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# In Defense of Representative Government: Speech to Congress — October 17, 1919.

by Victor L. Berger

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## American Capitalists Scared.

While I am well aware that the capitalist octopus in America is frightened by what is going on in Europe — particularly in Russia — while I know that there is a great deal of prejudice against Socialists, and especially against Socialists of German descent, I refuse to believe that sane men — and members of Congress at that — who favor a democratic form of government would deliberately try to destroy that kind of government.

I was indicted upon orders “from above” on the charge of conspiracy to interfere with the armed forces, and found guilty of that charge by a handpicked Federal jury, each member of which, according to a statement in the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, had the OK of the American Protective League — which means a branch of the Secret Service — before he was put on the jury. The same jury undoubtedly would have found many members of the 65th Congress guilty of the same charge if the jury had been selected for that purpose.

## Indicted on Legal Fiction.

The overt acts which formed the “conspiracy” consisted in the reprinting of the Socialist Party proclamation against wars adopted at the Socialist Convention in St. Louis [April 7-14, 1917], and in the printing of 5 editorials in which the *Milwaukee Leader* expressed its disagreement with the policies of the national administration regarding participation in European wars.

†- These four men were: National Secretary of the Socialist Party of America Adolph Germer; editor of the SPA’s official organs, *The American Socialist* and *The Eye Opener*, J. Louis Engdahl; head of the SPA’s youth section, William Kruse; former head of the SPA’s propaganda department, Irwin St. John Tucker.

There were four men indicted with me.† The prosecution did not charge that we had ever met to discuss the alleged “conspiracy,” nor that we had ever planned or ever mentioned it to one another by means of correspondence or otherwise.

What the prosecution did charge was that 5 men holding similar opinions with regard to the war conspired by means of “a meeting of minds.” This legal fiction outrages common sense, of course. Under this construction any man of any party or of no party anywhere in the United States could be indicted, convicted, and sentenced to 20 years in the penitentiary if his opinions upon public questions were offensive to the men temporarily in power.

## Socialists Oppose Wars.

You have heard these articles read here — these articles and many others written at that time — and also articles printed for many years before the indictment and some written after the indictment. Even the most rigorous construction of any of these articles by a man with a sane mind will not bear out the charge. And the suggestion that any of them is pro-German must sound just as ridiculous to you after you have listened to them. They are international and pro-humanity.

Opposition of the Socialist parties of all countries against imperialistic and commercial wars is as old as International Socialism. This was proven conclusively by the documents written and published in other countries that were read in this hearing.

Our position in that respect was first formulated in Geneva at the international congress of 1866. And if the opposition to imperialistic and commercial wars means a conspiracy, then that conspiracy against the World War of 1914 was really hatched out way back in 1866. It was well known that Socialists would fight only in wars of emancipation, or when their country was actually invaded, when this war was declared.

It is worth noting that the proclamations of all the European Socialist Parties in 1914 were worded very much like the proclamation and war program of the American Socialist Party adopted in St. Louis in 1917. Even the phraseology was almost the same. In no other country, however, were Socialists persecuted as they were in the United States.

### **People Did Not Want War.**

The American Socialists believed that the American people did not want war; that they were plunged into it by the plutocrats and profiteers of the country — their demagogic agitators, their press, their photo-plays, their advertisements, and other instruments of public expression; this is what the American Socialists believed and still believe.

Many Republicans and Democrats believed and said the same. And some papers and some men in Congress have criticized the national administration and the war in stronger language than I did. Among these were some of the foremost representatives of the Republican and Democratic Parties — men like James R. Mann, Claude Kitchin, Frank Mondell, W.E. Mason, and Champ Clark. We have read extracts from their speeches at this hearing.

I shall add here only a few of President Woodrow Wilson's remarks as to this war and its causes. At a time when the Socialists and the *Milwaukee Leader* attacked the German Kaiser and Germany most bitterly for being a party to the World War, Mr. Wilson said:

May 13, 1915: "Recalling the humane and enlightened attitude heretofore assumed by the Imperial German Government in matters of international right..."

May 13, 1915: "...having learned to recognize the German views and German influence in the field of international obligations as always engaged on the side of justice and humanity." \* \* \*

### **Cites Wilson's Stand for Peace.**

Of course, that happened before Mr. Wilson knew that he was going "to make the world safe for democracy" and fight the "Huns." President Wilson went on like this:

February 3, 1916: "We believe that we can show our friendship for the world and our devotion for the purposes of humanity better by keeping out of this trouble than by getting into it.

May 5, 1916: "There are two reasons why the chief wish of America is for peace. One is that they love peace and have nothing to do with the present quarrel..."

May 27, 1916: "With [the war's] causes and objects we have no concern."

