

Lovestone Looks with Favor at the Socialist Party

By MAX SHACHTMAN

In the last issue of the *Militant*, we indicated by a number of indisputable facts the direction which the Lovestone Right wing is taking: away from Communism and towards the social democracy. The few days that have elapsed have only served to furnish additional, and even more striking confirmation of this statement. The additional material, furnished by Lovestone himself shows that the hypocritical claims that the Right wing is anxious to work together with the pseudo-progressives in a "trade union bloc" against reaction, are set up in reality in order to camouflage the rapidly developing political bloc of the Right wing and the social reformists aiming at the liquidation of the Communist movement and Communist influence in the working class.

ZIMMERMAN DISCOVERS THE VIRTUES OF LEVY

We have already revealed the "united front" which the Lovestone faction made with the Sigman henchman, Levy, in Local 1 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. At that time, we did not have at hand the official apologium of Lovestone. Its publication only makes the case worse for the Right wing. As was easy to foretell, the "bloc" met with the unconcealed hostility of the vast majority of the Communist and Left wing workers in the needle trades. Like Lovestone, they are thoroughly acquainted with Levy and his stripe. Levy was one of the outstanding leaders of the Right wing in expelling the Left wing workers from the I. L. G. W. U. a few years ago and thereby splitting the union in the interests of the bureaucracy and the manufacturers. Only the sheerest simpleton can regard this struggle as a "dispute" between "two sections of the labor movement." As every class conscious worker, at least, understands, it was a struggle between those elements representing the interests of the workers and those elements representing the interests of the capitalists. Levy, and his boss Sigman, was and remains a member of the latter "faction". That he is not disinclined to have himself called a "progressive" today and to oppose the dominant bureaucracy is attributable to two facts: the dispute between the Schlesinger clique in office and the Sigman clique out of office; the revival of the fighting moods among the militant workers who for a dozen reasons (which we shall not deal with here) have been driven into the Right wing union again in the last couple of years.

The task of those who have at heart the interests of the Left wing and Communist movement (which are and must be identical with the interests of the working class as opposed to those of the bourgeoisie and its labor agents), is to reveal the mechanism which has actuated the Levys in the past and moves them to their "new" position today. For the Levys, large and small, represent an accidental, individual phenomenon, generally speaking, no "erring sinner who sees the light" but a distinct class influence in the labor movement. How do the Lovestoneites measure up to this task? By joining hands with Levy and using their own somewhat tarnished "Communist" reputation to give him what amounts to a clean bill of health. The leading Right wing opportunist, Zimmerman, who transferred his allegiance from the party to the Lovestone faction without disturbing his own equilibrium for a moment, lamely explains the shabby affair as follows:

"Their [i. e., Levy's] program is mildly progressive and on a number of questions unclear and confused. Some of the leaders of the Trade Union Center [the Levy group] have a bad record in the union because of their former support of the expulsion policy. But at the present time the Trade Union Center is carrying on a fight against the policies and régime of the reactionary administration of the union. At the present time these leaders claim [so!] that they recognize their mistakes and that they definitely and openly repudiate the expulsion policy." (Rev. Age, No. 4.)

It is not true that the "Trade Union Center is carrying on a fight against the policies and régime of the reactionary administration"; it is the channel through which the Sigman clique is fighting the Schlesinger clique, and the victory of the former would not result in a less reactionary administration at all. It is not true that the Levys recognize their "mistakes", nor that they make this "claim"; it is true that the Lovestone faction is deliberately adorning Levy in order to make him, and consequently the bloc, acceptable to the rank and file militants.

"It is clear for us," says the leaflet issued "independently" by the Lovestone group (and if we know the Lovestoneites, with the tacit consent of Levy), "that some of those with whom we are making this bloc have sinned considerably against the workers. They will have to work actively to make up for their past. They will be able to do this

only through proving through action that they are willing to fight in the interests of the workers, that is, to fight for union conditions in the shops, to fight against every leadership which will pursue harmful policies in the union and in relation to the bosses." (Rev. Age, No. 4.)

That Levy will "work actively" in the future (for Sigmanism) is incontestable. That he will "make up for their past" by continuing to gut the real Left wing movement, by betraying the workers' interests, by trying to expel the militants once more as soon as they threaten all the sections of the bureaucracy—that is equally incontestable. The Lovestoneites mean something else, however. They consciously spread the illusion that the fake "progressives" a la Levy have it in them to "fight in the interests of the workers". What an "independent" leaflet should do is to point out that these people can do no such thing because they represent, in essence, one wing of the capitalist bureaucracy in the union. There is still another aspect to this leaflet: The Levys, it says, will have to work actively in the future to make up for their black past. That is, they have not yet made up for their past—except, perhaps, by a few harmless words which bind them to nothing. The Lovestoneites, therefore, have made a speculative bloc, based on the "possibility" and "hope" that the Levys will become working class fighters and the leopard will change his spots.

