International—is the Lip-service recognition of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. (Italics ours.) These men are apt to recognize anything and sign anything only in order to remain at the head of the working class movement. Kautsky already says that he is not opposed to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. French social-patriots and 'Centrists' also sign under the resolution for Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

"They do not deserve any confidence." (Italics ours.)

"They recognize the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in words, in order secretly to read into it the 'will of the majority,' 'general suffrage'... We should guard ourselves against these new tricks, against these new lackeys of reformism, more than anything else..." (Italics ours.)

The political identity of Y. F. and of all those who stood and stand with him now,—is now clear to us.

He is a typical "Left Winger," which term he himself uses and prefers to the term "Centrist" for a definition of his political position.

The creation and existence of a "Left Wing" was a good and positive sign at the death-bed of the Second International; it still is such in a country where a Communist Party has not yet been organized, presaging its formation in the near future.

The "Left Wing," in other words, belongs to and represents the transitory period from the Socialist to the Communist Internationals.

But when and where a Communist Party has already been organized, or, speaking generally,—in the epoch when the Communist International has been organized and begun functioning,—the left wing most certainly represents a backward stage of development, composed of the indecisive, hesitating, wavering, backward elements, who left the rotten corpse of the Second International, but still—their professions to the contrary notwithstanding—cannot join the Third International "full-heartedly," without open or mental "reservations"...

Quoting Lenin (see his "Greetings to Communists Abroad" in the "International Supplement" to this issue of the "Communist"):

"The Left Wing combines the unimaginative, cowardly old prejudices of the small, petty, petty-bourgeoisie regarding parliamentary democracy, with the Communist recognition of the proletarian revolution, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Soviet power."

Exactly this "unimaginative, cowardly and petty-bourgeois" Left Wing, our "learned author" Y. F. represents. His sympathies are all on the side of the Left Wing. Toward Bolshevism or Communism, with its "all-prevailing sense of realism" he feels nothing but "old prejudices" and repulsion.

He repeatedly and expressly indicates this throughout the whole of his article. Bolshevism is to him: "a mysterious compound of words and phrases and ritual which could only be known to its high priests..."—"The Communists, lo and behold"—sarcastically and ridiculing remarks he,—were the bearers of a new revelation... He feels really hurt and indignant at the "discovery" that the "Communists were not the Left Wingers of the Socialist Party, but spurned this Left Wing along with the rest of the Socialist Party!"

On the other hand, he, with an obvious and warm sympathy speaks of the "protest of the Left Wing against its absorption into this religiosity of word-

\* Meaning, of course, all those who in spirit belong to the Berne "International," with its traditional rule of letting each country retain its own autonomy and right to determine its own policies,—which has since been proven so fatal...