October 5, 1916: "The singularity of the present war is that its origin and objects have never been disclosed."

December 18, 1916: "I take the liberty of calling attention to the fact that the objects of the statesmen of the belligerents on both sides are virtually the same."

And it is a fact denied by nobody that Mr. Wilson was re-elected President of the United States in November 1916 with the slogan that "He kept us out of war"; and after all this, he pushed us into the war a few months later.

### **Wilson Changed Tactics.**

We all know that Mr. Wilson changed continuously in his tactics from "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight" on May 10, 1915, to demanding a standing army of 534,000 men for peacetime (and after the "covenant of nations has made wars impossible forever"), and demanding also the biggest battle fleet we have ever had or even imagined we could have, in 1919.

These changes in the position of the President were evidently brought about by certain "interests" that had a great deal to gain by our entrance into this war. However, the Socialists did not accuse President Wilson of any "conspiracy" with J. Pierpont Morgan and Lord Northcliffe. We understood perfectly that the President considered it his duty to protect these international capitalistic interests.

Under the convenient legalistic term of "conspiracy," as construed by some of our Federal judges as a "meeting of minds," whether the persons accused

have ever met or not — and with an act like the “espionage” law, which forbade men even to think against the war — the gentlemen in Congress (mentioned above) could have been indicted and found guilty of “conspiracy,” individually and collectively.

They could have been indicted, tried, and found guilty for the alleged utterances of persons whom they have not known and for articles they have not seen — if the right kind of a panel could be gotten together by the United States authorities.

They could be indicted far away from their home, compelled to give bail in another state, and convicted there by a Federal jury. The gentlemen whose names I have mentioned above were protected from that tyrannical procedure only because they were member of Congress at the time.

### **No Protection for Citizens.**

But does the Constitution only protect members of Congress during the war? And how long will it protect either members of Congress if you permit this sort of procedure?

What happened to me is that: A citizen of Milwaukee, Wis., I was indicted in Chicago, in the state of Illinois. I was compelled to furnish bail there amounting to \$100,000. I am under bail for \$45,000 more on other indictments in some places in Wisconsin for the same articles.

Republicans and Democrats could be punished in exactly the same fashion for any opposition to a hostile national administration. President Wilson was recently quoted in the papers as having said that certain Senators “should be hanged” because they do not approve of his treaty. Supposing he insists that this idea be incorporated in a law? Well, the Senators happen to be very prominent Republicans, so there is little likelihood that they will be hanged even on Mr. Wilson’s say so.

### **Subjected to Persecution.**

But we American Socialists surely were doomed beforehand as “German Socialists” and “Bolsheviki” in the capitalist press.

The minions of the Department of Justice were in possession of all our books and files. These spies

had opened my letters and the letters of other defendants for many months, before and after the indictment. And although there was not even the shadow of evidence to connect any of us — or the Socialist Party — with “German propaganda,” the prosecution continually hinted at “German propaganda.”

The Milwaukee Leader and I have been persecuted under the Espionage Act in an unprecedented manner. The Milwaukee Leader has not only lost its second class mailing rights by order of Postmaster General Burleson, but he has also deprived us of the right to receive any and all kinds of mail, letters included.

### **War Not Fought for Democracy.**

The Espionage Act, which gave the Postmaster General unlimited discretionary powers and formed the basis of many prosecutions by the Attorney General, proved to be a “peonage” law. It made political “peons” out of American citizens.

Under the Espionage Act, according to the report of the Attorney General, not a single man was convicted of being a paid German spy, or even convicted of trying to find out military secrets. So far as there is any record, those accused of such offenses under the Espionage Act have been either acquitted or interned without imprisonment, because they were not citizens.

American citizens, however, have been sentenced to terms as high as 20 years in the penitentiary for remarks made in private conversations about this war.

It was a crime to say or to write that this war was caused by commercial rivalry. To doubt that this was an “idealistic war” meant that the doubting Thomas was immediately arrested — as a pro-German or at least a Socialist.

Spokesmen of the Republican Party in the United States Senate, however, now frankly admit that it was a war for commercial supremacy.

Senator Harding of Ohio declared a few months ago in open session that “from the very beginning it was a lie to say that this is a war to make the world safe for democracy.”

**Wilson Admits Trade Caused War.**

And President Wilson, at the St. Louis Coliseum, September 5, 1919, enlightened the world as follows:

The real reason that the war that we have just finished took place was that Germany was afraid that her commercial rivals were going to get the better of her, and the reason why some nations went into the war against Germany was that they thought that Germany would get the commercial advantage of them.

