

Clear the Decks!

III

THE moderates in the Socialist Party, while desperately using terror and expulsion to crush the Left Wing, as desperately refuse to discuss the fundamental theoretical implications of the tactical controversy. In this refusal, they tacitly admit defeat. They cannot afford, considering the party temper, to oppose the implications of their petty bourgeois reform policy to the revolutionary implications of our Communist proletarian policy.

Accordingly, the moderates indulge in sneers and operation. In his article in the New York *Call* of May 21, "The Socialist Task and Outlook," which has become the "life saver" of the moderates, Morris Hillquit says:

The "Left Wing" movement as I see it, is a purely emotional reflex of the situation in Russia. . . . The "Left Wing" movement in a sort of burlesque on the Russian revolution.

This answers no argument and solves no problem—which is characteristic of the opportunist policy. We plead guilty to an emotional response to the Russian Revolution; we acted, to the extent of our power, in solidarity with our revolutionary comrades in Russia: which is more than can be said of Hillquit & Co., who were deliberately, coldly, traitorously silent, until the upsurging temper of the Party compelled them to become "me too" acclaimers of the Russian Revolution. But our response is equally a response of the mind, of theory. . . .

The New York *Call*, having heard the voice of its master, develops the argument of "initiation" in its issue of June 5:

A striking thing about the pretended "Left Wing" organization within the Socialist Party is the effort to duplicate every phase of the experience of the Russian Socialists. . . .

Socialists have always held that the workers of each country must work out their own policies and that these policies will vary according to the nature of the economic, social and political conditions of each country. Lessons can be learned from other countries, to be sure, but policies cannot be copied everywhere.

This appears formidable, but in reality is cheap.

The heart and soul of the Left Wing policy, and of Bolshevism, are mass action and proletarian dictatorship.

Proletarian dictatorship was first formulated by Marx. In this, the Left Wing "imitates" Marx, and not the Russian Revolution.

The tactic of mass action, as a revolt against petty bourgeois parliamentarism and the answer of militant Socialism to the concentrated industry of imperialistic Capitalism, was developed prior to the conquest of power by the revolutionary proletariat in Russia.

The Russian Revolution has made reality of the theory of proletarian dictatorship and mass action, while revealing the general forms for the realization of the theory in practice,—and of Socialism. The Russian revolution is the final, unanswerable argument against petty bourgeois parliamentary Socialism, in favor of proletarian revolutionary Socialism.

Imitation? The Communist International calls for an acceptance of the Left Wing—of that revolutionary Socialism which is conquering power for the proletariat. Or shall the party cling to the Socialism of the Ebert-Scheidemann Social Democracy? . . .

Our task is not the immediate seizure of power: revolutions come, they are not manufactured; our task is to reorganize the Party so that it shall become a revolutionary factor in the immediate struggles of the militant proletariat, and prepare for the final revolutionary struggle that is coming.

The accusation of "imitation" recoils upon its makers. These moderates imitated the policy and practice of the German Social-Democracy, apishly and disastrously. They never tried to develop tactics in accord with American conditions,—except in the matter of playing cheap politics.

The American proletarian movement has made a real contribution to international Socialism,—the theory and practice of revolutionary industrial unionism. In accord with the giant character of industrial concentration in the United States, industrial unionism proposed to organize the workers in concentrated industrial divisions, in the integrally constructed industrial unions. In this industrial unionism, moreover, there was implicit, if not fully formulated, the theory and the practice of mass action and proletarian dictatorship. But the Socialist Party, under the control of the moderates, consistently and persistently sabotaged industrial unionism in favor of the reformist parliamentary policy of the German Social-Democracy. Who are the imitators? . . .

The Left Wing in the Socialist Party is not a product of today only. It has its past, as well as its future. The Left Wing has always existed in the Party, unified largely around the question of industrial unionism.

Conditions vary, and the application of theory and practice varies in immediate expression. But the tendency is fundamental. The tendency of proletarian

dictatorship and mass action,—it is upon that that Socialism must build its immediate policy. An actual revolution is not necessary in order to build our movement upon the basis of mass action and proletarian dictatorship, since mass action and proletarian dictatorship have their immediate as well as ultimate implications.

