All Power to the Left Wing!

By Louis C. Fraina

An Answer to the Michigan-Federation Call for a New Party

THERE is a call issued for the "organization of a Communist Party" at Chicago on September 1. The Convention is called by a "National Organization Committee" consisting of Dennis E. Batt, D. Elbaum, O. C. Johnson, John Keracher, S. Kopnagel, J. S. Stilson and A. Stoklitsky. The committee represents a small group which, emphasizing its own plans and purposes as against the considered opinion of the Left Wing Conference, is actually sabotaging the Left Wing.

This development was initiated at the Conference. A group of comrades, of which the most consisted of the delegates of the Central Commitee of the Russian Federation and four delegates from Michigan, together with three utterly unrepresentative delegates from New York City, appeared at the Conference determined upon one thing: to force the immediate organization of a Communist Party. All their actions were colored by this determination. The Conference itself did not interest them. The task of laying the theoretical and tactical basis for our movement did not interest them. All was secondary to their preparations for a *coup d'etat;* and when their *coup* met miserable disaster, they practically abandoned the Conference.

The Left Wing Conference laid down the theoretical and tactical basis for a party of Communist Socialism. That is indisputable. It equally laid down the organization basis, since it unified the forces of revolutionary Socialism. A party does not consist simply of a name. It must have a theory, tactics and an organization,—all of which were developed at the Conference.

The Conference was not against a Communist Party. The majority favored a Communist Party in principle, but decided that the fight within the Socialist Party should be waged for two months more, to completely rout the moderates and to rally the revolutionary masses in the party, and that the final decision should be in Chicago at the Emergency Party Convention.

The issue in dispute was not one of principle. It was one of judgment whether to organize the party immediately, or wait two months.

This is not a fundamental issue.

But the minority deserted, at the moment when a concentration of our forces was absolutely necessary.

They are comrades who, at the moment when revolutionary unity is indispensable, place their own ambitions and their own petty politics above the fundamental interests of the movement. Secession on principle is justifiable; but secession where there is agreement on fundamental principles is desertion.

Consider the facts:

The problem of whether a Communist Party should be organized immediately at the Conference was discussed at several sessions. The proposal was decisively defeated.

The proposal being decisively defeated, the minority delegates who favored a Communist Party immediately should have withdrawn *and organized their party*. That alone would have constituted sincere, consistent and uncompromising procedure. But they stayed.

At a subsequent session, the "Communist" minority united in favor of a Convention called by the State of Michigan for Chicago on September 1 to "organize a new party."

The call for a new party issued by Michigan was *not* a Left Wing or Bolshevik call—that is admitted by the delegates of the Central Committees of the Russian and Lettish Federations, who are the heart of the secession group. Yet they rallied around this call at the Conference—a miserable compromise.

This maneuvre was decisively beaten.

But still the "Communist" minority stayed in the Conference. At another session, Delegate Hourwich (who was elected by Local New York of the Left Wing, but actually represented the Central Committee of the Russian Federation at the Conference) proposed that, in addition to nine or eleven members of the National Council of the Left Wing to be elected at the Conference, each Central Committee of the Russian Federations should elect one member each in addition—which would have meant *Central Committee, not federation membership* control of the Council.

Call For Delegates

Pursuant to the actions of the National Left Wing Conference, the following call is made to Left Wing Socialists and Locals throughout the country:

Act at once to win the allotment of delegates to your State for the Emergency Convention of August 30th for the Left Wing.

Proceed at once, in a regular official way, to instruct these delegates to join themselves with the National Left Wing Organization in its plans to transform the Socialist Party into a Communist Party, or to establish a new Communist Party.

Where the Left Wing has failed to make nominations on the regular ballots for election of delegates, or where the Left Wing elements cannot carry the regular party elections, to organize the Left Wing membership provisionally for the purpose of electing delegates to go to Chicago on August 30th to work with the National Left Wing.

The election of delegates by the Left Wing acting outside the regular party machinery should however, be on same ration of delegates to members as in regular election, although the requirement of three years party membership would not apply in this case.

In the formation of a new party these Left Wing delegates will constitute the only representation of their respective States, so it is all-important that such delegates be sent to Chicago on August 30th.

Notify the Left Wing Council early and fully concerning your actions.

NATIONAL COUNCIL, LEFT WING
I. E. Ferguson, Nat'l Sec'y

This proposal was decisively defeated. And then, at another session, 31 delegates, representing mostly the Federation delegates, read a declaration "withholding further activity in the Conference" because the Conference rejected the proposal for a Convention to organize a Communist Party.

But these delegates stayed in the Conference and participated in its acts *after* the defeat of the "immediate Communist Party" issue. *They did not withdraw until the proposal to control the National Council was defeated.* In other words, the "Communist" minority did not secede until its proposal to allow each Federation Central Committee separate representation on the Council, thereby securing control, was rejected by the Conference.