Nevertheless, in 1917 Postmaster General Burleson suppressed about 60 weekly Socialist publications and took away the second class mailing right from the Milwaukee Leader and tried his level best to kill the paper — for saying the same thing in 1917 that Woodrow Wilson and everybody else is saying now. Or was it a crime to tell the truth — until Mr. Wilson himself accepted it as his own?

Remember, Abraham Lincoln waged a war of 4 years infinitely more dangerous to our country and to the Union without any espionage law. It was a war which divided our population in almost every city, even up north. It was a war which in the main was fought out and decided within 100 miles of Washington — while this time our boys had to travel over 3,000 miles to get a chance to break in. And yet Lincoln refused to have a gag law enacted.

It was different under the Woodrow Wilson administration.

**Only U.S. Has Political Prisoners.**

At the present time America is the only civilized nation in the world which still has political prisoners. And our national administration keeps adding to their number.

Of course, the Attorney General denies that there is such a thing as a “political crime” in America. He claims that we Socialists are to be punished for violating a certain provision of a law — the Espionage Act — not for our Socialist ideas.

But that is exactly what the Tsar of Russia always told his subjects.

The Russian people were never punished for their political beliefs — they were always punished for violating certain provisions of some Russian law.

And that is how the Tsar raise the terrorism in

the Bolsheviki and prepared the graves for himself and his children.

And while my co-defendants and I were told at the beginning of our trial in Chicago by the United States District Attorney that “the Socialist Party was not on trial” — a few minutes after we had been found guilty by the handpicked jury, the same United States District Attorney triumphantly declared in an interview in the papers that “Bolshevism has received its fatal blow by this verdict.”

**Socialism Not Bolshevism.**

Now, Socialism is not Bolshevism.

Socialism is the collective ownership and democratic management of the social means of production and distribution — while Bolshevism, as far as I understand it, is communism combined with syndicalism.

And this is my chance to say a few words explanatory of Socialism.

Like every new phase of civilization, Socialism thus far has received the attention only of the oppressed and the lowly. The opulent and the rich have no reason to wish for a change of the present system. They do not, as a rule, want to hear anything about it. Until of late, outside of the working class, only students of history, of political economy, and a few advanced thinkers have given any attention to the principles of Socialism. Most other persons have only a very vague idea even of its basis. Yet Socialism is in the foreground of discussion today.

**Want New Social Order.**

Socialism stands for a new civilization.

Of course, with people who believe that whatever is will exist forever, and that we have reached the acme of civilization, and the end of all things in economic progress, with such people it is entirely useless to argue. But surely no educated man believes that the present conditions are the end of all things. That we have not reached the end of our national development is clear. Every new invention and every new political question proves that to us.

And it would be sad indeed if we had reached “The End.” We then should soon be on a level with

China. And I need not explain that the Socialist movement is not to be traced to the irresponsible work of individual agitators or eccentric persons. The very name of our movement, "Social Democracy," proclaims the aims of the Socialists.

In regard to the political form, we demand the rule of the people, i.e., democracy. In regard to the economic sphere and the spirit which shall manifest itself in this form and give life to it, we demand Socialism; that is, the collective ownership of the collective means of production and distribution.

Thus we shall have Social Democracy — a democracy which is founded on economic independence, upon the political and industrial equality of opportunity for all.

### **Trusts Outcome of Competition.**

Determined opponents of the present capitalistic system of industry as the Socialists are, still they never claim that the concentration of capital is the cause of all evil.

We look the facts square in the face.

The trusts are the legitimate outcome of competition. The trust is the "survival of the fittest" under capitalism. The trust appears after competition has virtually destroyed competition.

Socialists, therefore, do not try to smash the trusts as such. On the contrary, the Socialists appreciate so fully the advantage of industrial production on a large scale that we wish its most perfect development — and wish to give its benefits to everybody — which is impossible under the capitalist system. For that reason we want to nationalize the trusts.

### **Would Extend Advantages.**

The control of production by the people as a whole means the highest possible perfection of industry on a large scale and means the extension of its advantages to all the people. And we all deeply feel the disadvantages of the private ownership of the means of production and distribution on a large scale. We observe how the railroads and other public service corporations corrupt our legislatures.

We notice how our life insurance savings and bank deposits are simply furnishing funds for high

financiers to underwrite imperial adventures. We witness how the successful largest factory owners combine into trusts, which are "financiered" by the banks, and how the meat trust, the oil trust, the steel trust, and all the other trusts are "regulating prices," and how moreover, some of these trusts are ruining the health of the people.

We all see it. We all feel it. And we all know it.

Therefore, most of us also comprehend that the owners of these sheets and strips of paper, which under our present system stand for "capital," virtually decided how much we shall pay for our meat, for our bread, for our sugar, how much for coal and for gasoline, and how much we are to spend for our houses, clothing, shoes, etc. In other words, by deciding how well or how poorly we are to live, these owners of production virtually decide how long or how short a time we are permitted to stay on earth.

