

BOB SWALLOWS UP SOCIALIST PARTY CORPSE

By JAY LOVESTONE.

(Thirteenth Article.)

For all practical political intents and purposes the socialist party is no longer in existence.

Thru permitting the LaFollette movement to swallow it, the socialist party has signed its own political death warrant.

The lone Congressman Berger, the prominent New York attorney Hillquit, and the less well-known Reverend Norman Thomas held formal obsequies over the corpse of what was once the mighty Socialist Party at the LaFollette Conference on July 4, 1924.

For many years there was unrelenting hostility between the Socialist

Party and the followers of Senator La Follette. Despite the repeated flirtations of the Socialist Party bosses with the Wisconsin reform wizard, the membership time and again prevented a merger of their organization with the Badger state senator. In fact, there was a time when feeling ran so high against such improper political coquetting that a national referendum was held to decide on the expulsion of Berger from the Socialist Party on the charge of having been guilty of collusion with capitalist politicians.

It was this continued, strong opposition of the Socialist Party rank and file that forced the leaders to denounce LaFollette on many occasions. Time and again the Socialist membership drove the party officials to attack LaFollette's trust-busting program, the graft with which his machine was reeking, his antilabor lieutenants, his opposition to the working class waging political struggles against the exploiters, and his general fraudulent progressivism.

In the light of the success finally achieved by the leaders of the Socialist Party in annihilating its last possible claim to be called a party of in-

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LaFollette Swallows Corpse of Socialist Party

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dependent working class political action, a review of what the Socialist rank and file once actually compelled these same leaders to say of Robert M. LaFollette is very timely.

Charged with LaFollettism.

Even twenty years ago Berger had his eye on the LaFollette bandwagon. In 1905 he was charged, on this score, with having an understanding with capitalist parties. It was only his control of the Wisconsin party machine that saved Berger's political neck and face.

Interesting information on the strong opposition of the general socialist membership to these Berger "understandings" is afforded by the following report of the Social Democratic Herald of June 10, 1905:

"The State Executive Board also points to the fact that the National Committee has not awaited the investigation of the State Executive Board of Wisconsin but has already removed Comrade Berger from the National Committee.

"The finding of the State Executive Board of Wisconsin (a Berger committee) is as follows:

"That no collusion or understanding of any sort whatever exists, or at any time existed, between the Social Democratic Party of Milwaukee or Comrade Berger and any capitalistic party, candidate or candidates."

The removal of Berger by the National Committee was then submitted to a referendum, the Crestline Referendum. 4,215 voted for the expulsion of Victor Berger. 4,718 voted against his expulsion. Wisconsin, where Berger was in absolute control of the party machinery, cast 975 votes. National secretary Mailly then charged that Wisconsin was not entitled to cast that many votes, as it was much behind in dues, and that this alone saved Berger from being thrown out by the membership for his having been in collusion with capitalist parties and politicians.

Then, as now, the dominant capitalist party in Wisconsin was the LaFollette republican crew.

Attack LaFollette Labor Record.

Today LaFollette is in an alliance with the Socialist Party and is seeking the support of the workers on the ba-

sis of his record in Wisconsin and in Congress. It is this record that the socialist bureaucracy has forced its membership to indorse. Let us call upon the Social Democratic Herald of July 1, 1905 to tell us what the socialists once thought of the LaFollette regime in the Wisconsin Commonwealth. We read:

"The LaFollette legislature has had the worst record of killing labor bills of any of its predecessors."

Victor Berger further declared in the Milwaukee Free Press of September 13, 1906: "LaFollette is trying to do the same thing in the republican party that Altgeld tried in the democratic, and he will have less success, because the democratic party had no principles except to get graft, while the republican party has well-defined principles for capitalism and is proud of them."

As late as April 6, 1923 the Milwaukee Leader took occasion to attack the LaFollette machine because it saved the private detective agencies of Wisconsin. In its comment on the failure of the state senate to interfere with the private detective agencies breaking strikes, Berger's mouthpiece said:

"Senator Howard Teasdale, one of the LaFollette senators who swung over to the lobby for private detective agencies, opposed the bill (to regulate) because it would make it difficult for reformers to smell out vice."

