

The Left Wing and the Socialist Party

AT this moment two campaigns are being carried on within the American Socialist Party. One is a campaign to defeat the transformation of the party into an organ of revolutionary Socialism. The other is an intensive campaign of Socialist education, the greatest campaign of Socialist education ever carried on in the United States.

The official control of the Socialist Party, now centered in the repudiated National Executive Committee and in some of the local executive bodies, is being used to thwart the demand of the overwhelming majority of the membership that the Socialist Party shall cease to play capitalistic politics with the revolutionary aspirations of the proletariat.

The Left Wing movement within the party has been in actual terms a campaign of education. The Left Wing has brought to the members of the party not only the most faithful record of the historic achievements of the revolutionary proletariat in all countries, but also an analysis of the changing character of world Socialism in relation to these achievements. And, in turn, the awakened impulses and understanding on the part of the rank and file of the membership accounts for the present insistent demand that the American Party shall at once transform itself, in spirit and methods, in harmony with the Socialism now carried by the current of history into the forefront of the world social drama.

Socialists everywhere—Socialists who really think and feel in true proletarian consciousness—have been moved to the depths of their being by the tremendous events since August 4th, 1914. They realize that the historic changes of these five years cannot be without meaning to the proletariat of America. They realize that American Socialism can no longer remain the confused, listless, anaemic expression of radical democratism which it was in the years preceding the world war of finance-imperialism. It must become a proletarian expression in terms of the class struggle.

To those who have not yet grasped the full significance of this new assertion within the party, who have not yet visualized the real challenge of life which must weakly express itself in phrases and who yet suspect that there is an element of artificial stimulation in this process of party change,—to these comrades particularly we call attention to the quiet progress of revolutionary transformation within the party which has been going on since the adoption of the St. Louis platform in April, 1917. For the year 1916, the state of Oklahoma had an average membership of 9,369, surpassed only by the state of New York, with an average for the year of 9,774. Next came Illinois, with 6,600, and only Pennsylvania and Massachusetts also stood above the 5,000 mark. For 1918 the Oklahoma average was under 2,000, with New York at 12,642 and Illinois, 8,098. Ohio was added to the list of states with over 5,000. The big gains for the first part of 1919 are in New York, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan and Massachusetts. From 1916 to 1918, 13 Western and South-Western agrarian states lost approximately 14,000 members.

It is at once apparent that there has been a transfusion of blood within the Socialist Party during the past two years. The losses have been rural, petty bourgeois, losses in favor of the Nonpartisan League. The gains have been proletarian, cosmopolitan, international.

In other words, the stress and strain of war, revolution and prosecutions—prosecutions

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which recognize our revolutionary class policy in spite of the party's bourgeois reformist platforms—the life experience of world and American Socialism has already changed the face of the party notwithstanding the stubborn refusal to record this change in the party proclamations and action.

The American party, formerly a Socialist organization of farmers, shop-keepers, professionals, etc., with its working class membership largely of the petty bourgeois craftsman type, has now become predominantly an organization of the industrial proletariat, massed in the large industrial centers. This is the fundamental explanation of the easy conquest of the party for revolutionary Socialism. It is the Left Wing which speaks the real proletarian aspirations.

Recently the party officials, still mouthing the phrases of Socialist internationalism, have been insistent upon an American Socialist Party which is American in membership and American in its program and methods. In this they manifest their utter blindness to the truths of Socialism and of the social conditions about which they speak. In what country have not the active Socialists been branded as "foreigners"? In what country have not the "agitators" been advertised as "aliens"? What a depth of reactionism is revealed by this "Socialist" aping of the blood-suckers who heap fulsome flattery upon the immigrants while in meek servitude, only to curse, harass, and kill them when there is an assertion of class action!

Think of Americanizing an international party by eliminating Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Letts, Yugoslavs, and Hungarians, meanwhile keeping within the fold Germans, Scandinavians, Jews, Finns, Italians, Greeks, etc. Nothing could reveal more clearly the unprincipled, hypocritical, inherently reactionary character of the official Socialism challenged by the Left Wing.

The industrial proletariat, in the United States, is predominantly of foreign birth. Of the native elements, the largest groups are the negroes, more alien than any of the aliens. But even this is beside the point, for the struggle against Capitalism is not a national but a world struggle, and when is this more apparent than in the present phase of open alliance of the capitalist forces in the League of Nations for the object of checking the on-sweeping social revolution? Even American Imperialism was quick to accept its mutuality of obligations in laying siege to Soviet Russia, though the American economic interests in Russia are relatively of small account.

It is only the corruption and decadence of the opportunistic Socialist parties which makes understandable how the true internationalism of the early Communists and of the First International became the lip-internationalism of the Second International. The betrayal of the class-conscious proletarians of the United States by their party officials in making a

MASS MEETING

Manhattan Lyceum, 66 East 4th Street

Monday, July 7, at 8 p. m.

New York delegates to Left Wing Convention will report. All comrades invited.

Admission by Party Card only.

jugglery of phrases out of the whole conception of Socialist internationalism—in the midst of a world-wide proletarian responsiveness to the Russian challenge in the world struggle—is a betrayal of the same calibre as that of the worst Socialist reactionism of Germany, France, and England. It lacks only the setting of a crisis of action to give it the tragic consequences of the Scheidemann-Ebert-Kautsky treason to the Social Revolution.

Consistently with its innate character, moderate Socialism plays the role of working class betrayal, when the proletariat becomes aggressive in its revolutionary expressions. In the United States, not yet having come to the stage of open imperialist servitude, because its aid is as yet spurned, moderate Socialism is already rushing in uninvited to play the role of *agent provocateur* against the rising proletariat. From its vantage point of working class representation it intensifies and fortifies the prejudices against Bolshevism and the I. W. W. by purging itself of all such contamination, meanwhile offering resolutions of sympathy and donations in pietistic affirmation of its working class character.

In like manner moderate Socialism now plays its dastardly role of proletarian betrayal in its attacks on the Left Wing movement within the party. The criminally reactionary party moderates, not content with the party channels of vituperation, carry into the capitalist press assertions and innuendoes to urge and abet the capitalist repression of revolutionary working class education and organization. And, in the midst of its own despicable treacheries, moderate Socialism sanctimoniously cautions against the advocates of proletarian Socialism as "paid spies" within our ranks!

As if the Left Wing movement were anything more strange than the coming to life of Socialism within the American Socialist Party!

The Left Wing is the instinctive proletarian response to the Social Revolution and bankruptcy of the Socialism of the Second International. The attempted resurrection of the Second International, at the February Berne Conference, was a ghastly exhibition of the perversion of Socialism to the purposes of imperialist Capitalism. The statement of "principles" issued by the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party in June is made up of a series of hypocritical evasions, epitomized in a scoring of the Berne Conference coupled with a refusal to repudiate the Second International and align the party with the Communist International. Opportunism never reached a lower level than in the theorizing and performances of this Committee. Avoidance of clear statement on fundamental issues was never more unworthy the party mission than in this time of heroic accomplishments and gigantic efforts by our revolutionary comrades in many countries.

Out of this Left Wing conquest of the party comes an American Socialism of the temper and power of the militant proletariat; a Socialism which speaks only in the unequivocal understanding of the revolutionary class struggle; a Socialism which seeks its formulas of action in the immediate mass response to imperialistic oppression; a Socialism which can truly hope to gather under its banner the aggressive elements of the American working class; a Socialism which must soon become a formidable factor in the great social struggle; a Socialism of revolutionary inspiration and promise.