

A "Socialist" Prosecuting Attorney

By Nicholas I. Hourwich

AT the joint session of the central committees of all New York locals of the Socialist Party, held Monday, March 17, representatives of the Labor Defense Union (for the defense of political prisoners), stated officially, for the first time, it seems ("unofficially" it had become known a great deal earlier), the "Socialist" as the party moralists very likely would phrase it, and carefully term it, concerning the Milwaukee "Socialist" prosecuting attorney. This guardian of "law and order," elected on the Socialist Party ticket about a year ago, arrested in Milwaukee and put in prison for "seditious activity" fifteen persons—Socialists and Anarchists. During the confinement of these comrades an explosion took place in the prison, which resulted in the death of eleven policemen. The explosion was, of course, laid to the imprisoned "seditious persons," and though there were neither data nor proofs of their guilt, the "Socialist" prosecuting attorney, with zeal and ardor that would give credit to any of the capitalist "guardians of order," decided to investigate the "case" and to secure a verdict "guilty." "The case" was conducted according to all rules of the prosecuting attorney's art. All means were resorted to—means which have given so much "honor" to the San-Francisco prosecutor, Fickert, who accomplished the sentencing of Thomas Mooney. The laurels of Mr. Fickert, apparently, secured the envy of his "Socialist" colleague in Milwaukee!...

In search of "evidence," the residences of all suspected persons were raided, by order of "our" Milwaukee prosecutor; correspondence was seized; also Socialist literature, and portraits of Marx, Engels, and other Socialist workers and writers.

The hearing was scheduled for the very day when the funeral of the eleven policemen was to be held, at the time when the disposition of the man in the street was especially excited against all sorts of "seditious persons" and all sorts of "sedition." At the trial, the "Socialist" prosecutor delivered a pathetic speech, during which he flourished before the eyes of the jury the portraits of Marx, Engels and Bakunin, and So-

cialist brochures found at the residences of the men under trial, asserting that all this "circumstantial evidence" established beyond dispute the "criminal state of mind" of the men on the stand, and their participation in the explosion....

As might be expected, the prosecutor won a "brilliant victory," and "justice" triumphed. All the men on trial were found guilty, and were sentenced to imprisonment, the terms reaching 25 years!....

And since virtue is always rewarded in this best of all possible worlds, the virtue of the prosecutor and the abilities of this "Socialist" representative of the "good Socialist city" of Milwaukee were also rewarded. At the last November elections in Milwaukee, the hero-prosecutor, who had upheld the honor of the Socialist Party, and who had proved to the dismay of its enemies that a "Socialist" prosecutor is never lagging behind a bourgeois prosecutor, was, as recognition of his "services" to the party, again renominated by the party, and again elected as prosecuting attorney.

Such is the brief but instructive story of how a "Socialist" prosecutor of Milwaukee "fought for" the emancipation of the working class!....

We do not doubt that this story will evoke a feeling of repulsion and indignation in all members of the Socialist Party. We do not doubt that even the right wing of the party (with the exception, perhaps, of Milwaukee, for whom, apparently, Socialism does not exist) will turn its back on an individual who so openly and unceremoniously transgresses Socialist "ethics;" and as Pontius Pilate washing his hands, will bring him to the party court. We do not entertain very much assurance—there are too many things that makes us pessimistic in this respect—but we are ready to hope that the party court will expel this "Socialist Prosecutor" from the party.

The moderates of the right wing of the party will then come to us with a sigh of relief and with the

noble consciousness of a duty performed, and they will say: "You see, we have expelled him. The party is purified and its honor vindicated."

But we shall answer these party moralists: "Is it really so? Can it be, really, that the expulsion of this or that individual party member who has violated Socialist principles will 'save' and 'purify' the party? And is it appropriate that you should express your indignation at this ill-fated 'violation'? Look at London, Berger & Co., whom you have been in the habit of ardently defending and praising at all times. Indeed, all these leaders of yours are, in greater or smaller degree, daily doing the same thing which has provoked your indignation in the Milwaukee 'comrade-prosecutor'; they are traitors to Socialism and to the cause of proletarian emancipation."

No! By merely expelling this or that member of the party you will not cleanse the party and save its honor. Paraphrasing the materialistic formula of Marx, it is not the individual party members who determine the party consciousness, but, on the contrary, the consciousness of the individual member is determined by the party life. In other words, the "collapse of Socialist morals" in the party, treason to Socialist principles by individual members of the party, are the result and the symptoms of the general disease in the whole party organism. The party as a whole has not yet learned the revolutionary lessons of proletarian experience in Russia and Germany. In spite of these lessons, the party as a whole continues to follow the old worn-out policy of opportunism, compromise and cheap "reformism." But that which did not comparatively affect the party in the past during the period of peaceful development, must necessarily result in acute diseases in this period of revolutionary transition.

To really cure the party of its diseases, the party must abandon the environment of opportunism for a healthy "revolutionary climate." This is the problem of the recently formed Left Wing of the American Socialist Party. The cure for the diseases of the party is prescribed by the Manifesto and Program of the Left Wing. There is no other cure.