

The Growth of the Left Wing

By Maximilian Cohen

REVOLUTIONARY Socialism always had its exponents and champions in New York. Back in the old days before the war "rights" and "lefts" "reds" and "yellows" lined up in their various branches and consumed lots of space in the Socialist press with their tactical differences and opinions.

But the world war and the betrayal of International Socialism by the dominant Social-Democracies of Europe; the Russian Revolution and rise of the Bolsheviks to power; our own entrance into the conflict; the defection of our movement with its lip-service to International Socialism and its petty-bourgeois pacifism, and finally the social-patriotic acts of our party officials and spokesmen generally, and Meyer London and the Socialist Aldermanic Delegation of New York in particular, created an intolerable situation which grew worse from day to day.

The rank and file betrayed and outraged by its spokesmen found every attempt at protest blocked by an entrenched machine hard to reach and difficult to dislodge. It controlled the party machinery and press and had the active support of reactionary trade-union elements who threaten to withhold financial assistance during political campaigns unless candidates suitable to these "leaders" were selected.

A general membership meeting called only after pressure had been exerted after the Aldermanic Delegation first voted on the Liberty Loan, found its actions nullified by Comrade Gerber suddenly springing some twelve o'clock rule long after the specified hour. The re-nomination of Meyer London found every apologist for social-patriotism and every mouth-phrasing revolutionist lined up solidly for his re-nomination.

At the first party meeting to re-nominate, the reactionaries sensing strong opposition, finally sabotaged the meeting into getting London down to face the charges personally. The next meeting found them down in full force and then they played their trump card. Meyer London was on the platform. It was presumed that he would answer questions or at least that the chairman would permit discussion after which London could sum up and define his position. Nothing of the sort! The chairman granted him the floor and London proceeded to attack, malign and insult every Socialist who did not agree with his out and out social-patriotic stand. He then left the hall immediately after; of course he was re-nominated by the

party machine and the Forward's politicians who saw to it that the meeting was packed.

But the Central Committee of Local New York must ratify. The Central Committee at its regular meeting withheld ratification. So again the machine got busy and called a special meeting and by a vote of 42 to 38 reversed the decision of the previous meeting.

Then came another sensation. The Aldermanic Delegation had flopped again on the Fourth Liberty Loan. The overworked machine got busy again and blocked and frustrated every attempt on the part of the rank and file to express their disapproval and take proper disciplinary action.

Lastly, and as fitting climax to their "activities" the Aldermanic Delegation voted for the appropriation for a Victory Arch and thus sank as low as it is possible to sink in the mire of social-patriotic mud.

Feeling ran high. The machine worked secretly and the Socialist press silently to defend the thrice-dishonored and guilty offenders. Under pressure of some members of the City Committee a joint meeting of the Central Committees of the various locals of Greater New York was called to discuss the Aldermanic acts and recommend action to the various locals. Julius Gerber was elected chairman at this meeting. The chairman of the Socialist Aldermanic Delegation made a lengthy report of inconsequential and routine details which had nothing to do with the purpose of the meeting. He read a report that might have been in place in some grammar-school class in elementary civics. It was insulting by the very absence of emphasis on those points which had to do with tactical differences and principles. He did slur over those points in the last ten minutes of his report as if such matters were beside the question, of very little moment to Socialists and needed no further amplification. After the report the chairman arbitrarily called for questions from the floor when the method of procedure should have been discussion upon a motion. Each question called for a lengthy answer by some member of the Delegation and so the chairman steered the meeting safely up to about 11.30 or thereabout when some delegates woke up to the fact that they had been tricked out of full discussion and some one made a motion to close questions and start discussion. At this point

some delegates from Queens who claimed recognition under questions were ruled out of order and they as a protest rose in a body and left. Immediately after the Kings County delegates also rose in a body and left the hall as a protest against the all-too-evident attempt at whitewashing the Aldermanic Delegation by the New York machine. Some New York delegates left with them so did also a number of comrades in the rear of the hall.