Why does Levy make the bloc? It may be asked. The answer is: Why shouldn't Levy make the bloc? What does he lose by getting the support of the Lovestone group? Nothing! On the contrary, he gets a nice, new, shiny coat of whitewash and a number of votes. But the minimum program of the bloc? What about that? Doesn't it obligate Levy and Co. to a progressive administration? Nothing of the kind. The minimum program of the bloc between the Lovestone group and Levy (printed in full in Rev. Age, No. 4), has a distinctly reactionary foundation, upon which are erected a number of other points which nine avowed reactionaries out of ten in the I. L. G. W. U. would acknowledge as correct. The main point in the bloc's program reads:

6. "We fight against every clique rule in the union because we want that the union should be conducted in an honest, democratic and progressive manner through the membership of the union. No discrimination, persecutions or any sort of swindles must be practiced at meetings and elections of any sort."

So far as the Lovestone section of the bloc is concerned, this sort represents a betrayal of Communism, neither more nor less. The "fight against every clique rule in the union" is directed essentially at the Communists, and specifically at the official party. This reactionary slogan has become the time-worn rallying banner of every bureaucrat in the labor movement who is threatened by the militant workers whose vanguard is everywhere constituted by the Communists. It is the main "practical" aspect of the theory of "no politics in the union" fathered on the one side by the Gompers hierarchy and on the other by the latter-day reactionary philosophers of syndicalism—the theory which always means no revolutionary politics in the union, no working class politics, but bourgeois politics. "No politics" in the A. F. of L. always meant Democratic and Republican party politics. "No clique control" in the French trade union movement today means, so far as the triple alliance of Right wing (Sellier, Lovestone's colleague), the "progressives" in the reformist trade unions, and the syndicalists in the Left unions are concerned means swinging as many workers as possible into the Right wing union under the actual control of the French Socialist Party.

More than three years ago, Gold, head of the Furriers' Left wing, made a bloc with the Sorkin group of "progressive" bureaucrats, in which "no clique control" was also the outstanding point. At that time, the Lovestone group, though in control of the party, was still compelled by the protest of the party minority to condemn Gold and repudiate this reactionary point as a betrayal of Communism. What a perfect contrast would be presented by printing, side by side, the minimum program of the Levy-Lovestone bloc and the 1927 Party Political Bureau condemnation of the Gold-Sorkin bloc! But Lovestone will not print it. He is too busily engaged in liquidating Communism.

LOVESTONE DISCOVERS THE REVOLT IN THE S. P. . . .

"The revolt of the membership in the social democracy and a pronounced Leftward movement primarily among the socialist youth is not a phenomenon limited to Germany," we learned from *Revolutionary Age* (No. 5); "it is manifesting itself in

various forms in a number of countries including the U. S. A. Here, too, the Yipsels are playing a prominent rôle in the struggle within the Socialist Party against the gross reformism which characterizes that party's political line and leadership."

There is no doubt of the development in the ranks of reformism of a Leftward movement of the workers. Only a Stalinist functionary, blinded by the scintillating phraseology of the "third period", which divides the working class into Communists on the one side and "social fascists" on the other, can deny its existence. The Leftward movement in the social democracy flows from the antagonism between the treacherous course of the socialist bureaucracy and the class interests of the workers in the ranks. This antagonism creates a chasm between the top and bottom layers of the social democracy. The problem of the Communists is to win the "bottom", the workers, to the revolutionary movement by deepening the chasm and making it unbridgeable. This can only be done by the maintenance of the sharpest intransigence in principle and the application of the policy of the united front on issues of the day. To set these workers in motion for militant struggle requires their disillusionment with the theory and practise of reformism, in other words, the dislodgment of the reformist leadership.

In seeking to solve the problem of winning the Leftward moving socialist workers, the Communists are confronted by an extremely dangerous foe: the Left wing of reformism. Their function is to serve as a bond between the avowed class collaborationists and the discontented workers, to bridge the ever widening chasm. The fact that they straddle the two is due, first, to the fact that the workers are pulling in different directions, and second—what is even more important for us—to the fact that they hope to draw their two points of support together again. Purcell came forward as a "Left winger" in order to hold the workers in the organized camp of Thomas and MacDonald, and—when the time was ripe—to bind them to the latter ideologically again. The fact that he was given such invaluable aid in this work by Stalin-Bucharin and Co. does not change the essential character of his rôle. We name Purcell only as a symbol for Seydewitz in Germany, Zyromski in France, and on a much smaller scale, for Stanley, leader of the American S. P. "Left." These are not confused workers groping for the revolutionary road; they are skilled leaders who aim to make reformism radical enough to retain the restless workers and yet keep it reformist enough to mollify the far-sighted Hillquits. Against this "Left" variety of reformist leadership, the Communists can conduct only the most implacable and irreconcilable struggle.

