

The British Workers and Soviet Russia

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OUR progress is very slow. When the Allied Intervention to crush the Russian Soviets began a year ago, it was impossible to arouse British workers to protest against it. In June, 1918, when the Allies were as yet only meddling tentatively in Russia, Kerensky came to this country to appeal to the Allies to make a great war upon the Soviets. His first appearance was at the Labor Party Conference at Westminster. He was introduced to the Conference by Arthur Henderson and received a great ovation from the delegates who had not thought enough about Russia to understand that he was the tool of the Czarist counter-revolution. Those of us who protested against his being allowed to address the conference as an honored guest were howled down or ejected. Our demand that Maxim Litvinoff, the duly accredited representative of Soviet Russia, who was present in the gallery, should be allowed to reply to the charges Kerensky had made against the Soviets, was ignored, at the bidding of Arthur Henderson.

At the Blackpool Trade Union Congress, the following fall no effective protest was made against the intervention: no delegate was found bold enough to express solidarity with the Soviet Government. But now all is changed: The workers are gradually coming to realize that the Russian and Hungarian Soviet Governments are governments of the working class, answering to their needs, and enabling them, at last, to realize their long cherished ideals. Though the official leaders like Arthur Henderson have deprecated, repudiated, and even helped to slander the Soviets, a deeply felt sense of solidarity with Communist Russia has been growing steadily amongst the workers. For months past "Hands Off Russia" has found its way into the resolution of every labor and Socialist propaganda meeting and literature about Russia has been the more eagerly read than any other. At the Southport Conference of the Labor Party, which opened on June 25th, the feeling which has been growing during the year was clearly manifest. To the mass of the 950 delegates Russia was the most burning of all questions, and throughout the conference, by clapping, by cheers, by interjectory remarks, they gave vocal expression to heated thought on the Russian question. The rank and file delegates were far in advance of the platform and the well-known leaders (Resolutions at the Labor Party Conference are placed on the agenda several months beforehand and emergency resolutions are only brought forward through the standing orders committee). This official element acts as a barrier to swift progress difficult to circumvent. Nevertheless it can be said that the Southport Conference of the Labor Party has succeeded in declaring itself on the following points:

(1) It has clearly recognized the International class struggle between Labor and Capital.

(2) It has declared (though as yet a little timidly, and without as yet full preparedness to meet all the obligations of this choice) its solidarity with the Workers' Socialist Republics of Russia and Hungary.

(3) It has declared itself in favor of using direct industrial action to achieve the political ends of the workers.

(4) It has decided that direct industrial action shall be used to stop capitalist attacks upon the Socialist Republics of Russia and Hungary.

(5) But it has left this action to the joint Executives, and the Executives will not act without pressure.

The Conference was not invited to discuss the fact that delegates had come from the French and Italian Comrades to appeal to the

British movement to join in a demonstration strike against the war on the Soviet Republics. Henderson, merely announced, "as a matter of information only" the Executive had agreed with the French and Italian delegates to arrange anti-intervention demonstrations for July 20 and 21 in France, Italy and Britain: the demonstrations to be "in the form best adapted to the circumstances and to the methods in operation in each country." The resolutions to be submitted to the demonstrations states:

"To this end it is the further duty of the working class movement to authorize action in the various Parliaments, and to bring to bear whatever pressure it can command, in view of their national circumstances against the governing authorities of the various countries."

Of course some delegate ought to have jumped up and moved the suspension of the Standing Orders, in order that a resolution might be moved declaring a general strike on July 20 and 21. No one was ready enough to seize the opportunity; but if any delegate had done it, old experience proves that the Chairman would probably have refused to accept the motion. The resolution actually adopted by the Conference:

"Instructs the National Executive to consult the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress with a view to effective action being taken to enforce these demands by the unreserved use of their political and industrial power."

