

The Left Wing Answers

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only a constant swelling of the ranks of unskilled, transit labor, in correspondence with the progress of the machine process and the spasmodic character of the market demands.

Capitalist mastery tends rapidly to a stage of military feudalism, turned to ruthless labor suppression and regimentation of the entire national life on the basis of a universalized militarism. The labor revolt rapidly acquires consciousness of the desperate nature of the combat, and of the futility of all processes except its own mass defiance.

The Socialism which proceeds in consciousness of this process—the Socialism of the living class struggle, not of the illusory game of capitalist parliamentarism, a play of words while the real decisions are made in the Star Chambers of finance,—this Socialism must be supremely aware of its own function in relation to this cataclysmic social conflict. The correct statement of the proletarian policy and tactics in relation to this crisis, whether abrupt or prolonged (which depends on the development of revolutionary class consciousness) is the immediate obligation of the Socialist movement. The mass expressions evolving out of the Socialist organization itself should take on the essential character of the general mass assertion upon which the revolution itself depends.

In other words, the school of revolutionary understanding and revolutionary activity cannot await the morning of the social revolution, else the proletarian mass protest against imperialistic exploitation will yield only blood.

Objection: The Left Wing wants to substitute violence for political action.

Answer: Violence, in the labor movement, arises either by capitalistic provocation or by individual act unrelated to the organization propaganda or tactics. In the United States, today, we find the illustration of brazen capitalistic efforts to incite desperate workingmen to acts of violence, by fake examples and by constant suggestion of acts of individual violence as part of the program of the revolutionary movement. We find also the wholesale organization of violence as the answer to proletarian propaganda, with its compulsion of quitting or resistance on the part of the workers.

The Left Wing wants to make the political action of the Socialist Party of the character of revolutionary Socialism. That is, the platforms of the party and the role of its members in public office must be part and parcel of the entire propaganda of the party; all in the direct line of the revolutionary class struggle.

Our conception of political action must not be based on the rules and models of bourgeois politics, but must be in adaptation to the proletarian conditions of mass functioning. That is, the proletariat develops modes of power peculiar to its own circumstances, as its power to check the industrial processes by means of strikes, or its power to check military adventures by non-refusal of service. Whatever the method of expressing the proletarian mass power, everything comes within the terms of political action just so soon as it is turned to a political object, that is, the object of winning the state power, or of coercing the state power in relation to a particular policy.

The Reformists conceive of political action in terms of a modification of the political and economic regime of Capitalism. The Left Wing, on the other hand, regards political

action from the angle of array of the revolutionary proletariat outside the capitalist state to coerce its actions, and, in final terms, to capture the state power in its entirety.

This difference is crucial. If the objection is that the Left Wing is not seriously concerned with the system of capitalist politics as a system, ranging in detail from the most aristocratic conservatism to the most radical Laborism, that is correct. Within this play of capitalist politics, there is little of consequence to the development of the Socialist movement. It is the outside array which is of consequence, against proletarian mass power. It is the item of proletarian consciousness which throws the balance one way or the other. That consciousness can be affected by the use of the capitalist political machinery, and it is upon this basis that the Socialist Party enters into the regular political campaign, through it visualizes the real conflict as outside the parliamentary and administrative circles.

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Objection: The Left Wing offers no constructive plan.

Answer: Making a catalogue of occupational and administrative reforms, as in our American Socialist Party platforms, is certainly no constructive program of Socialism. It is constructive of nothing, unless it be a more

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that it frees the energy, while it co-ordinates the forces, of the proletariat, compels the proletariat to act uncompromisingly and reject the "rights" of any other class; and action destroys hesitancy and a paltering with the revolutionary task.

The great war has objectively brought Europe to the verge of revolt. Capitalist society at any moment may be thrust into the air by an upheaval of the proletariat,—as in Russia. Whence will the impulse for the revolutionary struggle come? Surely not from the moderate Socialism and unionism, which are united solidly in favor of an imperialistic war; surely not from futile parliamentary rhetoric, even should it be revolutionary rhetoric. The impulse will come out of the mass action of the proletariat. And it is this mass action alone that can sweep aside the hesitancy and the risks, that can topple over the repressions and power of the bourgeois state. Mass action is the dynamic impulse of the revolutionary proletarian struggle, whatever the specific form it may assume; in the actual revolutionary period, mass action unites all forms of struggle in one sweeping action against Capitalism, each contributing its share as integral phases of the general mass action,—as in the proletarian revolution in Russia. In a crisis, the state rigidly controls all the available forces of normal action; parliaments become impotent, and a "state of siege" prevails that can be broken through only by revolutionary mass action,—equally during war and in any revolutionary situation.

Mass action is dynamic, pliable, creative; the proletariat through mass action instinctively adapts itself to the means and the tactics necessary in a prevailing situation. The forms of activity of the proletariat are not limited and stultified by mass action, they are broadened, deepened and co-ordinated. Mass action is equally a process of revolution and the Revolution itself in operation.

efficient Capitalism, a better-ordered slavery of the wage-worker.

The only "constructive" element of such platforms is that they may induce a few persons to vote for the Socialist candidates who are not in opposition to Capitalism as a system. They give the appearance of a "practical" program—because they contain features which appeal as reasonable within the terms of Capitalism. In so far as they are "practical," the enlightened capitalists assure their enforcement. This is part of the general social progress, not in any way the particular mission of the Socialists. On the contrary, it is a perversion of the Socialist movement to let it fall into the mesh of advocacy of capitalist reforms, most of which have a reverse effect against the fundamental interests of the working class.

The constructive work of the Socialist Party is to develop the proletarian consciousness upon which depends the overthrow of Capitalism; to develop the organization and tactical basis for expression of this consciousness, and to formulate the general program for the proletarian manoeuvres both in winning power and in using this power to make the basic economic changes upon which the Socialist order of society depends.

The Left Wing denies that there is any "constructive" policy of Socialism within the formulas of capitalist management. The Left Wing declares that the first constructive step is the establishment of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Only after this step can there be proletarian democracy and socialization of industry.

The thing to construct today, in the United States, is an accurate understanding and consciousness on the part of the militant proletarians of the character of the struggle in which they are engaged and of their organization requirements in relation to this struggle. An accurate understanding of the class struggle of itself indicates the general character of the Socialist transformation by which private-property exploitation is to be ended.

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Objection: The Left Wingers are mostly "November Bolsheviks." They are emotionally carried away by the Russian Revolution.

Answer: Yes, many of the Left Wingers are "November Bolsheviks." None the worse, if they are Bolsheviks.

There has never been such a lesson in Socialism as that of the Russian Revolution, a lesson made universal by the experience of Germany in November 1918 and afterwards.

It is a lesson that is being intensified every day and in all countries. It is neither transient nor unique. Even the Opportunists are willing to admit its appropriateness for practically every country—except their own! And this is true of the Opportunists in each country! (Even in Russia!)

Naturally the new life of the Socialist movement comes as a direct response to the immediate revolutionary inspiration. This response must be given increasing consciousness and effective organization character.

Assuredly there is a large element of emotionalism in the response to the Russian Revolution, and emotionalism which is not harnessed to understanding is apt to prove effervescent. But such emotionalism is the very life of our movement. It must be tempered and tested. But without it we would be not a movement of flesh and blood, but a sectarian creed of abstract dogma.