### **Professional Classes Suffer.**

And the wage workers are by no means the only sufferers from these conditions.

With every increase of power and concentration of wealth, educated groups also are forced more and more into dependence upon the capitalists. Our teachers, professors, speakers, newspaper editors and writers, and ministers, physicians, and other professional men are more and more at the mercy of the capitalistic system and brought into abject dependence. Thus we see the beginning of an educated proletariat, worse off than the brick masons or the plumbers.

On the other hand, money making is not a matter of education. On the contrary, the more vulgar and wolfish the man, the more readily he succeeds.

And wealth, usually expressed in money, is now the god. Mammon has become the idol of this day. It is through the distribution of a part of this mammon that the rich man gets his dangerous powers. It is the monopoly of that which all want — some of which all must have — that makes his power so fearful.

The big grafter (or his heir) writes his check and gets all the good or bad things his heart desires. He gets adulation, professional skill, wine and women, paragraphs in the newspapers, and the disposal of political places. By subscribing \$50,000 to the campaign fund of the winning party he can become an ambassa-

dor.

### **Would Convince Majority.**

But it is said that the Socialists are revolutionists.

Very well! We are revolutionary, not in the vulgar meaning of the word, however, which is entirely wrong, but in the sense illustrated by history, the only logical sense.

I believe it is foolish to expect any results from riots and dynamite, from murderous attacks and conspiracies, in a country where we have the ballot, as long as the ballot has not been given a full and fair trial. We want to convince the majority of the people. As long as we are in the minority, we, of course, have no right to force our opinions upon an unwilling majority.

Besides, as modern men and true democrats, we have a somewhat less romantic and boyish idea of the development of human things and social systems.

And we know that one can kill tyrants and scare individuals with dynamite and bullets, but one can not develop a system in that way. Lenin and Trotsky are finding this out to their dismay.

Therefore, no true Socialist ever dreams of a sudden change of society. We may have revolutions, if neither the capitalists nor the workmen make good use of their brains, but greater than all revolutions is evolution.

We know perfectly well that force serves only those who have it; that a sudden overthrow invariably breeds dictators; that dictatorship can promote only subjugation, never freedom.

I have even proposed a general and methodical arming of all people as the safest means of preventing sudden upheavals and preserving genuine democracy. That would, as a matter of course, also end the dictatorship of the plutocracy.

### **Revolutionize Mental Processes.**

In short, the Socialists do not expect success from a smaller or bigger riot, but from a real revolution, from the revolutionizing of minds, the only true revolution there is.

It is clear that this revolution of the minds can

not be brought about in a day or two, nor can it be arranged according to the pleasure of a few. It can only be attained by patient work and intelligent organization. Therefore, the Socialists concentrate their whole force on education, agitation, and organization.

And education always means enlightenment and humanity, and organization means order.

We want to observe closely the order of things, the development of economic and political conditions. We want to find out, if possible, where this development leads. Then, supported by this knowledge, we want to put ourselves in line with the march of civilization, so that civilization will carry us, instead of crushing us, which it would do, if knowingly or not, we should stand opposed to it.

Thinking men of all classes become Socialists not because we like to be "different" from other people. We are Socialists because we have recognized that the economical development of the present capitalist system leads towards Socialistic production. Not that we wish to urge upon humanity "our" Socialistic Republic, but that the Socialistic Republic has urged itself upon us as the next stage of civilization and will urge itself someday upon all civilized humanity.

### **Three Classes in U.S.**

In a hazy way, however, our opponents attempt to convey the idea that the Socialists incite class antagonism and class hatred. And there are some honest men who believe that the Socialists create class hatred by explaining the class struggle. There are some well-meaning men in this country who still believe that because this is a republic there are no classes in the United States. They claim that everybody here is the equal of everybody else. Nothing of the kind.

As a matter of fact, under the present capitalist system, we have three classes, roughly speaking, in America.

The first class is the capitalist class, composed of wealthy bankers, railway magnates, corporation directors, trust magnates, etc., who have made money and are active in business, and people who are doing nothing and inherited their wealth. That class forms about 2 percent of the nation. In the income tax figures for 1917 we find 206 men with millionaire yearly incomes — 10 of them with annual incomes of more than \$5

million and 196 with yearly incomes ranging from \$1 million to \$5 million. I have no figures for 1918.

The next class is the middle class, composed chiefly of small manufacturers, merchants, farmers, and some professional men. This class forms about 24 per cent of the nation.

The third class is the proletariat, made up of wage workers, small [farmers?], and some persons in professional occupations. That class forms about 74 percent of the nation.