In the Leninist period of the Comintern, this was always the policy pursued, and with excellent results for the movement. It was this relentless attitude that prevented the International from being diluted and corrupted by such people as Crispian and Dittmann in Germany, who even pretended at one time to support the idea of the proletarian dictatorship and the Soviet system. Even in the United States, the Comintern warned the revolutionary workers against such Centrists as Engdahl, Kruse, Olgin, Trachtenberg and Co., who were even more "radical" in their words than Crispian was or than Stanley is today. Now that Lovestone, in his feverish hunt for allies, has discovered the S. P. "Left wing", let us see how he approaches these miniature Crispians. In the report of the New York convention of the S. P. dealing with the trade union question we read:

"The discussion was rather inadequate as far as the supporters of the Stanley resolution were concerned. Not once during the discussion did they refer to the fusion of the Socialist Party leadership with the trade union bureaucracy. They avoided in the discussion on and in the resolution the demand for organization of the socialists into groups in the various organizations." (Rev. Age, No. 6. Our emphasis.)

Incredible as it sounds, it is there—black on white. The principal complaint Lovestone lodges against the Stanley group is that they failed to fight for the organization of socialist party members into trade union fractions! But fractions are organized for the purpose of extending their party's ideological and organizational influence and control in the unions. At least that is the aim of the Communist fractions; we assume that it would hold equally true for socialist fractions. But since when has it become the task of the Communists to demand the organization of the reformists into compact fractions which must inevitably seek to liquidate the influence of Communism? We have always been under the impression that it is the duty of the Com-

munist to make it impossible for reformist fractions to establish themselves. The Right wing liquidators, in their march from Communism to the social democracy, pick up their natural allies on the left flank of the latter. And to make their newly-discovered allies acceptable to their own soldiers, to the workers in the Lovestone group who want to remain Communists, the Lovestone leaders must needs present the Stanleys in a favorable light by monstrously exaggerating their "revolutionary" caliber:

"The clearest expression of the differences within the S. P.," the report continues, "is to be found in the question of the attitude to the Soviet Union."

That is true, not in the sense of the liberals whose interest in the Soviet Union is limited to its existence as an "interesting experiment" and an object of American diplomatic recognition, but in the sense of its realization of revolutionary strategy and principles of Marxism. Now, Lovestone adds:

"The resolution submitted by the Stanley group is one of the clearest and most consistently Left (!!) resolutions that has come from any group in the S. P. since the 1919-21 split. It is a resolution which, basing itself on the proletarian character of the Soviet state, very closely approximates a Communist position." (Rev. Age, No. 6.)

"Close" enough, we take it, to make unity between Lovestone and Stanley both desirable and attainable. This is not at all a fantasy. Quite the contrary. Lovestone already has one foot in the camp of Muste. Standing right next to Muste in the C. P. L. A. is Stanley. To think that the Muste-Lovestone unification involves only a "trade union bloc" is to entertain the utterly grotesque notion that there are two distinctly different Stanleys: the partisan of Muste and the leader of the S. P. "Left wing". It is clear: Lovestone is reconciling his group, in the characteristic manner of the opportunist, to a return to the fold, as we will see in another minute. The rate of speed is a subsidiary consideration; the forms of this reconciliation and the stages it will pass through, are also of secondary importance. Will it, for instance, go through the stage of a Two-and-a-Half International movement? It may, because the component elements are at hand, in various stages of development: the Muste faction of the C. P. L. A. (ardent admirers all of the I. L. P.), Lovestone, the Stanley group, the group around the Italian *Musteite* daily, *Il Nuovo Mondo*, strong tendencies under the German *Volkszeitung* and the *Verband Internationaler Arbeiter*, etc., etc. But that would only be a half-way house of short occupation. The S. P. looms ahead.

ZAM DISCOVERS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN S. P. AND S. L. P.

Lovestone going back to the S. P.? Isn't that a bit strong? Doesn't he claim to be a faction of the Communist party? Doesn't he even go so far as to demand that the party return to Leninism? But pretension and intention are two different things. What Lovestone pretends to aim towards we find out from his "holiday" pronouncements. What he intends to do we find out by examining the various measures of "preparation" to lead the Communist workers off the revolutionary path. Not the least of these measures is the one assigned to Zam, who has been sent forth like a scout into the far lands of the socialist party and who has returned with glowing accounts: Yea, they are flowing with milk and honey.

Zam's findings are recorded in two illuminating articles in the *Revolutionary Age* (Nos. 5 and 6), "Lenin or DeLeon", which have as their aim to prove the superiority of the Socialist Party over the official Communist party as a hunting ground for the Lovestone faction. How? By showing that, first, the S. P. was more fertile ground for Communism than the S. L. P., and second, that the official C. P. today is more or less identical with the S. L. P.; therefore, it appears, the S. P. is more fertile ground for Communism than the C. P. But let us have Zam's own words, which, with all the circumspection of the cowardly opportunist, are sufficiently eloquent:

1. "It was not the 'revolutionary' S. L. P. but the 'reformist' S. P. [Why is 'reformist' quoted?] that gave birth to the Communist movement . . . The looseness of and lack of discipline in the S. P. made it possible for a revolutionary wing to develop within it and to secure leadership over the mass of its members, which led to the establishment of various Left wing groupings and papers, and finally to the original Left wing which became the Communist Party."

2. But the strictly disciplined and centralized S. L. P. made impossible such a development. On the contrary, every new tendency in the S. L. P. was crushed with a ruthless hand, and expulsions became a by-word".

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