

Left Wing Bogey

By Nicholas I. Hourwich

The successes of the "Left Wing" of the American Socialist Party begin evidently to frighten the official leaders of the Social Opportunists. From this fear spring the "radical measures" to which individual Party "leaders" and the Party machine resort in their struggle against the "seditious" elements within the Party; from this fear springs the haste with which, foreseeing the alarming possibility of defeat at the Emergency Convention, they expel from the Party or discredit the independent thinking members, and even whole "Left Wings".

The magnitude of the danger threatening the dominating Right Wing can be judged, for instance, from the fact that "Left Wing Sedition" has penetrated even such a bulwark of "respectable" Socialism as Milwaukee, guarded by the maestro and ideologue of American Social Opportunism, the "Socialist" Congressman, member of the National Executive Committee of the Party, Victor Berger.

The *Milwaukee Leader*, published in Milwaukee and edited by Berger—a "Socialist paper"—deems it even wise to devote to this "danger" a special editorial under the significant caption: "Do We Want Violence"?

This editorial is worth discussing, because it gives complete expression to the "philosophy" of the Right Wing, as well as to those weapons with which the latter is ready to arm itself in its struggle to crush and destroy the hated "Left Wing".

The central point of the editorial, as can be seen from the caption, is the question of "violence".

We shall not discuss here the scientific incorrectness of the term "violence". The main weight of the question, as it is put by the Left Wing, consists not in whether "violence" should or should not be used; but in the application of the revolutionary mass method of struggle. As can be gleaned from the text of the article, the term "violence" is used by the editorial writer of the *Milwaukee Leader* instead of the term "revolutionary method of struggle", and used deliberately—in the vein of the whole provocative character of the editorial. The more abstract, and therefore less definite expression "revolutionary method of struggle", might prove to be a harder task to classify under the articles of the "penal code" than the more concrete and definite—and therefore, more useful for the purposes of the Milwaukee "Socialist" prosecutor, Mr. Zabel—term "violence".

Berger's editorial proclaims first: "The Left Wingers want to use violence. Of course, they do not directly say so"—maliciously remarks the writer, with a look towards police headquarters. "Such things cannot very well be said openly. But if you read their writings you can come to no other conclusion. . . .

"The Left Wingers want to incite a series of violent uprisings, using the methods of the Spartacans of Germany as their model, hoping that each uprising will bring them a little nearer to the goal, and

that after a few outbreaks they will carry the day."

"But"—and here the writer dismisses the Spartacan tactics—"these methods have not succeeded even in Germany," to say nothing of America. The author evidently never realized that most, if not all, of the responsibility for the "failure" of the Spartacans in Germany must be ascribed to his spiritual and political partisans—the Scheidemanns!

The victory of the working class—in the opinion of the editorial writer—will be won not through a revolutionary struggle, but as a result of a "political success at the polls". In other words, this is the well known realization of Socialism . . . through voting at elections, through the "parliamentary majority". . . Evidently the author has not progressed, has forgotten nothing and learned nothing during the last few stormy years, though he states at the beginning that "nearly all Socialists are somewhat more radical than they were before the war". Apparently he even does not belong to these "nearly all".

However, the author shows some signs of swinging to the "Left"; a tribute, as it were, to the spirit of the times. Reluctantly, he is even ready to admit the possibility of application of "violence" during the period of the social reconstruction in this country. But Socialists on no account will be guilty of such "violence". They will patiently vote. . . "Violence" may be applied only as a result of "provocation" on the part of the "conservatives"—and even this "after we (i. e., the Socialists) become the majority".

But even in case of such "provocation on the part of the conservatives It is not the part of a political party to incite to violence. By its very nature and essence, a political party is an organization that uses peaceful, political methods. If violence should come, its natural way of coming would be by way of the unions, not the Party. ."

However, there are still to be found Socialists who claim that a Socialist Party, by its nature and essence, differs from all other political parties in that it is a revolutionary party, and that its task is not to follow the tail of the unions, but to march forward, to lead the unions, lead the whole working class!

All this revolutionary mission the Bergersonian editorial providentially entrusts to the unions (and of course, to the unions of the American Federation of Labor,—he recognizes no other unions). It is the more convenient, so that the failure of the Revolution and the shameful conduct of the Social-Patriots before and during the war, might be ascribed to these same unions, as is being done by one of Berger's comrades. Morris Hillquit, in his latest pronouncement.

After all this anti-revolutionary and counter-revolutionary absurdity, the author finally gives some practical advice to his readers regarding the "Left Wing".

In a nutshell his advice is, "For God's sake, don't deal with these seditious persons".

And this advice is given by the author of the editorial article in an open manner, frightening and playing up the basest, small-town "Hebrew fear" of his readers:

"If you are thinking of joining the Left Wing—by taking part in the formation of a Communist League or otherwise—we want you to know exactly what you are about. If you join the Left Wing, you thereby agree to take an active part in a bloody uprising in Milwaukee."

The added words, "in Milwaukee" (remember, this "bloody uprising" will take place precisely here in Milwaukee) are of special significance, and, as the readers can see for themselves, bear all the attributes of a provocative denunciation.

The picture is completed by flinging a delicate hint regarding the political honesty of the "Left Wing":

"We feel certain that our capitalist enemies have some of their paid spies in the Left Wing to urge the use of violent methods" . . .

Already the late Comrade Mehring, in his famous letter to the Russian Bolsheviks, pointed out that one of the methods of the "Scheidemanns" in fighting the Independent Socialists and the Spartacans was the accusation that they were "paid agents of the Government," and provocateurs. It looks as if the methods of the "Scheidemanns" in all countries are alike.