### **Existence of Classes Not New.**

It is unnecessary for me to dwell on the difference in the lives, modes of living, and general standard of the different classes. But the existence of classes is nothing new and the class struggle is many thousand years old. It began the moment civilization began.

In the most democratic republic of Athens and in the aristocratic republic of Sparta, and later on in Rome, the people were divided into different classes, with different rights and different duties, according to their wealth. Some of these classes were hereditary to begin with, always provided that the respective family could keep its wealth.

In Rome the Censor would assemble the Roman people every 4 years, have every citizen show up his wealth, and put him into his respective class. And the great Cato got the honorable name of "Censorius," because when he held the office of Censor he would expel from the senatorial class the man who could not show the necessary wealth to belong to that class.

And in all these ancient civilized commonwealths there was to be found a large stratum of citizens who owned nothing, and which in Rome was called the "proletariat," the "child makers," because the only capacity in which its members could serve their country was by furnishing children for the state.

Nor was this all.

Lower still, most numerous, and belonging to no class were the slaves. They did not own their bodies and were not supposed to have any souls. Plato described the slaves as "animated tools."

The slaves were either captured as prisoners of war or were made slaves on account of debts, or were the descendants of such persons. The class struggle then

was very crude and very brutal. So much for ancient civilization.

We all know that the classes almost took the form of castes under the feudal system. Everybody was pressed into an iron mold. Society, then, was really a pyramid with the king on top. The high clergy and the feudal lords, the patricians and the burghers of the cities formed the upper layers, and the serfs, owned by the lords, formed the lower layers of the pyramid. And under the feudal system also, as everywhere else, wealth and land gotten by force, cunning, or in any other way, furnished the basis of the classification.

### **Class Struggle Remains.**

The capitalist system, of course, has changed the mold. But the class distinction and class differences and the class struggle have remained. In fact, the struggle is now more subtle, but more bitter than ever.

There is also this difference: Under former civilizations, almost everywhere the class distinction was the result of war. And the ruling class was made up of the members of the victorious tribe or the victorious nation. This was generally the case in ancient times and almost invariably so during the Middle Ages. The ruling class usually was the stronger, the more able, part of the population. As a whole, it was the only class that had any education fitted for the condition of the time.

Thus, the medieval lord was unquestionably the best fighter of his day. He was trained for warfare, clad in iron, and spent all his life in hunting or fighting. The average medieval lord in war was good for about 20 peasants. Five or six hundred of these lords could go out to conquer a country. When the Archduke Leopold undertook to conquer Switzerland he had an army of about 600 knights, and that was considered a most tremendous fighting force. The commoners, of whom there were 3,000, did not count. And if it had not been for the mountains and the rocks of Switzerland the duke would have accomplished his purpose.

### **Classes Under Feudal System.**

Besides, in every one of these epochs, the rulers could claim, and did claim, that it was the will of God that they should rule, and that the common people

should serve and obey.

In old Greece and old Rome the patrician families usually also claimed descent from some god.

And all during the Middle Ages the church supported the claim of the feudal system to be "God-ordained." The church was a beneficiary of the system to no small extent, the bishops and abbots often having great estates and being governors of many thousands of people. Besides, the ruling classes were not only more able than the poor people, but in many cases they differed in nationality, speech, and general makeup.

Thus, for instance, the Norman lords spoke French in England for a long time. In France, the Franks were a German tribe who had taken possession of Gaul. In many parts of Germany, the Germans had subjugated the Wends and other Slavic tribes. Hence, there was an element of conquest in every case.

In modern countries the conditions are entirely different. The conquered class is of the same nationality, the same speech, the same mode of thought. And the ruling class is not better or stronger, nor more able in any way.

### **Worker Fights for Capitalists.**

Since the general introduction of public schools, the proletariat, as a whole, gets at least the elements of the same kind of education. The ability to read and write opens to them the same avenue of knowledge and mental power that the ruling classes possess. The proletariat and the middle classes not only do all the useful and necessary work which is *<illeg.>* done under the present civilization, but they also have to keep up with that civilization. Today civilization depends entirely upon the proletariat and middle class for its existence.

And what is more, the capitalist class is even unable to defend its position in case of danger. If there is any fighting to be done, the capitalist class holds its position only because the proletariat is asleep and is not conscious of its strength.

A statesman of old Rome said that the Romans could hold their slaves only because they had never counted themselves and their masters. However, since we have universal suffrage, there is good chance to count ourselves and our masters at every election.

Nor would the claim that God had ordained class rule hold good today. Not even the most stupid workers would believe Ogden Armour that God has ordained that he and the other big packers should form a trust to uphold the price of meat. Nor would anyone believe our magnates of the steel trust that they are descended from the gods — and must rule.