These delegates and comrades crowded in the corridor and forced Comrade Goebel to give them a meeting room, a thing which he at first refused to do. There the Left Wing Section had its birth as an organization. A committee of fourteen was elected with power to draft a Manifesto and bring our message to the rank and file. The committee drafted a temporary Manifesto and Program and called mass meetings in Kings, Manhattan and the Bronx for party members only; Our Manifesto was enthusiastically endorsed and our position backed up by the members present. I might add here that the New York *Call* refused even to print our paid advertisements announcing the meetings, although it is a well-known fact that they permitted their solicitors to plead for Liberty Loan ads from the Liberty Loan Committee and printed same in direct violation of the meaning and purpose of the St. Louis Resolution. But Left Wing ads were too dangerous forsooth! The readers of the *Call* might find out that there are some members in the Socialist Party who were and are opposed to the betrayal of Socialist principles by official spokesmen and official party organs.

However we managed to have our meetings well attended in spite of the *Call's* attitude and finally, we called for an all-day convention for February 15th. It was one of the most enthusiastic meetings ever held in New York. On that day the Left Wing Section was formally launched, rules of organization adopted and the Manifesto and Program revised for publication in pamphlet form. A City Committee and executive officers were elected. *The Revolutionary Age* was endorsed as our organ for the present and John Reed was chosen as New York editor.

We are a well organized section within the Socialist Party of Local Greater New York and are extending our activities to cooperate with all Left Wing Locals throughout the country for the purpose of uniting our forces preparatory to making a nation-wide drive for the capture of the whole party machinery.

Men in the Scotch Shop Steward Movement

WILLIAM CALLAGHER, born in Scotland of Irish parents, is the printer of *The Worker*, and president of the Clyde Workers' Committee (the Glasgow shipyard district). He was arrested in February, 1916, and charged with sedition in connection with his speech at an anti-conscription meeting; and on February 12, 1916, he spoke at an open-air demonstration in favor of "No Conscription." In April 1916, he was tried for circulating a copy of *The Worker* containing an article "Should the Workers Arm?" and sentenced to 12 months imprisonment. He has been prominent at all the meetings of extremists since his release. In October, 1917, he was appointed president of the Clyde Workers' Committee. At a mass meeting organized by that committee at Glasgow on November 25, 1917, he made a speech inciting the workers to strike, and called on his audience to come to the Court, in case the speakers were prosecuted, and show that they were "in earnest." At a meeting in Sheffield on December 16, 1917, he said that he did not want a revolution a hundred years hence, but as soon as possible; "I would suggest to you that we revolutionaries should organize with the view of taking possession of the products of industries and of distributing machinery." When Sir Auckland Geddes, as Minister of National Service, addressed the workers in Glasgow on January 28, 1918, Gallagher seconded a resolution to the effect that the audience would bind themselves to enforce the declaration of an immediate armistice on all fronts. In February, 1918, he went to Glasgow, and moved a similar resolution, but was compelled to withdraw it. In August he went to Coventry, and on returning to Glasgow he urged the workers to organize a strike and demand the release of John MacLean. In January of this year he went to Sheffield, (England) and urged the formation of a Soldiers' and Workers' Council. He is a born fighter.

David Kirkwood, born in Scotland, was formerly chief shop steward of the Beardmore Works, and a prominent member of the Clyde Workers' Committee. He had much to do with organizing the strikes on March 17 and April 9, 1918. In March, 1916, he was deported from Glasgow and chose to go to Edinburgh. There he did not secure employment, and was supported by money from the Clyde Workers' Committee. Early in 1917 he returned to Glasgow, and resumed his old activities. About this time he became organizer of the local Independent Labor Party branch. In

These brief sketches of some of the prominent figures in the Shop Stewards movement in Scotland will give an idea of the timber which goes to make up the organization which is at the present time playing such an important role in British Labor circles. The men mentioned below are not "headliners" but are some of the active officials in the various big shops and councils. These biographical sketches are not written in the light of "boosts" for the men mentioned but were originally published in various Scottish bourgeois papers for the purpose of giving their "records." The only changes made in the original text are those details which are added for the sake of clarity, and in a couple of cases the reporter's personal opinions have been omitted as valueless.