The acceptance of the Left Wing program implies a reconstruction of the immediate tactics and policy of the Party. We shall not wait for the revolution: we shall engage actively and aggressively in the immediate mass struggle of the proletariat, out of which will emerge the dynamic force and consciousness for the realization of proletarian dictatorship, of Socialism.

Moderate, petty bourgeois "Socialism" in the Party evades all actual problems of Socialism and the Revolution. While it prates childishly of a revolutionary crisis not being imminent, an actual crisis is upon us, and the moderates are helpless, hopeless, incompetent. They reject, not only the Revolution, but the revolutionary struggle: they repudiate the Communist International; they cling to the old tactics and the old reformism; they castrate Marxism and abandon revolutionary Socialism.

Clear the decks! Let us clear them now!

The slogan of the moderates is: Split the Party for petty bourgeois Socialism, for the abandonment of the immediate revolutionary struggle!

The slogan of the Left Wing is: Conquer the Party for revolutionary Socialism, for the immediate and ultimate revolutionary struggle against Capitalism!

The California Convention

By Alanson Sessions

THE California State Convention of the Socialist Party, held on May 30th, 31st and June 1st at San Francisco, resulted in a more or less definite decision to affiliate with the Left Wing movement of the American Socialist Party. The greater part of Sunday, June 1st, was spent in a discussion of the practicability of the Left Wing Program. It is unfortunate that a clear-cut decision was not taken before the adjournment of the convention. While Left Wing sentiment seemed to be dominant, a vote on the subject was either adroitly avoided by the machinations of the Right or overlooked by the Left.

The first two days of the convention were occupied in the discussion of methods of organization and propaganda and of the nature and future of the Socialist press. But from the outset it was clear to all that such discussion was futile until the momentous question of basic party policy was determined. The subject of organization and propaganda must be confused and incoherent if the party does not know precisely where it stands with relation to the Left Wing. It was to be expected, therefore, that the first two days of the convention would be wasted in tiresome verbosity.

The third day proved that the majority of the membership is Left Wing by sentiment, if not by intellectual conviction. Most of the delegates felt that there is a dire need for a radical alteration in tactics, but few of them had done any serious and consecutive thinking on the subject. Taylor, state secretary, and Dolsen, one of the most prominent of the party organizers, are both Left Wing. Others like Lillian B. Symes and Cameron King, recognized as big figures in the California movement, were emphatically Right Wing in their attitude. King especially, bitterly attacked the Left Wing Program and denounced "frenzied Fraim" as a phrase-monger and a vulgar disrupter.

King based his argument principally on the fact that a revolution in the United States is not likely for many years to come. This being the case, he contended, it was idle to agitate for a dictatorship of the proletariat and an application of Russian tactics to American conditions. The leader of the Left Wing, Comrade Coleman, in answer to King, argued that the possibility of an immediate overturn in this country was something quite beside the point—that the Left Wing wished only to make the party strictly revolutionary in its aims and tactics and to prepare thoroughly for the revolution when it comes.

There is little doubt that the referendum vote on the Left Wing and Right Wing issue will result in favor of the former. The leaders of the Left, however, recognize the fact that many of their supporters are not well-grounded, and they are carrying on a strenuous campaign of education among their ranks.

It is interesting to note although the Left Wingers have been denounced by the Right Wingers as hysterical, etc., at the California convention the exponents of the Left Wing were far more scholarly and unhygienic than their opponents. Cameron King, for instance, did not hesitate to resort to epithets and personal denunciation in his speeches, while Coleman's talk was a dispassionate, impersonal analysis of the situation.

This convention is a preliminary convention to a larger and more representative one which will be called in the near future.

Dictatorship and Minority

THE petty bourgeois characteristics of moderate Socialism are clearly apparent when they try to discuss the problems of revolutionary Socialism. Then they indulge, with pseudo-Marxian trimmings, of course, in all the stupid arguments of the *petite bourgeoisie*.