### **Plutocracy is Doomed.**

Unless plutocracy can persuade the majority of the people to close up the public schools and make illiterates of the next generation, and unless it can also persuade them to give up the electoral franchise, plutocracy is doomed. So much is clear.

And that is the reason why we Socialists can look with such equanimity and complacency into the future. The future belongs to some form of Socialism.

And now you understand, gentlemen, while the Socialists are not Bolsheviki — if they had only the choice between Bolshevism and plutocracy, and no other choice, then they would stand for Bolshevism in preference to plutocracy.

In short, it will depend very much upon the action of the capitalist class and the behavior of capitalist governments during the next few years as to what is going to happen to the capitalist class, not only in European countries, but also in America.

It will depend on our rulers whether we shall have an orderly evolution, which I have always preached and propagated, or a violent revolution, which we Socialists have always tried to avoid.

Just now the plutocrats believe that they can quell the uprising of the working class by using force and by enacting special restrictive legislation. But remember, the Tsar of Russia tried force to suppress ideas. Where is the Tsar now? Where is his wife? Where are his children?

Prince Bismarck, one of the greatest statesmen Germany has ever produced, tried the enactment of special restrictive legislation against the Socialists. Bismarck lived long enough to regret it. Where is Germany now? If the Socialists can not save Germany — Germany can not be saved.

### **Verdict Impossible Under Kaiser.**

But even at that I believe that a verdict like the one rendered in [Kennesaw Mountain] Landis' court in Chicago — and a sentence like his — would have been impossible under the Tsar in Russia or under the Kaiser in Germany.

I believe that for the articles that I have printed and for which I was found guilty and sentenced to serve 20 years in the penitentiary, I should not have been punished 20 minutes in prison in Germany under the Kaiser, or under the Tsar in Russia.

Under acts passed by Congress as “war measures,” however, many men have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment far exceeding the heaviest sentences for much worse offenses under the regime of the Tsar or the Kaiser.

For the ruling class in America, capitalism and Americanism have come to mean the same thing. The word “profit” and “patriotism” were used as synonyms by our profiteers during the war and ever since.

And all opposition to capitalistic, commercial, or imperialistic wars was regarded as “high treason.” And all opposition to profiteering was denounced as disloyalty and “German propaganda.”

### **Capitalists Fear Socialism.**

Bolshevism and Socialism also mean the same thing to the capitalist class and its press. And “government” and “national administration” were purposely confounded by the people who wanted war because it helped their business.

The capitalists fear Socialism. They point to poor Russia, which is undergoing the pangs of rejuvenation — where a new society is to be born out of chaos and pain — as an example of Socialism.

This is not the time nor the place to explain Bolshevism in Russia and to tell the difference between Bolshevism and Socialism — but there can be no doubt that the Bolshevik revolution is the natural result of Tsarism and of the methods the Tsars used against the Socialists and liberals in Russia.

And if our authorities refuse the representatives elected by legal voters admission to legislative bodies — then the working people may be forced to discard their belief in representative government and in the

ballot.

The Bolsheviks do not favor representative government. They preach “direct action” and the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

The Bolsheviks want to break entirely with the past. The Socialists do not believe that a complete break is either possible or desirable. But, as I said before, the outcome will largely depend upon the attitude of the “powers that be” — whether the Socialists or the extremists will prevail.

### **League Capitalist Alliance.**

Remember, less than 2 years ago the Kaiser was one of the most powerful men in the world. Less than 3 years ago the Tsar was the autocrat of 170 million people. Where are they today? And do you really believe that a revolution which did not stop before Kaiser and Tsar will stop before the majesty of the money bag?

It is true, our capitalists rulers may form a so-called League of Nations. It is an alliance of the plutocratic governments against the Socialist and the communist nations of Europe — the alliance to be directed and governed by the British plutocracy. Such a league will furnish no relief against armaments, high taxes, and wars. On the contrary, there will be more armaments than ever, and more wars than ever.

And since ideas can not be excluded by bayonets, the communists may eventually win simply because of persecution. The present civilization may be lost entirely, the good in it will go down with the bad, which would be deplorable.

I repeat that I have nothing to retract from the articles that I have written or the speeches I have made. All my predictions have come true. And a great deal more will come true than I have predicted.

This is the worst imperialistic war ever known in the history of the world. Every honest man who has any brains admits it now.

### **List of American Losses.**

The following facts are set forth in a statistical summary of the war with Germany:

The total American casualties to November 11, 1918, when hostilities ceased in France were as follows:

Killed and died of wounds .....	36,154
Died of disease .....	14,811
Deaths unclassified .....	2,204
Wounded .....	179,625
Missing .....	1,160
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>326,117</b>

The *Milwaukee Leader* often dwelt upon the unparalleled cost of the war. Here are some figures:

America's war expenses totaled \$32.363 billion. We could have for the cost of this war carried on the Revolutionary War for 1,000 years.

