

The Struggle for Control

Communism vs. I. W. W. Pacifism.

By Morris Gordin

A CERTAIN section of the I. W. W., under the leadership of Varney and Sandgren, are very insistent in denying the political character of the class struggle. For them Karl Marx's famous assertion that "every class struggle is a political struggle" is of no consequence. According to their view the political state is only a mere super-structure which will collapse of itself the moment the basic foundation of society, the economic system, is removed. Hence the state should be ignored. The class struggle must concentrate and develop its full impact on the economic field. There is nothing to bother about the state power. It is a shadow and will disappear as soon as the object creating it i. e., the economic capitalist control of industry, will disappear.

How will economic capitalist control disappear? In an armed clash with the master class? No! Because that involves a struggle with the state power which is the armed power of the master class, in other words a political struggle. How can the master class be dislodged from industry before it is deprived of its most powerful weapon of defense, namely, the state power? How can the working class attain the control of industry without coming to blows with the master class? To these questions no clear answer is given. The only explanation which could be found among the many vague answers is something like this: The working class will assume control of industry when sufficiently organized and ready to assume such control. This does not presuppose a revolution. The assumption of control is not a revolutionary act; it is an evolutionary process (See Varney's: "Industrial Communism") which at a certain point of time will be realized of itself, without any sort of violent means being necessary, because of the readiness of the proletariat and the ripeness of the historic process.

We do not understand such an idealistic, peaceful conception and consumation of the bitterest contest in human history, i. e. of the class struggle. It would have us believe that the master class will surrender without a fight to the finish. This is contrary to the entire record of history. Never did one ruling class renounce its prerogative before it was overwhelmed and crushed in open combat. The subject class aspiring to power must make its way to the helm of society over the corpse of the former ruling class. Such is also the "destiny" of the working class: through revolution and seizure of the state power to the control of society and industry!

But we do not intend to expound here in this article the entire argument of "Revolutionary Communism Versus Evolutionary I. W. W.-ism." These few remarks are made only to emphasize the chief points of division between us as Revolutionary Communists and the Evolutionary and Pacifist I. W. W. of the Varney and Sandgren school. This element has been especially noisy the last few weeks appearing in all the I. W. W. organs the "triumph" of their ideas in Germany (See "The I. W. W. into Germany," *the I. W. W. Union*, December, 1919). Numerous references were made to "The General Workers' Union of Germany" (*Die Allgemeine Arbeiter Union Deutschlands*) which was declared to be a copy of the American I. W. W. We deny this claim and assert that so long as the I.

W. W. remain indifferent to the political struggle they cannot claim an identity or even relationship with the "General Workers' Union of Germany." The organization in Germany fully recognizes the political character of the class struggle. It considers itself subordinate to the political revolutionary party which is the instrument for the capture of the state power and the inauguration of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. With such an industrial organization of the working class we would be glad and happy to work hand in hand and to fight together for the triumph of Communism!

Following is Section One of the Program of the General Workers' Union. We reproduce it from the official organ of the organization, *Der Kampf*, for November 27, 1919:

OUR AIMS.

THE World Revolution brought international capitalism to the brink of bankruptcy. Hence the proletariat is confronted immediately with the realization of its historic mission, the overthrow of capitalism.

In Germany the November Revolution introduced the period of the final conflict for the capture of the political and economic power. In this period all the industrial struggles become mass-struggles and take on a revolutionary character. At the outbreak of the mass struggles which after the November revolution involved all the important industries it became evident that the existing trade-union organizations not only have failed to assume the leadership of the struggles, but have employed all means to counter-act them. The creation of a new militant economic organization became an urgent necessity. The new organization is "The General Workers' Union (*Allgemeine Arbeiter Union*).

EMPTY WORDS

will not help lead the revolutionary workers in the struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The Proletarian Revolution demands revolutionary action!

BY SPREADING

THE COMMUNIST PRESS WE SHALL AROUSE THE WORKING CLASS TO THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

It is the militant economic organization of the revolutionary proletariat in the period of the class struggle aiming at the overthrow of capitalism. Its task is the propaganda, preparation and direction of economic mass struggles. This purpose can be achieved only in the name of the general revolutionary struggle WHICH MUST BE CARRIED ON BY ALL MEANS (MASS STRIKES, DEMONSTRATIONS, UPRISINGS, etc.), BOTH ON THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FIELD. The closest co-operation with the political revolutionary party which stands on the basis of the Third International is imperatively necessary. The General Workers' Union declares itself in solidarity with the program of the Third International and is fighting under its banners.

The aim of the revolutionary proletarian struggle in which the General Workers' Union is to perform A PART OF THE TASK, namely that of the organization of the masses on the economic field, is the abolition of capitalism by revolutionary methods and the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat for the realization of Socialism. The General Workers' Union unqualifiedly rejects any co-operation (the conclusion of

collective agreements or wage-arrangements) with the capitalists.

During the Dictatorship of the Proletariat the General Workers' Union PLACES ITSELF AT THE SERVICE OF THE COMMUNIST reconstruction of industry (The adjustment of work, the regulation of production in the various branches of industry, etc.)

Clearly the General Workers' Union differs fundamentally from the non-political and pacifist section of the I. W. W. The G. W. U. recognize the political character of the class struggle which must be carried on by all means (mass strikes, demonstrations, uprisings, etc.). It considers its work only "a part of the task." The main part of the task is to be accomplished by the revolutionary political party which is the instrument for the inauguration of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, during which "THE GENERAL WORKERS' UNION PLACES ITSELF AT THE SERVICE OF THE COMMUNIST RECONSTRUCTION OF INDUSTRY."

To show with the utmost clearness how definitely the G. W. U. recognizes the political character of the class struggle, we permit ourselves to cite one more quotation from their official organ, *Der Kampf*. We refer to the last paragraph in an article reproduced in *The Communist*, December 27, 1919, under the caption: "The Struggle for Control":

Every struggle for the industrial control is political and economic alike. The aim of this Union is to point out this identity and to do away with the fear of the recognition of the political character of the strike-weapon. This Union must not only widen, but also deepen the strike movement. The demands for wages must be transformed into political demands. The economic struggle for economic aims must develop into an economic struggle for political aims, and later develop into a political struggle for political aims. And this last aim must be finally fought out with the last political bulwark, WITH THE ARMY!"

Has this anything to do with the political indifference and evolutionary pacifism of Varney and Sandgren? Did they gain a "victory" in Germany? Nothing of the kind! It is our victory in that the G. W. U. is absolutely in accord (almost to the point of repetition of the same phrasing) with our Communist position on the question of the strike-weapon. "THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE FOR ECONOMIC AIMS MUST DEVELOP INTO AN ECONOMIC STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL AIMS AND LATER DEVELOP INTO A POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL AIMS." Such is the position of the entire revolutionary proletariat of Europe, including the erstwhile Syndicalists.

How long will the revolutionary rank and file of the I. W. W. permit the organization to be misrepresented by such "grape juice" preachers of evolution and counter-revolution as Varney and Sandgren?

The I. W. W. organization must be made safe for Communism by ridding it of the pacifist and "evolutionary" leadership and by placing it squarely in favor of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and of the political struggle. Then we shall join hands and work in close co-operation (like the General Workers' Union and the Spartans in Germany) and fight together under the red banner of the Third International for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in America.