Consider proletarian dictatorship. The petty bourgeois apologists of Capitalism stigmatize it as "dictatorship of the minority," as a violation of the rights of the "majority." Now comes the New York *Call*, in its issue of June 8, and stigmatizes the Left Wing conception of proletarian dictatorship as having "all the characteristics of the doctrine of the 'militant minority' as it was worked out by the French Syndicalists!"

The *Call* says that the Left Wing "attempt to establish a dictatorship within the Socialist Party is a resurrection of the 'militant minority.'" Is it? The Left Wing has used agitation to convert the party membership to its policy. It has urged an Emergency National Party Convention to discuss problems of policy and tactics. It has used the referendum of the Party to "get across" its policy to the membership. In the measure that certain groups have taken the initiative in this agitation you have a "militant minority" but not in the petty bourgeois sense used by the *Call*, since our purpose has been to convert the mass of the members in the party.

But the moderates are using the tactics of the militant minority. A small minority, the National Executive Committee, sabotaged the call for an emergency convention; a minority, the bureaucracy of Local New York and the State Executive Committee, expelled the Left Wing locals and comrades. A small minority, the N. E. C. expels and suspends 40,000 members of the Party and refuses to recognize the will of the masses of the Party as expressed in the referendum to elect a new N. E. C., international delegates and international secretary.

This is the "militant minority" in action, become a murdering minority of the Party. . . .

The revolutionary Socialist concepts of mass action and proletarian dictatorship are not derivatives of Anarcho-Syndicalism, but of Marxism. Anarcho-Syndicalism is petty bourgeois, as is parliamentary Socialism against which it revolts, and counter-revolutionary. In theory and in practice (as proven by events in Russia) *Anarcho-Syndicalism is not compatible with proletarian dictatorship*. Proletarian dictatorship implies the conquest of the political power of the state and the construction of a transition "proletarian state" on the basis of which to introduce Socialism; two concepts repudiated by Anarcho-Syndicalism.

Is the theoretical scholar of the *Call* ignorant, or is he a sophist? . . .

This scholar insists that "the Russian revolutionists in the second revolution were cautious enough to wait until they were sure that they represented the feelings and desires of a minority," and implies that the Left Wing of the Socialist Party is acting to the contrary. This is conscious subterfuge. Prior to the second Revolution the Bolsheviks were a militant minority urging mass action and proletarian dictatorship upon the masses.—revolutionary agitation for a revolutionary mass policy. That is precisely our task—agitation. We must revolutionize the Party, convert it into a "militant minority" (or in Marxian terms, "the most advanced and resolute section of the working class") in order to carry on a revolutionary agitation to develop a revolutionary mass policy of the proletariat.

Mass action and proletarian dictatorship exclude the Blanquist tactics of the "militant minority" in the Anarcho-Syndicalist sense.

Revolutionary Socialism builds upon the mass-power of the proletariat. Moderate Socialism "builds" upon the bourgeois state, upon votes, upon bourgeois liberal public opinion. Petty bourgeois Socialism makes the introduction of Socialism the task of a "minority" of parliamentarians; revolutionary Socialism makes it the task of dynamic mass struggles of the proletariat,—the conquest of power by the masses.

Socialism cannot conquer without the masses. But, equally, there is no Socialism without the mass struggle of the proletariat,—and this mass struggle is repudiated by the moderates.

Proletarian dictatorship implies a recognition of the mass character of the struggles of the working class,—of mass action. It accepts parliamentary political action in order to arouse the masses, but rejects the idea of using the bourgeois state to introduce Socialism. Proletarian dictatorship is the unifying concept of revolutionary Socialism.

The Socialist Party must rally the masses for the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism. In order to accomplish this, it must reject its petty bourgeois policy, revolutionize itself, develop a consistent and aggressive policy. That is the task of the Left Wing: Conquer the Party for revolutionary Socialism and then rally the masses for the struggle against Capitalism,—the means being mass action and proletarian dictatorship, in their immediate and ultimate implications.