

## Political Mass Strikes

THE proposed general strike to compel the release of Tom Mooney and other class war prisoners has not, as yet, materialized. Sabotaged by the bureaucracy of the American Federation of Labor and its necessity blurred by the liberal-"Socialist" campaign for amnesty, the proposed mass strike is now a thing of regrets. The bourgeois press is jubilant since a strike to compel the release of class war prisoners would constitute a *political* strike, the first use by American labor of this aggressive and potentially revolutionary form of action.

But as economic pressure and revolutionary agitation proceed, the political strike will become familiar to the American proletariat, since class antagonisms and class struggles are being emphasized, necessitating emphatic action.

In Europe, where the political strike is a familiar form of proletarian action, the workers are preparing for the mightiest of all political strikes—a political strike simultaneously in France, Italy and England on July 21 to compel the end of intervention in Russia. The proletariat of Italy is using the political strike to act on the food crisis; while the Seamen's Federation at Naples prevented the steamer Cablons, bound from London to Vladivostok, from leaving the port because it carried munitions for the counter-revolutionary forces in Siberia fighting the Soviet Republic.

British labor is being agitated by the issue of the political strike. The moderates oppose this aggressive form of proletarian action. James Sexton, Labor Party member of Parliament, "favors" a revolution social in character, but opposes using the strike for political purposes as it would be "letting mad dogs loose." But the more radical representatives of British labor urge the use of the mass political strike to end conscription, to compel the return of all troops from Russia and to stop the shipment of munitions to the troops of Kolchak and other counter-revolutionary elements.

The bourgeois (aped by the "Socialist" moderates) are against the political strike. An editorial in *Collier's* of July 19 says: "Always up to the present (strikes) have attempted claims only in regard to the workman's own needs: his wages, hours, and right to organize. Now the strike has been brought from the field of economics into that of politics. Instead of defending the pay of a group, it is to dictate the policy of a state."

Precisely: it is militant labor's purpose to use its economic might by means of political strikes to impose its will upon the state. In the intensity of the class struggle, with the machinery of government deliberately calculated to baffle the will of the masses, labor can conquer only by the assertion of its economic might in political mass strikes.

It is just because strikes have been localized to wages and hours that labor has not secured power and control over its own life. As political problems are at basis economic problems, just so the economic problems of the workers are political problems in the sense that these problems are products of exploitation and exploitation is defended by the political power of the capitalists. But these problems of the workers are political in the larger sense, not simply in the parliamentary sense; they imply the necessity of coercing the state, of imposing labor's will upon the state, and the initial form of accomplishing this purpose is a mass stoppage of work in order to compel the state to come to terms.

The political strike, according to *Collier's*, "is hostile to democracy. . . . Their legitimate instrument is the citizen's vote, not economic civil war." Democracy is hostile to the political strike, since the function of democracy is to reconcile the workers to their oppression and assure the supremacy of Capitalism. Economic civil war is a repudiation of democracy: but capital uses this civil war to impose its will equally upon the workers and the state. Capital threatens the workers with unemployment and starvation unless its supremacy is assured; and capital threatens the state should the state act contrary to its will. Capital imposes its will upon the state since it controls the financial and economic power; labor must impose its will upon the state by means of its assertion of economic power in political mass strikes.

Democracy prevails in France, Italy and England. But this democracy does not prevent conscription, it did not prevent the war, it does not prevent the starvation of the Russian people and supplying Kolchak & Co. with munitions to murder the Russian people. Realizing these fruits of democracy, the workers are concluding: To hell with democracy!

Capital controls the state and the press, it controls all the available means of social expression and can sabotage the will of the masses expressed in "the citizen's vote." The one real social expression capable of being used by labor is the mass political strike, which may, at the right moment, impose its own government forms upon society. Democracy as it prevails is not the rule of the majority, but rule *over* the majority, it is the particular form of expression of bourgeois requirements and supremacy. If the mass political strike annihilates this fraudulent democracy, so much the better for the political strike! Votes can be disregarded, but not the political mass strike of the proletariat.

