

The N. E. C. Declaration of Party Principles

THE session of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party which tried to split the Party, adopted a declaration which opens:

In order to dispel all possible misunderstanding, which recent insidious agitation within our ranks is endeavoring to create between the party membership and its National Executive Committee, the latter takes this occasion to summarize briefly its views of the party's attitude on the main questions which at this time engage the attention of the Socialist movement at home and abroad.

In these hypocritical terms, Morris Hillquit (who submitted the draft of the declaration), offers his insight into "the party's attitude." He knows and every one knows that what follows is his own jugglery with the crucial issues upon which the party membership has been officially denied the chance to express its attitude. The N. E. C. policy of evasion and suppression has been finally ferreted out by the Left Wing victory—and the repudiated N. E. C., under Hillquit's dictation, now tells us "the party's attitude"!

Through all its collective expressions in recent years, and particularly by its declarations at the St. Louis Emergency Convention, the Socialist Party of the United States has aligned itself with the most advanced portion of the international Socialist movement, and the National Executive Committee has faithfully endeavored at all times to voice this position.

Here, then, is the thematic opening of the declaration of principles—or lack of principles. Behold the St. Louis platform, and what more can you ask? Let us make abrupt answer:

The St. Louis platform was adopted April 1917. It is now June 1919.

The N. E. C. never did the least thing to develop the implications of the St. Louis platform. Perhaps there was not much to be done; perhaps the cost would have been all out of proportion to the achievement. The situation was most difficult. But the party officialdom could have maintained a solemnly insistent silence.

The highest claim to be made by the N. E. C. is that out of the eight members in attendance at the August 1918 meeting, four prevailed upon four others not to insist upon a record vote on the anti-war stand,—these four who wanted to repudiate the declaration against the war being now four out of the seven who have expelled 40,000 revolutionary comrades from the party.

The platform of last Summer put the party on the basis of the Interallied Conference: pro-war on terms of the Wilson program; in favor of Socialist communication across the fighting lines if the German labor spokesmen would first admit defeat and guilt—all a pale imitation of approved jingo etiquette.

Hillquit and Stedman were leaders in the People's Council; in fact the whole People's Council business was semi-officially the affair of the Socialist Party. The People's Council policy was a policy of the worst petty bourgeois pacifism, urging a Wilsonian peace—exactly the same as Gompers' National Alliance. It wanted to reform the peace, just as it now wants to reform militarism generally.

An anti-war declaration was not of itself a declaration of revolutionary Socialism. Even the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Conferences, out of which came the voice of oppositional Socialism during the war, were analyzed at the recent Moscow Congress of the Communist International as made of confused elements. To be anti-war was not to be part of "the most advanced portion of the international Socialist movement." The Independent Labor Party, the French Minoritaires, the German Independents—these and other were boldly critical of their own Imperialism. They gave voice also to the war-weary revival of pacifism. The revolutionary Socialist position was the clear call to the class war against the imperialist war.

The vitality of the St. Louis platform consists, first, of its promulgation in April 1917, second, in staunch insistence upon its terms, in speech and action, by individual Socialists. The N. E. C. is conspicuously out of the reckoning in calculating the credit, the very high credit, which goes with the party stand on the war. Indeed, when its most conspicuous member came into the courtroom on this platform, he made a caricature of it and of the convention which adopted it.

Finally, as to this "most advanced" stand of the party, the Congressional platform issued by this same Committee last Summer, far from voicing an advanced Socialist position, is not a Socialist platform at all. Its "most advanced" sentences were lifted outright from Sidney Webb's British Labor Party Program—which has since exploded of its own gaseousness.

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1. The Socialist Party at all times consistently and uncompromisingly opposed the war. Now that the war is over, the party strenuously objects to the imperialistic features of the alleged peace treaty drawn up at Paris,

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and to the reactionary alliance of capitalist governments masquerading as a League of Nations. It demands the immediate repeal of all repressive war legislation, complete amnesty for all political prisoners, and restoration of full peace-time civil liberties.

Now isn't it clever to call the Paris treaty an "alleged" peace treaty? Very clever. We must be indignant. Socialists could not expect anything so wicked from Wilson-Lloyd George-Clemenceau-Orlando-Mikado democracy!

And the League of Nations! How shocking! "Demanded" in the platform written by this same N. E. C. last August—under camouflage of "Confederation of Peoples," with labor representation (Gompers as well anybody else, so far as appears from this "demand"). Of course last Summer it was not to be anticipated that these democratic plenipotentiaries would get together for any purpose except to destroy finance-Imperialism and militarism—and autocracy! So note now, our innocent surprise!

In this predicament, "imperialistic features of the alleged peace treaty," "reactionary alliance of capitalist governments"—we "demand"—what? Repeal the Espionage Law, free our prisoners! There you have the world statesmanship of Hillquit et al., self-appointed trustees of the American Socialist Party!

And we must not overlook the "restoration of full peace-time civil liberties." Class war? The N. E. C. never heard of it! We have a very nice Constitution; we have never had laws nor prosecutions against working-class propaganda; we have no flood of new laws against real Socialist agitation. It was all a war emergency, and now that the war is ended let our "liberties" be restored. What a joy to read the plain, honest sentences of the Manifesto of the Communist International, after the sickening diet of these Hillquitian sophistries, evasions, hypocrisies.

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2. It supports wholeheartedly the Soviet Republic of Russia and the Communist government of Hungary, and vigorously protests against intervention in those countries on the part of the government of the United States by military means.