Re-consider the facts:

1) The Left Wing Conference decided in favor of a Communist Party, to issue either out of the capture of the Socialist Party or out of a secession at the Emergency National Convention.

2) The Conference developed the theoretical, tactical and organization basis for the Party.

3) The Conference decided that, in the event the Socialist Party National Convention is postponed by the old N. E. C., the Council of the Left Wing shall proceed with the Convention.

4) The Conference, moreover, issued a call for a Convention in Chicago, September 1, of all revolutionary elements that would unite with a revolutionized Socialist Party or with a new Communist Party.

These decisions provide an ample basis for the unity of all uncompromising Left Wing forces. Yet a small clique of deserters issue their own call, as against the Left Wing.

What is this call issued "to organize a Communist Party"? In the first place, it says: "Those who realize that the capturing of the Socialist Party as such is an empty victory will not hesitate to respond to this call and leave the 'right' and the 'centre' to sink together with their 'revolutionary' leaders. . . . Rendered impotent by the conflicting emotions and lack of understanding present (the Left Wing Conference) continued to mark time as centrists in the wake of the right."

In other words, the Conference and its National Council represent the "centre," while the small clique of deserters represents the Left Wing.

But now consider: The Call to "organize a Communist Party" says: "This party will be founded upon the following principles," and then comes the program of the proposed new party, *every single word of which,* except one short sentence and the excision of certain unimportant passages *is the program adopted by the Left Wing Conference, and appropriated by these deserters.*

Either—

—the Left Wing Conference adopted a revolutionary program worthy of being used as the basis of a Communist Party, in which event the crime of the small clique of deserters in bolting the Conference is moustrous;

Or—

—the Left Wing Conference was a "centre" Conference adopting a "centre" program, in which event the proposed Communist Party is to be built upon the basis of a "centre" or non-Bolshevik program.

Either contingency is a terrible commentary on the acts of the seceding comrades.

The small clique of deserters stigmatizes the Left Wing Conference as reactionary. *But they adopt its program.* By this adoption, they admit that it is a revolutionary program representative of fundamental Left Wing principles and tactics. They admit, moreover, that the Conference, in its formulation of theory and policy, was in accord with Communist Socialism.

It comes down to this, apparently, in the judgment of the small clique of deserters: if you favor the immediate organization of a Communist Party, you are Left Wing; if you favor a Communist Party being organized two months later, you are a "centrist." It makes the test of revolutionary integrity, not one of fundamental principles and tactics, but one of time and judgment—which is nonsense.

Not *all* who favor an immediate organization of the Communist Party are Bolsheviki. Three of the names signed to the Call are *not*

(*Continued on Page 8*)

All Power to the Left Wing!

(*Continued from Page 7*)

Bolsheviki at all—Dennis E. Batt, O. C. Johnson and John Keracher. The program adopted at the Left Wing Conference (which the Call for a Communist Party adopts as *its* program) was opposed in fundamentals by these three Michigan comrades.

At the Conference, I challenged the comrade delegates of the Central Committees of the Russian and Lettish Federations to deny that the call for a new party issued by Michigan (around which they rallied) was not Bolshevik—but there was no answer to the challenge.

The Michigan comrades (I mean the "leaders" and not the membership) are in fundamentals antagonistic to Left Wing principles and tactics; they *never* adopted the Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing; they are, in fundamentals, Menshevik.

In other words, Stoklitsky, Stilson, Hourwich & Co. are willing to unite forces with comrades whom they *admit* are in theory actually antagonistic to Bolshevism; but they split away from the Left Wing Conference which is so thoroughly Bolshevik that they adopt *its* program as the basis for their proposed new party.

The most miserable compromise lurks in this whole procedure. At the Conference, the Russian comrades rallied around the Michigan Call, which they admit was not Bolshevik; now the Michigan comrades accept a program which they opposed at our Conference and which they repudiate in fundamentals. This is petty politics, unworthy of men in the revolutionary movement.

A Communist Party must adhere to fundamental revolutionary principles. It must be uncompromising.

But the proposed new Communist Party starts with the most miserable compromise imaginable. It starts with elements which do not agree. It compromises in caucus, and starts as a *swamp*. It is these compromising comrades who at this moment are playing the "centre" game.

The Left Wing Conference repudiated compromise. It decided upon an uncompromising party policy and adopted an uncompromising program.

The compromisers of the proposed "Communist Party" must be disciplined. They must be repudiated. They must realize the necessity of revolutionary discipline in the Left Wing.

At the Conference the Michigan delegates (who had not adopted the Left Wing Manifesto and Program) issued an ultimatum, that the Conference must either adopt their call and proposal for a Convention in September, or they would withdraw and proceed with their own plans. They acted directly against the unity and discipline of the Left Wing.

There is danger ahead, comrades, and particularly comrades of the Russian Federation. The vanity and the lust for power of leaders must be crushed. We must have revolutionary discipline. We must have a mass movement. There is only one Left Wing, organized in the National Council. All power to the Left Wing!