In the economic civil war which is a natural characteristic of Capitalism, an expression of the irreconcilability of interests between labor and capital, democracy is always repudiated. Government, national and municipal, suspends all civil rights; the courts, the police and often the army are used against the workers on strike; the issue becomes an issue of *power*. There is no democracy during a strike; and should militant labor, when it develops the power, recognize democracy, it stultifies itself and defeats its own purposes. Power is the final answer to Capitalism.

In the general strike in Canada, particularly in Winnipeg, the municipal government practically disappeared as a force. This mass strike was not a political strike; it was a strike for direct economic objects; but it necessarily clashed with the state power and assumed a political character. Instinctively, necessarily, the strikers usurped municipal functions of government; while the petty bourgeois and bourgeois citizens organized their own forces and equally usurped government functions;—the strike developing into a contest between the "government" of the strikers and the "government" of the bourgeois citizenry.

The political strike develops out of the usual economic strike—the usual strike necessarily developing political characteristics when it becomes general and clashes with the state. The political strike is conscious of its purposes and, moreover, it develops out of the impulse of the mass struggle itself the tendency toward proletarian dictatorship—all power to the workers by means of their own government organs, as against all non-proletarian social groups.

## The Party Fight

THE Michigan-Federation call "to organize a Communist Party" of their own, considered elsewhere in this issue, contains this utterly misleading statement:

"Their policy (that of the National Left Wing) is one of endeavor to capture the old party machinery and the stagnant elements who have been struggling for a false unity and who are only ready to abandon the ship when it sinks beneath the waves of reaction."

The amount of misrepresentation in this short paragraph is truly astonishing:

1) The policy of the National Council of the Left Wing is *not* "to capture the old machinery." The Left Wing struggle is to get *the revolutionary masses* in the Socialist Party.

2) The Left Wing is not after "the stagnant elements who have been struggling for a false unity" in the Socialist Party. The revolutionary masses in the party are not stagnant; the intensity of their struggle against the Right Wing is a proof that they are not concerned with a "false unity." It is not the state of Michigan nor the Central Committee of the Russian Federation which has made a national issue of revolutionary Socialism in the Socialist Party, but precisely these revolutionary masses in the Left Wing who are now stigmatized as "stagnant elements."

3) To maintain a contact with the masses in the Socialist Party for some time longer, in order to agitate and rally the revolutionary elements for a Party of Communist Socialism, is not a policy of "false unity," but of actually carrying on the struggle for revolutionary Socialism.

4) To accuse the Left Wing of being composed of elements which "have been struggling for a false unity" in the Socialist Party, is not in accord with the facts, and disgraceful. It is the Michigan-Federation clique which is acting on the basis of false unity, since the Michigan delegates repudiate the Left Wing Manifesto and Program while the Federation delegates are in favor. To hell with consistency and revolutionary integrity!

The character of the Left Wing struggle within the Socialist Party is determined equally by means and by purposes. The purpose is to construct a Party of Communist Socialism: the means, at the immediate moment, must consist of a struggle to secure the masses in the Socialist Party.

In other words, a Party of Communist Socialism must issue either out of the conquest of the Socialist Party, or out of a mass secession to organize a completely new Party. This policy has characterized the struggle of the Left Wing within the Socialist Party.

The Left Wing made an issue out of an Emergency National Convention of the Socialist Party: it forced the issue. Our policy, determined by objective facts, was that the Party struggle would come to a climax at this Convention. But now that the struggle is on the verge of final crisis, a small clique insists that we abandon the struggle at the crucial moment!

The utterly slanderous character of the Michigan-Federation policy is indicated in another mis-statement: "The majority of the delegates to the Left Wing Conference neglected to sever their connections with the reactionary N. E. C.!" The N. E. C. was not recognized; it was repudiated; it was made clear that the Conference proposed a Party of Communist Socialism.