Indeed, the party membership does respond wholeheartedly to the struggles and successes of our comrades of Russia and Hungary. The party does protest against intervention. But if we may presume to read "the party's attitude," in comparison with that of the N. E. C., it is that we shall make ourselves one with the fighting armies of the world Social-Revolution, in so far as we may; not merely that we shall voice an empty "support" and "protest". Yet there is virtue and great value in the clear statement of our attitude and relation to the fighting groups of Europe. And has the N. E. C., these past years, given voice to the party response to the world-sweeping proletarian revolution? The further clauses of this statement are all the citations needed.

But first, Committeeman Krafft demanded that he be recorded as voting against clause 2! His government had the power to make war, and after his government acted there was nothing left for him but acquiescence—and he did not intend to trap himself into jail by protesting the Russian intervention!

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3. In Germany, Austria and countries similarly situated, its sympathies are with more advanced Socialist groups in their efforts to force their governments into a more radical and immediate realization of the Socialist program.

"The more advanced Socialist groups"—what a clumsy, paltry dodging of the issue. But the side-stepping results in a tumble; it is a sympathy with Socialist groups who want to force "their governments" into a more immediate realization of the Socialist program. In plain terms, the N. E. C. stands with the Socialists of Europe who stand with their capitalist governments, trusting, however, that these governments will be so radical as to introduce some government ownership of natural monopolies and some pensions. The N. E. C. has not yet heard of the Socialist groups which insist that "the realization of the Socialist program" means, in the first instance, the conquest of power by the proletariat.

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The next clause, the most important, shows how completely unprincipled is this statement of principles.

4. It recognizes the necessity of reorganizing the Socialist International along more harmonious and radical lines. The Socialist Party of United States is not committed to the Berne Conference, which has shown itself retrograde on many vital points and totally devoid of creative force. On account of the isolation of Russia, and the misunderstanding arising therefrom, it also is not affiliated with the Communist Congress of Moscow. The National Executive Committee believes that the international of the future must consist of organiz-

ations that are committed against imperialist wars. It should be the aim of the Socialist Party of America to stimulate and hasten the reunion of all radical and vital forces of Socialism and labor in all countries.

Behold the American International to which all must aspire—and to which all who are radical, may come! We had suspected that the Communist International represented the "most advanced" position of the international Socialist movement. But we have been in error. It is the American International which is most advanced, and our Bolshevik comrades have simply misunderstood! The "isolation" explanation was a Shiplacoff amendment to the Hillquit version. An isolation which has not precluded us from knowing exactly the program and purposes of the Communist International—and which has not precluded the Bolsheviks from discriminating between the official American Party and "the elements of the Left Wing of the American Socialist Party."

As to the Berne Conference, the N. E. C., upon an emergency justification, itself selected three delegates to represent the party. There was protest against this action at the time. But it is unnecessary now to realize minutely the situation of last January. The delegates were refused passports. Later O'Neal went abroad as special representative to the Bureau of the Second International, to secure information—and with dues in his pocket for the Second International! Long before O'Neal started for Europe, the repudiation of the resurrected Second International at Berne by the parties of Italy, Switzerland, Serbia, Rumania, Norway, Denmark and the Left Wing Socialists of Sweden was known. The issue was already clearly and sharply defined as a choice between the two internationals—between the International of social-patriotism and social reform and the International of social revolution. Not until May 29th, 1919, the day of the discussion of this "clause 4" at Chicago, did the N. E. C. interpret its own action as not committing the American party to the Berne Conference.

Very well. On May 29th we have the assurance that we are not committed to the Berne Conference, the infamy of which compels our opportunists to hedge against their own previous indecision. Does the N. E. C. then go on to draw the implication against further association with the Second International, and definite commitment of the party to the Third International? Not at all. We must have unity—unity between the Socialism which seeks to reform capitalism, in multifarious aspects, and the Socialism now in the midst of the world struggle for the overthrow of imperialistic Capitalism!

Note also O'Neal's contribution to this maze of wordy nothingness. "The International of the future must consist of organizations that are committed against imperialistic wars." A most awkward attempt, again, to capitalize the St. Louis platform as an eternal claim to "most advanced" Socialism. As if any Socialist party, at any time would recognize its support of war as "imperialistic." The German Social-Democracy supported the Hohenzollern regime against the Russian barbarism; and the American pro-war Socialists supported the Wilsonian hypocrisy in behalf of Russian freedom. And so on. The war stand is but one test of Socialist internationalism, and a mighty crucial one at that. But the reversion to nationalism in 1914, as evidenced by Socialist support of the various nationalistic war claims, was not really a reversion; it was only the tearing away of a veil of phrases from the true character of the Socialism of the Second International. The Socialist International exists no longer as an occasional talkfest of clever parliamentarians, calling themselves representatives of the proletariat. The Socialist International lives today as a fighting army. Outside the Communist International there are only different aspects of "Socialist" servitude to imperialist democracy.

Consider this anti-war test of Socialist purity as the pronouncement of Krafft, Goebel, Hogan and Holt! How these Socialist "internationalists" winced under the castigation of "social patriots," which was finally eliminated from the document! What hypocrisy, what pretense!

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5. In the field of domestic policies the Socialist Party is utterly opposed to the narrow spirit and policies of the American Federation of Labor as voiced by its reactionary leadership. It wages no war on the rank and file of the Federation, and will loyally support its active struggle against the employing class as heretofore, but the party will omit no opportunity to point out to the workers of the A. F. of L. the inadequacy of the latter's policies and leadership.

This statement was carefully combed for any word or phrase that might appear offensive to the A. F. of L. It condemns Gompers and Morrison, and a few others, and coquettes with the A. F. of L. in the same ridiculous fashion as during the past two decades.

The Hillquit draft carried no suggestion of the fundamental discrepancies of craft unionism in antagonism

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