But to put the matter differently, this sum would just be enough to pay the entire cost of running the American government from 1791 up to the outbreak of the European war.

The war cost the United States considerably more than \$1 million an hour for over 2 years.

During the first 3 months expenditures were at the rate of \$22 million a day. For the final 10 months the daily average was over \$44 million.

The total war costs of all nations were about \$186 billion, of which the Allies and the United States spent 2/3 and the enemy 1/3.

The 3 nations spending the greatest amounts were Germany, Great Britain, and France, in that order. After them came the United States and Austria-Hungary, with substantially equal expenditures.

The United States spent about 1/8 of the entire cost of the war and something less than 1/5 of the expenditures of the Allied side.

The total battle deaths of all nations in this war were greater than all deaths in all the wars in the previous 100 years.

Russian battle deaths were 34 times as heavy as those of the United States, those of Germany 32 times as great, France 28 times, and the British 18 times as large.

### **Nothing Gained by War.**

And what has been accomplished by these immense sacrifices? Has the world been made safe for democracy? Where? Are the "small" nationalities free? Is Ireland free? Is India free? Is even Belgium safe, if France should make up her mind again to conquer her, as France intended in 1867?

Is militarism abolished forever? Are not England, France, and the United States contemplating bigger armies and navies than ever known in the history of the world? As for America in particular — what have we gained in this war and by this war? What has

America gained except billions of debts and a hundred thousand cripples? And we have lost most of our political democracy. Can anybody think of a single thing, worthwhile, that we have gained through this war? And even a casual reader of the daily newspapers will admit that an imperialistic peace of the worst kind is the result of the much-heralded peace conference in Paris. All the predictions of the Socialists — and especially my predictions in the *Milwaukee Leader* — have come true, I am sorry to say.

And because I am a student of the world's history, because I can see clearly, because I warned my fellow men, my countrymen, of these events that were bound to happen if we pursued a certain course, therefore I was indicted, found guilty, and sentenced to serve 20 years in the penitentiary. This incident of being found guilty in Judge Landis' court for exercising my constitutional right of free speech and a free press should have nothing to do, however, with my being seated in the House of Representatives.

### **Carney's Claim Groundless.**

And it would be ridiculous, of course, to pay much attention to the plea of the attorney for my Democratic opponent, Mr. Carney, that I must be excluded and Mr. Carney seated (although he received almost 6,000 votes less than I did) in order to make at least the 66th Congress "safe," since I am sure to be re-elected if Carney is not seated.

If my re-election is as certain as the attorney for Carney claims, then that is only one more reason to seat me, because I am the true choice of the electorate of the 5th District of Wisconsin.

Of course, it is the natural and useful thing that the people should re-elect the man who expresses their ideas, especially if the man has proved to be true in the face of persecution and prison. In European countries, including France and England, many men have been elected and re-elected to parliaments who were under prison sentence. Most of the Sinn Fein men recently elected had been found guilty of "sedition" and "high treason" or were indicted and under arrest.

### **Sedition Act Prosecution.**

In our own country, Matthew Lyon, a member

of Congress from Vermont, who had earned the hatred of President John Adams by ridiculing the aristocratic pretenses of our country's chief executive, was, under the Sedition Act of 1798, indicted, found guilty, and imprisoned for having written and printed certain articles and pamphlets. Congress had adjourned when the trial took place. Lyon served his full sentence of 4 months, but was re-elected to Congress in 1799, while in prison.

The Federalist Party tried to expel Lyon from the House when he took his seat, but could not muster the necessary 2/3 majority, although the vote of the House did show a simple majority for expulsion.

Like all the other men who had been found guilty under the Sedition Act, Matthew Lyon was highly honored afterwards. He became a popular idol and was repeatedly re-elected to Congress. His \$1,000 fine was paid back to his heirs with accrued interest. Together with Thomas Jefferson, Matthew Lyon became one of the founders of the Republican-Democratic Party, now called the Democratic Party.

The Federalist Party — until then the ruling political organization — completely disappeared, mainly on account of having passed the Sedition Act.

It seems that the statesmen of the Democratic Party, including Woodrow Wilson, do not know the history of the origin of their own party. If they did they never would have passed the so-called Espionage Act — which is patterned after the old Alien and Sedition Acts, only made very much more drastic and cruel. Even the truth of a statement is not permissible as a defense under Wilson's law. And the maximum punishment was raised from 3 years in 1798 to 20 years in 1917.

