

THE MILITANT

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THE MILITANT

Editorial Board

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Leon Trotsky
Paris, France

Copy to the I.S.

Dear Comrade Trotsky:

We received your letter with the proposal that George D. Herron and the group associated with him be invited to participate in the editorial board of our projected theoretical organ. We will carry out your suggestion in this matter and probably extend the invitation to others while retaining a majority in the hands of the League.

At first reading your letter gave us a shock. George D. Herron was a notorious social patriot during the war--a really horrible example who put himself directly in the service of the American government as a propagandist with the special task of establishing an identity between Marxism and the Kaiser's "kultur".

The present Herron is apparently his son. For this mistake in the selection of his parentage there may be a certain extenuation in the probability that the connection is not entirely legitimate. The elder Herron was also a notorious exponent--and also practitioner--of the theory of free love.

We are also considering an invitation to Gitlow to participate in the editorial board of the theoretical organ. We are having now direct negotiations with the group, as you were informed previously. Some advice from you as to further procedure would be quite timely now. This group appears to be very anxious to sign a joint declaration with us for a new Party and to begin practical collaboration along this line. We have held two sessions of the joint committee. I enclose copies of the drafts which we have proposed. The one marked #1 was presented at the first session; the one marked #2 was presented at the second session.

They are anxious to evade any direct and clear declaration on the principled question of socialism in one country. They have come a long way from their old position and in their discussion freely agree with the necessity of indicting Stalinism for turning its back on world revolution, in favor of an insular national socialism. But they balk at putting this formulation boldly in the foreground. They argue that the opposition to "socialism in one country" is a negative presentation of the question (in the same way as Eastman puts the question in the Modern Monthly).

Their underlying motives also have a certain psychological explanation. As a part of the Lovestone group they were committed to the dogma of socialism in one country for a long time--the struggle against it has become such a pronounced "Trotskyist" position and they have hope of bringing with them eventually a considerable grouping which is still formally in the Lovestone faction. For

this they feel the need of a transitional formulation which puts things rather ~~ambiguously~~. Of course they don't give this explanation; it is our own interpretation of their position.

We are not disposed to yield to them on this point as it will only make greater difficulties later. At the present time the negotiations are deadlocked on this point.

The second point of difference relates to the question of the attitude which the proposed joint declaration should take toward the "Declaration of the Four" at Paris. They want to greet this declaration as a step forward but to keep from any endorsement of it or identification with it. Here again they emphasized that they have no principled difference. They have tactical objections to the prominence given in the Declaration to socialism in one country and to the identification of the movement for a new International so completely with such a small nucleus.

We don't intend at all to break off relations with them. They are yielding right along on the principled questions. In addition to that they show a firm will to get together with us and we do not intend to close the door to them. Even though this group is not a large one numerically, Gitlow enjoys a considerable prestige and there is no doubt that the group, ^{as a whole} means everything seriously. What is needed now, it appears to us, ^{is a tactic} which will serve to maintain friendly relations and assist the process of fusion without committing the League to any ambiguous political formulations in a joint document.

We have another meeting scheduled for next Thursday. There we will probably propose, if an agreement cannot be reached on the formulation for a joint statement, that we devise some practical method of collaboration on concrete tasks and begin a clarifying discussion in the Militant of the questions in dispute.

We hear that the proposal for a new Party has already created a certain ferment in the Conference for Progressive Labor Action--this is an American version of the I.L.P. without its mass membership. The death of Hillquit will probably also have a considerable effect on the internal situation in the S.P. Norman Thomas will probably become predominant in the leadership. The ambitious young elements in the party--tending vaguely toward a left position--have given in the past a certain support to Thomas against the fossilized machine of Hillquit. It is quite probable that a new situation will hasten a shake-up in this alignment and bring the more radical elements in the party toward a clearer political position. The Stalinists succeeded in arresting a promising left movement in the socialist youth organization by breaking it off prematurely. If we are up to the mark the next movement in the S.P. should fall under our influence and have a happier ~~combination~~.

We would appreciate very highly some specific advice from you in regard to our further procedure ~~on~~ the new course.

Fraternally yours,

J. P. Cannon
Secretary

JPC:RS