

A Criticism of the Program and Constitution of the U. C. P.

In the last issue we reviewed the convention proceedings of the U. C. P. (United Centrist Party) and showed just how, by whom and under what circumstances the various heterogeneous elements—that stand somewhere between the Socialist Party on the extreme Right, and the Communist Party on the extreme Left—fused and drew up its program and constitution. In this article we shall take up the program and constitution and point out its pseudo-Communist, confused, Centrist character.

The program is a long verbose document containing much that does not properly belong in a program. Much of it, after a good deal of revision, might go into a Manifesto, or a treatise on the war, or in a pamphlet or leaflet—but certainly does not belong in the program. The program is as conspicuous for its errors of omission as for its errors of commission. The whole thing seems to be disjointed, one part having no coherent relation with the next. Much of it has no place in a Communist program. For instance, one can read the first three pages of the first chapter "The Collapse of Capitalism," up to the "League of Nations vs. The Communist International" without coming across any distinguishing Communist interpretation, or terminology. The dominant note in that chapter is the bourgeois economic fallacy of inflation as the cause of the breakdown of capitalism. Another insistent note which permeates the entire chapter is the bourgeois pacifist horror of the destruction of property and lives.

Even Oswald Garrison Villard, who is a bourgeois liberal has written much better analyses of the breakdown of capitalism than is contained in this program. We shall give a few illustrations of what we mean by quoting verbatim and the reader, if he is a Communist, will grasp the point.

"It is this INFLATION—multiplication of the evidences of value at the same time that the actual values are destroyed—which is undermining the whole organization of capitalist exchange and production. High prices are the reflection of inflation."

And again:

"Italy is on the verge of the Communist revolution. The national debt of Italy exceeds the national wealth..."

"During four years of war the capitalist nations engaged in the greatest orgy of destruction which humanity has ever known. The entire energy of the nations was directed to producing the implements and ammunition which were poured out in an incessant stream upon the battle-fields. Hundreds of billions of dollars worth of wealth were produced for instant destruction; the direct expenditures alone have been calculated at \$870,000,000,000. An equal amount is represented in property destruction, loss of production, interruption to trade, etc. The United States alone, in less than two years, paid out over 32 billions. Such sums are beyond the grasp of the mind." (Italics ours.—Ed.)

The bourgeois theory of inflation and bourgeois pacifism as expressed in the program is probably the work of Caxton, who has constantly exposed himself in all the party controversies as a bourgeois intellectual. It is not surprising coming from him. But how could a convention of so-called Communists permit such flagrant bourgeois ideology to creep into its program?

In that chapter there is no Communist expression of any sort. There is no mention of proletarian revolution, or proletarian dictatorship, or mass action. Instead it talks of "workers' rule which will save civilization"—a typical bourgeois phrase. It talks of the "destruction of capitalism—the overthrow of world capitalism and the reconstruction of society on the basis of Communism"—but there is no mention of the bourgeois state and the part it plays in capitalist society; no reference to the Communist task of destroying that state. Just a mass of verbiage dealing with the "collapse of capitalism" from a statistical point of view, many phrases of bourgeois horror at the destruction of lives and property etc.

Then it goes on to speak of those countries "where the breakdown has been most complete, where the masses have been goaded to final desperation"—as if the proletarian revolutions were due simply to the fact that the masses had been goaded to final desperation!

Referring to Russia, the program speaks of the Bolsheviks who "took the lead to arouse the masses to consciousness of power and to realization of the need for the Communist reconstruction of society"—no mention of the proletarian revolution taught and propagated by the Bolsheviks for years—no mention of the destruction of the bourgeois state accomplished under the leadership of the Bolsheviks—taught and propagated by the Bolsheviks for years—no mention of the establishment of the iron dictatorship of the proletariat—taught and propagated by the Bolsheviks for years!