Yes, from time immemorial, the Bird of Liberty was a jailbird, and it got to be more so since Woodrow Wilson "made the world safe for democracy."

### **Representative Rule at Stake.**

Gentlemen, it may depend upon your decision in this case to a great extent whether the common people are to lose all faith in political elections and representative government — whether they are to turn to "direct action" and "soviets."

The tendency manifest among workmen of our country today is decidedly against "politics" and in

favor of "direct action." The only "politics" that workmen know in this country (with the exception of very few places in the Middle West and the Northwest) is capitalist politics. And this "politics" is so discredited that even the Boston policemen will not trust the promises of politicians, but prefer "direct action" and the strike.

There is a growing distrust of representative government everywhere, even in the classic land of parliamentarism, in England.

Although the advocates of the British Labour Party point to the fact that Lloyd George has lost to the Labourites practically every election held since last December, there are in many quarters symptoms of indifference and even contempt for parliamentary methods. This fact almost resulted in the Triple Alliance of Miners, Transport Workers, and Engineers declaring a "general strike" against British intervention in Russia and against conscription. If such a general strike ever should take place, England will see the beginning of a social revolution.

There is the same indifference to parliamentarism in France and Italy, and it is commencing to show itself in Germany and the Scandinavian countries.

### **Urges Orderly Methods of Change.**

If it were not for the Socialist Parties everywhere, representative government would soon come to an end in Europe.

In one instance after the other, labor unions are showing their willingness to accept the strike, and especially the general strike, as their sole weapon, and they are willing to use this weapon to enforce all of their demands, political and economic.

It is due to this tendency that at the special convention of the Socialist Party of America held during the first week of September this year [1919] a part of our organization split off. They started the Communist Labor Party and the Communist Party, neither of which has any faith in representative government and parliamentarism.

Now, I do not believe in the present capitalist system. I am convinced that it has outlived its usefulness and must make room for a new order of society. I believe in sane and orderly methods, however, to bring about the necessary change, provided we are permit-

ted to use sane and orderly methods.

And if you gentlemen would only have your ears to the ground and not trust the capitalist newspapers entirely for your information — if you gentlemen would read the signs of the times, even between the lines of these capitalist papers — you would soon come to the conclusion that besides furnishing a bad precedent it would be foolish and criminal to deprive the Socialist Party — a party casting over a million votes — of its sole representative to Congress.

### **Socialists Blessing to Country.**

As a matter of fact, a large number of Socialist in Congress would be a blessing to the country — they and their measures might possibly stand between the present society and chaos.

Special legislation to keep “undesirable” members out of Congress surely will work both ways. Someday it may be used by Socialists and other radicals against the representatives of the capitalist class, especially if the present decision will furnish a sufficient precedent.

Every thinking man should keep in mind that over half of the white race is in a chaotic stage of revolution at the present time, out of which revolution must develop an orderly socialist reign within the next 5 years. Every thinking American should take into consideration that England, France, and Italy will soon join the worldwide social revolution.

Can America alone escape a worldwide movement of the white race?

It will avail our statesmen nothing to hide their heads in the sand of reaction and to forbid immigration, or even to deport rebels. You can not build a Chinese wall against ideas.

There are 10 million men and women in this country always on the brink of pauperism and starvation. You can not expel all of them. You cannot kill all of them. You need them under the capitalist system as a reserve army of labor for your industries.

You cannot solve this question. And yet this question must be solved. Our reactionaries may soon rue the day when they persecuted the representatives of evolutionary Socialism and thus invited a cataclysm which is bound to bury the present system and its defenders.

### **Convictions Travesty of Justice.**

To sum up: I have always been proud of the Socialist record of observance of law. I have always tried to change or repeal such laws as, in my opinion, were harmful. My work was always constructive. I have always striven to conserve what is best in capitalist civilization as an inheritance for coming generations.

The law under which suppression of free speech and of free press was enforced is a flat denial of rights guaranteed every citizen by the Constitution of the United States. The manner in which that unjust and inherently unconstitutional law was used to procure my conviction for a crime which I never in word, deed, or spirit contemplated, was a travesty upon justice.

My case is still pending in the courts on an appeal. I am confident that the verdict will be reversed by the higher tribunal. I believe that the higher court will hold that I was within my constitutional rights in printing these editorials. A man can not be considered guilty, especially in a political case of this kind, until the highest court in the land has spoken. And in the opinion of real democrats, he will not be considered guilty at any time.

The 5th District of the state of Wisconsin is entitled to be represented by the man of their choice. I say again, it is not the personal case of Victor Berger — representative government is on trial.

And the particular question now is: Does the national House of Representatives desire to unseat the regularly elected and regularly certified representative of the 5th District of Wisconsin because he stood honestly and loyally by his principles?

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

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