

medium of such, effective, social legislation is not the capitalistically legal representative sitting in the capitalist congress. There are today in the United States thousands of mine and other dangerous occupations laws not at all enforced—though “socially legislated” The only relief laws carried out are those for the enforcement of which the proletariat has used industrial might or stands ready to use industrial might. Really, these laws might just as well never have been legislated into existence.

To say that there is Socialism in the horde of factory acts is as stupid as to say that there is Socialism in the cleaning of streets and lighting of street lamps. Both are indispensable to Capitalism. Both are inevitable. To condemn or commend either is futile. Capitalism can and will take care of these itself. For a revolutionary movement to invest its energy in these is supreme asininity.

Again, there is a large class of so-called social reforms “which aim at saving and cheapening the means of living for the workers.” Should these become universal they are followed by a corresponding reduction of wages. In considering these, it must be remembered that “every narrowing of the cost of production of labor power; i. e., every permanent reduction of price of the necessities of life for the worker brings about a reduction of the value of labor power at once, and is followed, consequently by a corresponding fall in the wages of labor.”

Under Capitalism the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labor power socially necessary to produce and reproduce it. In capitalist society labor power (the workingman in the wage market) is a commodity. His value is determined by what it costs to produce and reproduce him. In common parlance the tendency under Capitalism is for the worker to get about enough to live on and reproduce. On the whole, the worker gets in wages what it costs him to live and reproduce. Of course, strikes influence this status of the worker. But generally, strikes are rather defensive measures. In the main, strikes are waged by the workers not because they want more than enough to get along on but because they object to being paid less than enough to get along on. The mass of workers strike to insure pay and conditions guaranteeing this necessary quantity.

“To demand the suppression of poverty without demanding the overthrow of all the rest” is ridiculous. It is most asinine to demand of Capitalism that it change the law which is its very self-defense. Why should a Socialist movement plunge into absurdities by demanding that the bourgeois State shall cease to be the buckler and defense of capitalist society and of this law? Moderate, utopian, Socialism is built on the assumption that capitalist society “admits of certain errata without revolution, that is to say, without a fundamental change in the elementary structure of society itself.” This is nothing more than a piece of ingenuity! These “benefits” bestowed on labor by the capitalist State are not steps to Socialism. On the contrary, the capitalist class employs them as means of side-stepping Socialism. To maintain that a bit of social legislation here and there is a means of gradually bringing in Socialism and pushing out Capitalism is about as silly as the frog’s belief that because it can jump to a height of six inches it can, therefore, in four jumps reach a height of two feet.

Moderate Socialists and other social reformers are particularly emphatic in making their concern for the immediate improvement of the workers’ conditions. Because of this

supposed great concern on their part they invest their energy and hope in social reforms. How foolishly adventurous! The Left Wing is infinitely more concerned with the welfare of the proletariat at all times than the moderates are. That is why the Left Wing is a revolutionary organization. Because the Left Wing is ever anxious to promote the proletarian’s class interests it adopts revolutionary demands and unequivocally rejects reform demands.

Why becloud the issue? By having revolutionary demands—demands which strike at the root of the issue—a working class movement has a far better chance of securing immediate improvement in the laborers’ conditions than by having reform demands. Suppose the 12,000 Bethlehem Steel workers want an eight-hour day and a 20 per cent increase in wages. How are the steel workers to proceed in order to insure success in this struggle for the immediate improvement of their conditions? Shall they beseech a national organizer of the A. F. of L. to go into conference with Schwab? Shall they “bargain collectively” and talk things over like good citizens of a free democracy? Shall they perhaps appeal to their congressmen to have a committee chosen to investigate the merits, fairness, justice, and practicability of their case? Or shall they rather completely tie up Bethlehem Steel Works by a general strike? Shall they exert all their power to prevent scabbing? Shall they make an effort to call out workers from other industries in a sympathetic strike? The first mentioned are reform tactics. The latter are revolutionary tactics. The steel workers have a far better chance of success in their battle when they adopt revolutionary policies, than when they adopt compromise policies.

