

Parliaments and Soviets

By N. Bucharin
Of the Russian Soviet Republic

THE fundamental difference between the parliamentary system and the Soviet power is already known. It is known that the Soviets grant no political rights to the non-producing classes. The country is governed by the councils elected by the working population in the place where they work, in the workshops, the mines, and the villages. The capitalists, the landed proprietors, middle-class intellectuals, bankers, stockholders, and speculators, merchants and shopkeepers, priests and monks, in short, all who form the black army of Capitalism, are deprived of the right to vote and are without political power.

The Constituent Assembly (or Parliament, the members of which are elected to represent territorial constituencies) is the basis of the Parliamentary Republic. The highest sovereignty of the Communist Republic belongs to the Congress of Soviets.

In what does the one differ from the other? In the fact that to the Constituent Assembly, not only are the representatives of the workers and peasants elected, but also the representatives of owners, bankers, and capitalists, the representatives of all the capitalist class and their hangers-on.

Experience shows that wherever the bourgeoisie enjoys political rights, it uses those rights to dupe the workers and peasants. Because it has the press, both the daily newspapers and the periodicals, in its hands: because it has great wealth at its disposal, the bourgeoisie is able to corrupt public officials, to employ for its benefit the services of hundreds of thousands of agents; is always able to menace, and to intimidate for its own advantage, its slaves; and, in fact, to organize things in such a way that not a scrap of the power shall escape from its clutches.

All the people apparently participate in the elections, but, under this pretence is hidden the domination of Capitalism, which flatters itself that it has granted the people the right to vote and all "democratic" privileges, but which takes good care to preserve its own privileges. Thus in bourgeois republican countries, under the cloak of universal suffrage, the power is found to be entirely in the hands of the great forces of Capitalism.

Under the parliamentary system each citizen casts his vote into the ballot box once in four or five years, and the field is then clear for the members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers, and Presidents, to manage everything without any reference to the toiling masses. Gulled and exploited by its officials, the toilers have no part whatever in the administration of the capitalist state.

In the Soviet Republic, born of the dictatorship of the workers, the administration rests on an altogether new basis. It is not an organization of officials independent of the masses and dependent on the capitalists. The central government is established on the great class organizations of the workers and peasants; the industrial unions, the factory committees, local workers' and peasants' councils, and organizations of soldiers and sailors. From the centre stretch thousands and millions of conducting threads which lead to the provincial Soviets, the municipal Soviets, the local Soviets, and finally to the factory workshop Soviets.

Take, for example, the Supreme Council (or Soviet) of Public Economy. It is composed of representatives of industrial commissions, factory committees, and similar institutions. On the one hand, the industrial

unions embrace all industrial activity, they have ramifications in the various towns and are maintained by the masses of the organized workers. On the other hand, there exists today in every factory a committee elected by the workers. The factory committees group themselves and send their representatives to the Supreme Economic

Correspondence

(Continued from page 14)

by a Left Wing Convention to organize the Communist Party. This we shall do.

But, frankly, I no longer take your secession from the Left Wing so seriously. To be quite accurate you never joined with the Left Wing, so far as your delegates to the Conference were concerned; though I have no doubt we shall get plenty of support from Michigan for the National Left Wing movement as against the Michigan Party of America. You can confuse the situation and make our task more difficult. But if that must be, why, comrade, one more stumbling block in the hard path of revolutionary Socialism is nothing much to worry about.

Only I feel keen disappointment in the personal sense with my comrades from Detroit and Ann Arbor, and the few others in Michigan who may encourage you in this pursuit of the absolutely perfect Socialist Party for which only the *immortelles* of the Proletarian University are fit. This is a time for big deeds, for broad perspective in viewing the actualities of tremendous historical developments. You have bragged of the fact that Michigan stands today where Michigan stood even before the world war. This is but another admission that to you the realities of the proletarian mass life and consciousness means nothing unless it comes out of the class room. You do violence to the class room itself by divorcing it from the dynamics of the proletarian revolution. And, I might add, that in this very experience I have come to realize with painful distinctness the Michigan failure to grasp the fundamental conceptions of Communist theory and tactics. You spurn the concepts of mass action and industrial unionism, as expressed by the Left Wing, because you are not looking toward the mass proletarian experience under Imperialism. The fundamental snobbery of the reactionists displays itself in this application of Michigan tactics which you make to the party problem. You pay lip homage to revolution, and you discriminatingly quote the Marxian texts. But you want no contamination of the proletariat by taking seriously its first incoherent expressions of protest, as they appear in industry, in the mass strikes of industrial unionism. Nor do you want the contamination of other than Executive-ruled proletarians within your nice little Michigan Party.

But you will have a rude awakening, and a bad after-taste. The rank and file of the Federations and of your own State, when they are allowed to get accurate information and given the chance to figure these things out for themselves, will make short work of your unprincipled recklessness with regard to the general party situation throughout the country.

Earnestly yours,

I. E. FERGUSON,
National Secretary.

Council, which elaborates plans for economic changes and the administration of production. In the same way the central organism of administration is composed of representative workers, and rests upon the mass organization of the working class.

Thus we have an institution quite different from the capitalist republic. Not only because the non-producer is deprived of the right to vote; not only because the country is administered by the workers and peasants, but above all because the Government of the Soviets is in constant relations with the organized masses, and in this way, at all times, the greater part of the population joins in the administration of the State. Every organized worker exercises an influence, not only because, once or twice a month, he elects to represent him men in whom he places confidence, but because the industrial unions can themselves elaborate their own plans of organization. These plans are examined by the Soviets concerned, by the economic Soviets, and, if approved, they become law as soon as the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets has ratified them. An industrial union, or factory committee can in this way take part in the common work of building up new forms of life.

In the capitalist republic the position of the State improves as the activities of the masses are restricted, for the interests of the masses are in conflict with the capitalist State. The Soviet Republic, which embodies the dictatorship of the popular masses, could not subsist for a single instant without their support. On the contrary its strength grows as the masses become more conscious, and as they become more active in every direction: in the factory **the workshop, in every town and village.**

Before the revolution of November 7, 1917 the organizations of workers and peasants were simply the instruments of the class war against the ruling and possessing capitalists. The organizations fought capital for higher wages and shorter working days, and in the villages they fought for the expropriation of the land. Now that the power is in the hands of the workers and peasants, they have become the wheels of the governmental mechanism. The industrial unions are not merely fighting Capitalism. As an organic and integral part of the Workers' Soviet Government they join in the organization of production and economic activity. In the same way, the village and peasant Soviets, not only wage war upon the village usurers, the capitalists, and the proprietors of the soil, but, as organs of government, as wheels in the mechanism of this giant, the workers and peasants' State, they work to elaborate new agrarian laws.

Thus, little by little, through the organizations of the workers and peasants, the most extensive sections of the active population are summoned to take part in the affairs of State. No other country offers anything to compare with this, because no other country has known the victory of the working class, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Republic of the Soviets.

Much had already been written of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but no one knew exactly in what form it would be realized. The Russian Revolution shows us the precise form of that dictatorship. It is the Republic of the Soviets. That is why the arms of the Soviets are inscribed on the banners of the best ranks of the international proletariat.