

A Reply to a Non-Partisan League Farmer

By Jay Lovestone

(Continued from last week.)

V. Have we not in North Dakota a Soviet of Farmers?

No! This question deals with the differences between the Soviet and the bourgeois parliamentary state. First of all, your "Soviets" are based on the ponderous apparatus of universal suffrage. A genuine Soviet replies immediately on such organic groups as shop, factory, mill and so forth. Second: Your "Soviet" has no serious guarantees of immediate and direct relation between elected and electors. Thirdly: Your "Soviet" is chosen by an amorphous mass of electors who entrust full power to others for a year or so. In the genuine Soviet however, the Soviet electors remain always united by the conditions of their work and their existence. The Soviet delegate is always before the workers' eyes. And he can be ordered, censured, removed and replaced at any moment. In a real Soviet the representatives are directly concerned with industries. Here the right to vote is no privilege or charity, but a right only of a laboring citizen. Under the Soviet rule no agent of a capitalist political party drives any one to the ballot box. Because the Soviet voter must join a workers' organization, there can be no mass of indifferent voters as under parliamentary democracy.

Aside from the above it must be remembered that a Soviet represents only the industrial and the agricultural populations. It does not allow the exploiters, owners of farms for speculative purposes, for example, representation. The North Dakota "Soviet" is based on a union of all classes, big bourgeois, little bourgeois and workingmen. The arbitrary, geographical nature of the bourgeois state is still retained by your "Soviet." Did not the bulk of your "Soviet" voters go to the Republican Party in the last Congressional elections?

But how long ago was it that the Non-Partisan League farm owners, controlling your "Soviets" were dickering with the I. W. W. farm laborers, the agricultural proletariat, about the wages to be paid the latter? Are these industrial workers allowed by your "Soviet"? It is not true that the agricultural proletariat, the farm-hands, are unable to participate in the voting for your "Soviet" because of their lack of proper residential qualifications? No, you have no "Soviet". In a real Soviet only the agricultural and the industrial laborers rule and rule. Yours is a political organization controlled by farm owners and not by farm laborers.

The Socialists of North Dakota, who have become the backbone of the Non-Partisan (class peace) League have, like "moderate Socialists" the world over, a middle-class conception of the State. This conception arises from the latest tendencies in capitalism. The smaller capitalists are being pressed hard by centralized capital and by the men rising from the ranks and the wage working class. Your North Dakota farmers are pressed by the large trust companies on one side and by the agricultural proletariat on the other. Therefore your North Dakota "Soviet" is "socializing" many enterprises to help the farm owners. The middle class bases its hopes on an extension of state activities. By the intellectual proletariat, another section of the middle class, the extension of state activities is specially welcomed, for many new official jobs are opened up. To get these jobs, examinations must be passed. And who can pass them better than the intellectual proletariat? Thus the entire middle class sees in the state a glorified institution—a means of saving the world! The middle class ideal state is a state which controls industry and rewards each according to his "ability". The tragic phase of this state and municipal ownership is that it is heralded as Socialism in practice.

The middle class is anxious "to ape the luxuries of the rich, consequently their social demands aim at incomes. Whereas, the demand of the wage-laborer is for the social control of wealth created by labor in order to achieve economic freedom." But a careful examination of the various state enterprises definitely shows that they do not make for the economic freedom of the laborer, but that they rather strengthen capitalism and class rule. The growing industrial unrest compels all property interests to more and more rely on the state. "Public order" must be maintained. In "society's" name the state must crush strikes. The capitalist class contends that the state represents society in order to hide the class nature of the state. The Left Wing holds that reform nostrums are means of misleading the American proletariat. The bourgeoisie fear a class conscious proletariat and hence they strive to confuse the workers. National and municipal control are inherent in the higher stage of capitalism. Municipal and state ownership are as much "steps" toward Socialism as the general trend towards concentration and centralization of

capital is. Because our ruling class was menaced by a foreign ruling class, America adopted many such measures of "Socialism."

With America's entry into the war, state enterprise was nursed to a gigantic size. Today the American bourgeoisie is compelled to extend state control because it desires to hold the markets it has won during the war. What is more, industrial unrest must be curbed and the workers must be disciplined. The nominal wages may rise but only at the expense of the proletariat being tyrannized by the official bureaucrats. Whatever freedom the working class had, is fast disappearing. And the proletariat's social position is being lowered.

An extension of state control means a further extension of bourgeois control of the press and educational institutions.

The interests of the bourgeoisie manifesting themselves in these, mold the laborer's political ideas. To make still more secure the bourgeois control of the state, the working-class, though at great disadvantage, is never allowed to decide really important measures in capitalist society. Was the American working-class given a chance by its democracy to pass upon the declaration of war, financing of the war, conscription, the Espionage Act? No! Though the American capitalist class was very well equipped to win such a test, yet, these matters were too vital to capitalism to even take the least chance with interference of their realization.

Capitalism is in its death throes. Its inherent contradictions have become a fetter on the system of production. It is for this reason that in the last decade or two capitalism is relying ever more on the state. State control really means a better organized capitalism, and it is the last effort of the bourgeois class to stave off its downfall.

VI. Shall We Refuse a Baby's Cry for Food Because It Can't Eat Meat?

This question touches the heart of the social reform controversy. It deals with the so-called "immediate demands."

At the outset let us look into the why and wherefore of capitalist reforms. It must be kept in mind that when one speaks of reforms, he is well aware of the fact that the capitalist system is not yet overthrown, and that the "reforms" are to be granted by capitalists. Why do capitalists grant reforms?

