
The Left Wing Answers.

by I.E. Ferguson

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Most of the objections to the Left Wing offered by the Reformist Socialists are simply subterfuges to distract from the real issues. But undoubtedly there are some who take these objections seriously, and this stands in the way of their study and understanding the vital differences between Reformist and Revolutionary Socialism. In order to clear these side-issues out of the way, and to compel the critics of the Left Wing to meet the real issues, we make answer to the most common objections.

Objection: *The Left Wing seeks to destroy the unity of the Party on account of a quarrel of phrases.*

Answer: The progress of history has exploded a fake unity within the Socialist ranks of all countries. This was a unity of phrases, a unity having no more fundamental basis than agreement on reform politics within the scheme of capitalist democracy. Beyond this, some of the phrases of the class struggle, and more or less insistence that the political party of the working class must stand by itself.

The Left Wing seeks to create a real unity on the basis of the true Socialist program, a unity of understanding and of action. Such is the unity of the Communist International, which, however, rigidly excludes all elements not in complete accord with its fundamentals.

The unity which is illusory simply prepares for a separation just at the moment of crisis, as we have already witnessed in Germany, and as we witnessed in 1914 when the parties of the Second

International chose to stand with their respective governments rather than with one another.

A change of our party tactics and propaganda according to the requirements of the revolutionary Socialist movement will make the party unsuitable as refuge for various reformist, petty bourgeois, sentimental elements which have hitherto dominated the party. The Left Wing is obnoxious to these elements, and the Left Wing will drive them out of the Socialist Party. Because for all losses of this sort there will be a thousandfold gain from the proletariat, which is rapidly developing revolutionary consciousness but which cannot be expected to regard with respect the programs and performances of a Socialist Party without proletarian consciousness.

Objection: *The Left Wing plays the game of the capitalist enemy by dividing the forces of Socialism on account of tactical matters.*

Answer: As already stated, the Left Wing unites the forces of socialism. It separates these forces from confusing and destructive admixtures, which leave no meaning to Socialism, and which leave no body of men and women ready to engage in any common action — except the game of capitalist politics (in order to make Capitalism more endurable).

The capitalist enemy can only discover in this process that there is real life and a real understanding of the revolutionary implications of the class struggle within the Socialist Party. Of course a Left Wing defeat might be highly acceptable to

the capitalists, because it would show them that there is no revolutionary consciousness in the United States even among the members of the party dedicated to the social revolution. But a Left Wing victory shows the capitalists that the Socialist Party means what it says about the class struggle and the social revolution.

The present opposition to the Left Wing emphasizes how much the party gained by casting off some of its social-patriots on account of the adoption of the St. Louis platform. The coming of the Labor Party and the Non-Partisan League also is taken as a benefit to the Socialist Party in that it makes clear and emphatic the special mission of the Socialists (or Communists) as “the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; having over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march; the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.” Yet it was the very character of the Socialism which died with the world war of finance-imperialism that it sought as adherents elements which never could be expected to meet the tests of the class war.

The Left Wing is honest, both in its statements about what Socialism is, and in its desires to have within the Socialist Party only true Socialists of proletarian revolutionary consciousness. There is mighty little consolation for the enemy in that sort of a transformation of the Socialist Party, because anybody can see those who oppose the Left Wing and make this the basis for trying to split the party, are potentially the most dangerous enemies of the working class at a time of crisis.

Besides there is not so much discrimination on the part of the capitalists as might be imagined. They are largely ignorant about the Socialist movement, and their class viewpoint keeps them ignorant of Socialism until the time of revolution. Meanwhile they pay little attention to our

party discussions. There is bound to be a new direction to the Socialist movement along with tremendous historical changes, and this is our special and most important business. In these adjustments of our policies and tactics there are bound to be a few whose minds are beyond the grasp of a new historical situation, who are bound to insist on their old habits of thought and action as against anything. It is our business to take care of our party according to the right ideas about what it should say and do, and in this we can very well ignore what anybody says about our internal adjustments.

After all, we will only stand together under a crucial test to the extent that we really agree on fundamental party policies and methods.

Objection: *The Left Wing delights in revolutionary phrases leading nowhere except to idle shouting or outbursts of violence.*

Answer: The Left Wing insists upon the phrases which tell the truth about Socialism and the politics of the class struggle — and these phrases do, as a matter of fact, describe a revolutionary movement of the conscious proletariat to make an end to Capitalism.

In truth, however, it is the Reformists and Opportunists who play with phrases for their hypocritical purposes of alluring all sorts of persons through contrary interpretations. The Left Wing seeks the life meaning of all Socialist phrases, to convey life truths.

The program of the Communist International is a document of revolutionary Socialism, second only to the Communist Manifesto of 1848, and here is language with unambiguous meaning for any reader. The “Statement of Principles” of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, issued May 29 [1919], is a conception of phrases made by jugglers using the phrases of Socialism to mean all things and nothing.

It must not be overlooked, also, that the mere expression of revolutionary phrases is at times the

very essence of revolutionary Socialist action. An illustration which challenged the attention of all the world was the speech of Karl Liebknecht to a street meeting in Berlin calling upon German workers to rise against the Kaiser's government. Another illustration which commanded world-wide attention and which will find its place in the pages of universal history was the revolutionary expression of Eugene Debs in the Cleveland courtroom.

It is when the revolutionary phrases seize the mind of the masses and become translated into revolutionary action that the proletariat wins its triumphs. The critic who scorns the revolutionary phrases with rare exceptions is really the "Socialist" who is against the proletarian revolution.

The revolutionary phrases of Socialism have to do only with the mass power and mass action of the proletariat, and scorn the futile acts of individual terroristic violence which are unrelated to the organized proletarian movement. Nobody ever was or could be urged to individual acts of violence or sabotage through the propaganda of revolutionary Socialism.

Objection: *But the workers of the United States do not yet want a revolution.*

Answer: That is the misfortune, because the United States is grievously in need of the Socialist revolution.

This is the master-phrase of the opposition to the Left Wing, calculated to work upon the nervous fears of the timid and cautious. And though timidity and caution have their complete justification, there is no justification whatever for making this objection to the Left Wing.

We say that the conditions for the social revolution are here: the high concentration of wealth and the advocated centralization of industry, to such a point that supreme control is now in the hands of the dozen chiefs of central financial institutions; the evidence of the class of permanent wage-workers as the overwhelming element of the

population; the adaptation of the entire national life to the military adventures of extraterritorial finance-exploitation, with a gigantic expenditure of materials and life (this expenditure being in itself the most fruitful source of finance-exploitation); the complete negation of parliamentary democracy by open control by the financial masters, as during the war and since, and as emphasized by the agreement of the different capitalist parties on all essential economic matters, such as tariffs, banking and currency, control of public utilities, suppression of effective labor organization, yielding up of former concessions to the petty bourgeoisie in the nature of anti-trust laws, taxation at the point of consumption, with minimum of taxation at the point of net profits, and Monroe Doctrine insistence upon all of South and Central America as the special imperialistic monopoly of American finance-capital.

American Capitalism has reached the stage where its further progress carries with it an inevitable and terrible toll of destructiveness. On the side of the working class there can be 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 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 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 process 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 as 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, though it visualizes the real conflict as outside the parliamentary and administrative circles.

Objection: *The Left Wing offers no constructive plans.*

Answer: Making a catalog 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 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 — be-

cause 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 reserve 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 maneuvers 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. And accurate understanding of the class struggle of itself indicates the general char-

acter of the Socialist transformation by which private property exploitation is to be ended.

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 not be a movement of flesh and blood, but a sectarian creed of abstract dogma.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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