Referring to Italy, the program speaks of the Italian workers and peasants turning to "the Italian Socialist Party (a section of the Communist International)—to the program of Soviet rule under a working class dictatorship"—first mention of dictatorship, and, confused, Proletarian dictatorship does not function under Soviet rule—proletarian dictatorship and Soviet rule are one and the same thing. The Soviet Government is a form of proletarian dictatorship. The use of the term "Soviet rule under a working class dictatorship" shows a fundamental lack of understanding of soviets and proletarian dictatorship. Then the program speaks of the working class dictatorship as being "committed to the Com-

munist transformation of the economic life." Proletarian dictatorship functions primarily for political purposes—for the crushing of counter-revolution, for safeguarding the fruits of the victorious proletarian revolution, for the supremacy of the working class over all other classes, for suppressing the bourgeoisie as a class—all these factors being pre-requisites to the economic transformation of the economic life. But the U. C. P. program is blissfully ignorant of these elementary facts.

Let us take the sub-chapter dealing with the "League of Nations vs. the Communist International." The S. P. could endorse the whole position as stated there. We quote:

"In the working masses inheres the power of the Communist International—a power which is brought to consciousness and action by the pressure which robs life of all its values, by unending wars, starvation and repression."

What does this mass of words mean anyway? Is this an exposition of the essence of the Communist International? Most Communists believe that the essence of the Communist International lies in the fact that it is composed of the class-conscious revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat of the various countries, united under the banner of the Communist International dedicated to the task of propagating and leading the workers to the proletarian revolution and the destruction of the bourgeois state by means of force and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship as the only means of introducing the Communist society. But the U. C. P. program has nothing to say on this score. It speaks of "consciousness and action" which means anything and nothing. This program was not and could not have been written by a Communist—and no Communist convention could have endorsed such a program.

"The Communist International unites all the conscious revolutionary forces—it issues the call for the final struggle against capitalism."

There you have the U. C. P. conception of the Communist International out of its own mouth! It is some kind of International bureau which holds meetings once in a while for gathering and exchanging information—sends out appeals once in a while and nothing else. The U. C. P. haven't the slightest conception (or, if they have, they certainly don't show it in the program) of the real role and function of the Communist International in the world revolutionary movement.

In striking contrast to the above is the following excerpt from the Communist Program adopted at its second convention:

"The Communist International is the organ of the international revolutionary proletariat in their struggle for the conquest of world Imperialism... The Communist International subordinates the so-called national interests to the interests of the international proletarian revolution, embodies the reciprocal aid of the proletariat of various countries, for the proletariat of any one nation will not be in a position to organize the new society without economic and other mutual assistance... It wages war against the Berne International of social-patriots and the Centrist parties and their leaders who accept the proletarian revolution and proletarian dictatorship in words but not in deeds."

The Class Struggle.

We now consider the second chapter of the U. C. P. program under the above title. We shall quote the preamble which is printed in agate type and epitomizes, or is supposed to epitomize the entire chapter.

"The conflict that is rending capitalist society is a class struggle (that is like saying white is white.—Ed.). It is a struggle between exploiter and exploited, between oppressor and oppressed. The basic facts of the present economic system place capitalist and worker in constant opposition to one another, in constant conflict over wages, hours and working conditions."

"The overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a Communist society is the historic mission of the working class. The United States (?) Communist Party is the conscious expression of the class struggle of the workers against capitalism."

The first chapter is exactly the views of Gompers—the class struggle is due to the conflict over wages, hours and working conditions. The I. W. W. have a much clearer exposition of the class struggle than that contained in this program. This paragraph says nothing, and means nothing. It tries to state an elementary truth of Socialist economics and fails miserably.

The second paragraph is more ambitious. It bridges the gap from the mere "conflict over wages, hours and working conditions" to the historic mission of the working class—the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the Communist society. But it fails to state how it is to be accomplished. That is the very crux of the differences between the Communist and Socialist parties, as well as the syndicalists and anarchists. But the U. C. P. is silent on this point just where it ought to be explained. There is no mention of the capitalist state and the necessity for its destruction nor the manner of its destruction, as advocated by the Communist International, mass action culminating in armed insurrection and civil war.

The next two paragraphs, again develop the process of imperialism but say nothing about the capitalist state and its role in capitalist society. Meaningless revolutionary phrases and nothing else. What Lenin once said to some comrades in Russia can be aptly applied to the U. C. P.

"they are sick with the malady of revolutionary phrases."

The Nature of the State.