The easiest and most direct route to the immediate improvement of the proletariat’s conditions lies in revolutionary activity. The capitalist exploiters will not yield unless hard-pressed. And no proletarian pressure can be too terrific for this end. In short, whatever improvement can be had in the workers’ condition under Capitalism is to be gotten most by a movement which is revolutionary, clear in its aim, and class conscious. Truly, common-sense shouts for help when it is maintained that sycophantic, meek, reformist policies are efficient means of avoiding degradation and starvation of the proletariat. American industrial history gives eloquent proof of the truth of our contention as to the comparative efficacy of social reform and revolutionary activity in the immediate struggle.

One of the most important requisites for the success of a revolutionary party is a sound organization. A Socialist Party’s insistence on the so-called immediate demands or social reforms leads to perilous situations. This may lead, as it has led, to co-operation with non-Socialist groups, to a blurring of the supreme issue—the class struggle. But how long ago was it that the American Socialist Party co-operated with the People’s Council and sundry anti-preparedness committees? Does not the Socialist Party still co-operate with Tenants’ Leagues and radical “liberty-loving” people of all classes? Have not these reform tactics given the Socialist Party a leadership animated by a desire for personal aggrandizement? A “Socialist” Congressman was elected on such issues by “all the people” of his district, by his constituents, and *not* by the Socialists. And didn’t this “Socialist legislator” play safe when he violated party rules and principles? Could such a super-man ever be a national representative of a revolutionary party?

Furthermore, do not these reform tactics give us a leadership strongly characterized by its ignorance of Socialism? A perusal of the list of “socialist professors” hired by the Rand School of what is supposed to be Social Science affords more glaring proof of this. And truly, if the Party’s spokesmen are not to know what they are talking about, who is? Since when can the blind lead the blind?

Why confuse an issue the clarity of which is ever-imperative? Let us recall Hillquit’s (Socialist Party’s) last “splendid” Mayoralty campaign for cheap milk and a “general democratic peace.” The ghosts of the Malones and Panchots haunt the Party’s platforms. Recollections of Benson’s anti-preparedness campaign for mines, submarines, and referendums still linger in our memories! What unfathomable revolutionary fervor this moderate Socialist standard bearer did generate amongst the American proletariat by his aggressive fight for the “immediate solution” of the “problem” of militarism!

We have reached a stage in America where radical bourgeois parties can well promote these “immediate reforms.” We are face to face with an epoch when every ounce of proletarian energy should be invested in the main issue. Capitalism is crumbling everywhere. The circulatory (credit) system of bourgeoisdom is clogged beyond repair. In plain language, victorious “Great Britain, France, and Italy have no commodities to send out with which to pay for continued large imports from the United States. And they have neither gold nor American securities to send here in place of goods.” Therefore, little exchange is being bought in the New York market by importers. Add to this the fact that American exporters are compelled to sell at lower and lower prices. At what point will this process halt? Will our industrial barons halt or contract their operations? Consider for a moment the effect of this crisis in capitalist exchange on American industrial conditions. To contract or to halt operations means to increase the army of unemployed by hundreds of thousands. And perhaps by millions! It is not insignificant that a 1919 army of unemployed differs from a 1914 army of this kind in that it is very much more like an army. On the other hand, let our finance giants take pay in the promises of a continent haunted by Bolshevism, Spartacism, Communism, general industrial unrest, bankruptcy, political jealousy, and economic rivalry. What immeasurable profit!

History shows that of all the revolutionary classes the proletariat is the least favored to carry out a revolution. Yet, the historic mission of the working class is to carry out “a revolution that is pivoted upon the most complicated synthesis.” The bourgeoisie had economic power. They thereby made inroads on the military power of the feudal rulers. The bourgeoisie had many other advantages. The proletariat, on the other hand, lacks the economic, military, or intellectual advantages. The working class is an expropriated class in every sense of the word. And its enemy, the bourgeoisie, is cunning, ruthless, and powerful. The Social Revolution will not fall into our laps. We have before us an herculean task! The advantage we possess as a social class is numbers. Ceaseless education and organization must be our policy in order to fully utilize this social advantage. Hence, we should strive to have the proletariat rather turn his energy into channels leading to revolutionary, real, and permanent advantages than to “immediate,” petty, fleeting gains,