There are two reasons. First, in order to stifle the ever-increasing class-consciousness of the workers. To the capitalist class, as to others, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. By granting certain "improvements" in the immediate conditions of the workers, the capitalist hides the class nature of the present system of production. By apparently being kind to the worker, the capitalist hides the conflict of interests and promotes the proletariat's belief in the brotherhood of labor and capital. Thus the spirit of independent class action by the proletariat is dampened. Reflect for a moment over the effect of the "Welfare Bureau," of profit-sharing, and other immediate "reforms" on the employees. The extensive social reform program of Germany played no small part in cementing the proletariat's loyalty to the kaiser. The heralded "constructive reforms" fought for by the Social-Democratic Party are to a great extent responsible for the blood-shed in Germany today. Moderate Socialism in Germany, as everywhere, ascribed to bureaucratic petty bourgeois reforms a creative revolutionary value. The effect of these reform campaigns has been to dupe the proletariat as to the class nature of the state and bourgeois democracy. The German proletariat was misinformed as to the nature of the Communist order. And today Germany is not a land of soviets but a bloody bourgeois republic!

There is another reason for the capitalists' granting "improvements" in the workers' conditions. The only use the capitalist has for the proletariat is exploitation. But to be capable of exploitation a laborer must exist. He must do more than that. He must live. A broken-down worker is inefficient.

On the whole, the bourgeoisie are not as stupid as some of our twentieth-century utopian Socialists believe. Their investigators have made extensive studies proving that efficiency can be increased by shorter hours, and "improvements" in working conditions. The improved methods of production and business organization intensify the degree of exploitation. Hence, capitalism can well stand "reform"—or change of tactics in its exploitation of the working-class.

"Shall we fight for or against these 'immediate improvements?'" asks the moderate "Socialist." From this we are led straight to the object of a revolutionary Socialist political party. What is the purpose of a class-conscious proletarian party? Its object should be none other than to always hold before the working masses the ideal of revolution, the ideal of a new society—a Communist society. A Socialist Party should broaden the activity of the proletariat into class activity, and should always point out the nature of capitalism. The Socialists should not wage campaigns for the transformation of the state or for the enlarging of its functions. A Socialist political party must always be on guard against the seduction of the proletariat by the state activities in his "benefit." The parliamentary campaign and the legislature offer us a means of expressing our class interests, and of exposing bourgeois class interests.

The policy of the Left Wing, or revolutionary Socialism, is neither to oppose or to propose these "immediate demands," these "social reforms"—this whole gamut of "beneficial state activities or state capitalism." The social reform of state capitalism is today a fact to which Socialism must adjust itself.

The Left Wing does not intend to abandon the immediate struggle. To the Left Wing the immediate demands that arise serve as the dynamo of all action. By means of them we generate revolutionary currents amongst the proletariat. By aggressively engaging in this struggle the revolutionary sparks latent in the proletariat can be fanned into revolutionary fires against the bourgeoisie. We employ this struggle as a means of promoting the final struggle.

An analysis of the immediate problems confronting the American working class will help us clarify this matter. Let us analyze the attitudes of revolutionary and petty bourgeois Socialism towards them. First, let us take the unemployment problem. The tide of unemployment is rising. Shall we say to the capitalist class "Get out" and presto—there will be no unemployment?

The Left Wing holds that unemployment—rather disemployment—is an inherent characteristic of capitalism. As long as capitalism exists there will be disemployment. The problem cannot be "solved" as long as capitalism is intact. Unlike the petty-bourgeois Right Wing Socialism, the Left Wing believes that not even the capitalist state, that miracle-organ, that God of Right Wing Socialism, can "solve" this problem. Therefore the Left Wing disdains petitioning the President, as the official organ of Right Wingism, *The Call*, has done. We will not petition even a fourteen-point capitalist champion for the establishment of Government Employment Bureaus. What more dangerous weapon against the proletariat could be given the bourgeois government than control of employment. What chance would a labor spokesman, a bounded "agitator," have of getting a job? Perhaps this accounts for J. P. Morgan's generosity in contributing thousands of dollars for the maintenance of these "public" employment bureaus! A-ain to "solve" this "problem" of capitalism; reactionary, utopian Socialism agitates for unemployment insurance. Has insurance ever done away with unemployment anywhere? No! Not even in Germany where the "Socialists" now have a majority!

But cannot anything at all be done to combat the immediate distress of unemployment? Yes. The Left Wing has a plan of action in meeting this immediate demand. And in this struggle the Left Wing sees a means of promoting the final struggle. Suppose there are today two million unemployed in America. Shall we invest our energy in several tons of paper (petitions)? Shall we appeal for the votes of "all liberty loving citizens" and promise them a "solution" by insurance? No! The Left Wing would show the why and the wherefore of unemployment. The Left Wing would take advantage of this crisis of capitalism and spread revolutionary propaganda amongst the unemployed. It would not stop there. The Left Wing would propose and work for a country-wide strike for shorter hours so that fewer workers might be disemployed.

Is this an abandonment of the immediate struggle? Why waste energy in attempting to solve the insoluble, the contradictions of capitalism. Why misdirect the efforts of the working-class when splendid opportunity is offered to lead them into revolutionary channels? Is this demanding all or nothing? Is such a policy as outlined above based on the notion of "damn the immediate benefits and the worse the better?"

(To Be Continued.)

All Left Wing Branches are requested to postpone business meetings, street meetings, lectures, etc., and support Friday's Madison Square meeting.