The state, which has been completely ignored for nearly three and a half pages now comes into its own. They have a sub-heading dealing specifically with the nature of the state.

One would expect that since the program has been so lavish of words in previous chapters it might devote some space to an analysis of the nature of the state—why it came into being, the nature of the state—in every historical epoch etc. It states that "in every historical epoch the existing government—the state—has been the organ of coercion used by the ruling class to keep the exploited class in subjection." Surely no one, not even a bourgeois liberal could find fault with this statement!

Continuing, it says: "so long as the capitalists control the power of the newspapers, the press, the politicians, the schools and colleges so long as MILLIONS OF WORKERS ARE DISFRANCHISED THROUGH RACIAL AND RESIDENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS AND NATURALIZATION LAWS, the capitalists can well afford to allow the workers the empty privilege of periodically voting to confirm their rule." (caps ours.—Ed.)

Murder will out! Note the Menshevik statement which is capitalized. The implication is, that if millions of workers were not disfranchised then the capitalists could not afford to give the workers the privilege. It would no longer be an empty privilege. It might become a dangerous weapon in the hands of the working class. It might even be used as a means of ousting the capitalists from power. This is the meaning of that statement—and it is pure Menshevism. According to this, the U. C. P. still cherishes the hope that some day, if all the workers will be enfranchised the ballot may be used as the means for the emancipation of the working class.

This statement completely nullifies the chapter on "Election Campaigns," which claims that the U. C. P. will use the parliament for revolutionary propaganda only. Compare the above quotation from the U. C. P. and their chapter on "Election Campaigns" and you will get a clear idea of the meaning of "paying lip-service to the revolution."

We quote the following paragraph in order to show how completely this program fails to understand even current political phenomena from the Communist standpoint.

"The expulsion of the Socialist Assemblymen at Albany, the expulsion of the Socialist Councilmen in Cleveland during the war, indicate how summarily the capitalists get rid of elected officials who even in the least degree challenge the capitalist dictatorship."

Now, we would like to ask the theoreticians of the U. C. P. whether or not they believe that the Socialist Assemblymen or Cleveland Councilmen challenged in the past decree the capitalist dictatorship? If they do so believe, then their characterization of the S. P. as a party of social-patriots and traitors to the working class is camouflage. If they do not, why did they put it into the program?

We will quote just one thing more from the chapter on "Election Campaigns" as showing the ability of the unscrupulous Centrist leaders to manipulate language so as to fool their membership. They claim they will send their parliamentary representatives to the legislative halls to keep these slogans to the front. "Down with the parliamentary sham of capitalism; Hall to the Soviets and real working class democracy!"

Now what in the name of common sense do these slogans mean? This is sheer word-juggling. Damon who probably wrote this chapter remembers some slogans that were used in the recommendations issued by the Third International to the Communist Party, and, like a Centrist corrupted them to milk-and-water consistency that would suit his own purposes. The slogans if they are to mean anything at all should read—"Down with the Congress and Senate! Long live the Workers' Government! Long live the Government of Workers' Soviets!"

Industrial Unionism.

On this question the U. C. P. straddles painfully. They seek to please all elements. They have not dared to take an unequivocal position on this question, one way or the other. They have failed to learn from the experiences of the last year and the last convention of the I. W. W.

They reject the policy of the I. W. W., which is diametrically opposed to the position of the Third International—and yet they maintain that the I. W. W. "is the obvious medium for giving the advocacy of industrial unionism affirmative character." The I. W. W. must be upheld as against the A. F. of L.

The I. W. W. itself, after its last convention has renounced all claim to any revolutionary pretensions. They have rejected every principle and policy which the Third International advocates. It is a conservative economic organization, better constructed to struggle for high wages and better conditions under capitalism. That is all. To engage in the propaganda for industrial unionism to the workers means to instill erroneous ideas into the workers' minds which will be very difficult to remove later on. It is the task of a real Communist Party to propagate and agitate for the proletarian revolution, the destruction of the capitalist state and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship as the only means of emancipating the workers from capitalism. Industrial unions are neither committed to this program nor are they the mediums for this struggle. Particularly, the I. W. W. is opposed to the Communist program. Trade and industrial unions are a field for