September he addressed a meeting at Barrow, telling the workers to strike whenever they had a grievance and to strike suddenly; and in answer to a question he said he was out for a revolution, and if he found bloodshed was necessary he would not be one to hesitate. In November, 1917, he started an agitation at Glasgow calling on the Government to release Peter Petroff, one of the Russian Bolsheviks then residing in Glasgow. He is one of the few Scottish delegates on the Soldiers' and Workers' Council. He was prominent during the recent Glasgow strike and on January 31 he was arrested with Callagher when the Riot Act was read.

Arthur McManus, born in Scotland of Irish parents, is an engineer. In March, 1916, when he was editor of the Glasgow Socialist, the organ of the Socialist Labor Party, he was arrested with others and deported to Edinburgh. At that time he was in touch with Syndicalist agitators at Woolwich, Liverpool, and on the Tyne. He was an active member of the Clyde Workers' Committee and one of the foremost opponents of the official union leaders. Early in July he went to London to a trade union meeting, and was active in Labor propaganda. On May 17, 1917, he was arrested in connection with the May strikes and he appeared at Bow street, but the charge was withdrawn. He was the proposer of the "Immediate Armistice" resolution at Sir Auckland Geddes's meeting at Glasgow on January 28, 1917. He is a fluent speaker. At one time he was in touch with the Industrial Workers of the World.

John W. Muir, born in Glasgow of Highland stock,

is a member of the Independent Labor Party and editor of *The Worker*, a revolutionary paper. In April, 1916, he was convicted of inciting the workers on the Clyde (ship-yard district) to strike, and sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment. He was released in February, 1917, and a smoking concert was held to welcome him and William Gallagher back to Glasgow. He is a member of the Electrical Trades Union. His panacea for all discontent of the workers is the "Lightning Strike." He is believed to have gone to London to take part in the strike of the electrical engineers.

Councillor Emanuel Shinwell, born in Scotland, his father a Russian Jew and his mother an Irish woman born in Dublin, is a member of the Independent Labor Party. He was one of the leaders of the Glasgow strike and is secretary of the British Seafarers' Union a society opposed to the Sailors' and Firemen's Union. In December, 1915, he was charged at the Police Court on account of statements made at a Socialist meeting to protest against conscription. Early in 1917 he was addressing meetings on Glasgow Green, and in September of the same year he was convicted for a speech made at a labor demonstration there. At a meeting of the Clyde Workers' Committee in that month his name was put forward for the position of Scottish delegate to the Soldiers' and Workers' Council, but it was afterwards withdrawn. He spoke at the revolutionary demonstration of the Glasgow Socialists to hail the German Revolution on November 17, 1918. On January 29 last, he said that as soon as they had put the city in darkness the committee would take control of all foodstuffs, so that the workers might be assured of their food.

Cecil Herbert Stavenhagen, born in England of Dutch parents, is a member of the Independent Labor Party. He is secretary of the West London branch of the Electrical Trades Union, and is on the Executive Committee of the Union. He held strong views against the war, and is an advanced Socialist. He is the author of a pamphlet, *Labour's Final Weapon*. He presided at meetings of the E. T. U. on December 13, 1917, and January 3, 1918. He advocated a strike on the question of the 12½ per cent. award. At the latter meeting, on the discussion of man power, a resolution was carried pledging the London E. T. U. to strike in sympathy with the Clyde. He has always been in favor of "direct action" by the men as opposed to the machinery of the Trade Unions.