It will be seen that this resolution leaves it to the joint Executives to put the will of the Conference into operation. The Executive of the Trade Union Congress is openly opposed to industrial action for political purposes and cares nothing for the Soviets and the majority of the Labor Party Executives is also opposed to action. McGurk, the retiring chairman of the Labor Party, at once gave an interview to the capitalist-imperialist Evening Standard, a most virulently anti-Labor paper, in which he said that nothing would come of the resolution.

But already something is coming of the resolution. The spirit that is behind it is growing in strength and decision of purpose; Ben Tillett, the Secretary of the Dockers' Union, recently announced in conjunction with Havelock Wilson, the reactionary Secretary of the Seamen's Union, that they would send a food ship to Koltchak and that the dockers would load it without pay: that food ship does not seem to have materialized and when the other day Ben Tillett spoke in Poplar (a London dock district) until lately one of his strongholds, he was howled down by the dockers.

Now the London district committee of the dockers has decided to declare a strike on July 20 and 21; but it goes further, it had decided to advise its members to abstain from working on any ships bound for Russia or assisting in any way the overthrow of the Russian proletariat. Moreover it demands that the money invested by the Dockers' Union in war loans shall be immediately withdrawn.

The Executive Committee of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen is issuing a circular to its members asking them to support the demonstrations on July 20 and 21 in every way. This is very important, as though this Union necessarily is small, it controls a powerful and absolutely essential section of men. Moreover there is great rivalry between it and the National Union of Railwaymen; and where the smaller craft union leads the big industrial union is certain to try to go one better. There is already

the possibility of an immediate railway strike on industrial grounds and the railway men are seething with discontent.

The miners supported the strike resolution at the conference and the Triple Alliance is itself calling a conference on industrial action to stop the intervention. Altogether it seems that British Labor is beginning to move. We are slow, but let us hope, we are sure.

Draft of the Russian Communist Party Program

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masses, the aim of which is to disarm the proletariat and detract him from his task of disarming the exploiters.

16) Only a proletarian Communist revolution will work out the salvation of humanity and solve the dilemma which was created by Imperialism and imperialistic wars. Whatever hardships may occur during the revolutionary period, temporary defeats or temporary waves of counter-revolution, the final triumph of the proletariat is inevitable.

17) The victory of the world proletarian revolution requires the full confidence, the most intimate fraternal union and the utmost possible unity of the revolutionary activity of the working class of the advanced countries. These conditions are impossible of fulfillment without severance from our former co-workers in the movement and present enemies in principle, and without a relentless war against the bourgeois defacement of Socialism among the leaders of official Socialist Parties.

18) Such a defacement is the opportunism, an social chauvinism, the Socialism in words and chauvinism in action, which conceals and defends the predatory interests of its national bourgeoisie, advancing false slogans and defending in general the capitalist wars of 1914-1918. This current is created in order to give to the bourgeoisie an opportunity of buying the leaders of the proletariat by doling them out the crumbs of the large profits obtained by robbing the proletariat in the factories, and securing for them a petty bourgeois existence, and providing these leaders with office under the bourgeois regime. The opportunists and social-chauvinists as servants of the bourgeoisie are the direct class foes of the proletariat, especially now when in conjunction with the capitalists they suppress the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in their own as well as in foreign countries.

19) On the other hand, the bourgeois defacement of Socialism is indicated in the current of the "centre," vacillating between the social-chauvinists and the Communists, insisting upon unity with the former and endeavoring to resurrect the bankrupt Second International. But the new Third Communist International is, as a matter of fact, directing the combat of the proletariat for emancipation—the Communist International of the recently organized Communist parties, the recruits of which are the real proletarian elements of the former Socialist parties. In all countries, especially in Germany, the Communists gain ever more and more the sympathy of the proletarian masses. This International resurrects, not only the name of Marxism but also its political ideas and principles. All its activities are directed for only one purpose—the realization of the revolutionary tenets of Marx and Engels, cleansed of opportunism and social-chauvinism.