LaFollette-Class Enemy.

Especially significant is the following comment on the Farmer-Labor Party campaign of 1920 made by the Socialist Party in its national campaign book of that year:

"Its (the Farmer Labor Party's) selection of Christensen for President, a man unknown in the struggles of the workers, a man who was willing to withdraw in favor of LaFollette, shows the danger of deserting the Socialist Party for the Farmer Labor Party. LaFollette, Christensen's choice, was unwilling to have the platform contain a protest in behalf of the Negro. LaFollette opposed any 'radical' platform. He wanted a 'liberal' platform that would not offend many conservative voters, one that would not suggest a 'class party.'"

"If LaFollette and his views can be satisfactory to Christensen, the latter

cannot be satisfactory to determined and enlightened working men and women. A class party of the workers is needed." (Page 74.)

It is on this record that LaFollette has won over the Socialist Party leadership. LaFollette has not dropped his vigorous opposition to a class party of the workers. The Wisconsin senator is as vociferous as ever in his denunciation of any and all who dare call his program radical. At the Cleveland Conference it was LaFollette's influence that prevented the gathering from taking an official attitude towards the Negro problem and the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1920 LaFollette failed in his effort to kill the Farmer-Labor Party. In 1920 the Farmer Labor Party refused to permit LaFollette to dictate its principles. Four years after, last July, LaFollette succeeded in striking a mortal blow at the farmer labor movement. The same socialist leaders who denounced these efforts of LaFollette in 1920 helped the same LaFollette to undermine the independent working class political movement in 1924. And this in spite of the fact that today, more than ever before, there is an urgent need for a class party of the workers!

Socialists Right-About Face.

In the past the socialists have not minced words in ripping up LaFollette's trust-busting program. On September 3, 1904 the Wisconsin Socialist state convention adopted a resolution which read: "As for Governor LaFollette, he is powerless against the trusts and capitalists, because, as a good republican and lawyer, he cannot consistently oppose property rights of any kind. These rights are more sacred to all so-called reformers than the rights of man."

Daniel Hoan, now socialist mayor of Milwaukee, has made it clear in his pamphlet "The Failure of Regulation" that: "Not only were trusts not prosecuted in Wisconsin while Senator LaFollette was governor, but they have not been prosecuted before or since, in spite of the fact that there was then and is now a statute (section 1791-j) which provides in substance that any combination organized under the laws of Wisconsin, which shall enter into any combination or agree-

ment to prevent competition or to control prices, shall, in an action instituted by the attorney general of the state, have its charter revoked."

But Hoan has changed his mind, tho LaFollette has not. Today, Hoan is asking the workingmen to vote for this program of LaFollette.

Spurned Progressivism.

Before the Socialist Party committed suicide it, now and then, took occasion to expose the so-called progressivism of LaFollette and his followers. Commenting on LaFollette's support of one Thompson against the labor leader Frank J. Weber, running for the United States Senate, the Milwaukee Leader said on October 22, 1920:

"And here comes Bob LaFollette and his would-be progressives and would-be union men and puts up Mr. Thompson. . . That's dirty politics on the part of the progressives, who by the way are composed of town politicians and fake labor leaders who are looking to LaFollette to pick them up and give them a better office not for the best interests of the people but to further their own ends and keep the progressive forces divided."

Summing up the net results of LaFollette's program in Wisconsin, Mayor Hoan declared in his "Failure of Regulation" (p. 54): "The results which followed the enactment of the law regulating public service corporations in Wisconsin have very much pleased the special interests. The chief reasons for this are the following: The largest consumers get the lowest rates. Public utility stocks and bonds enjoy a rise in value. The utility corporation is protected from competition. The owners are granted an indeterminate franchise. The investors are granted large dividends."

What more could the employers ask from the government?

Talks Against Progressives.

Finally, Victor Berger addressing Congress on May 10, 1924, characterized the spurious progressives, at whose feet he is now worshipping, in the following stinging manner: "In America, as in Europe, however, it is absolutely useless to expect any help for either the farmers or for the workingmen in the cities from the politicians of the capitalist organizations.

"The republicans and the democrats will do nothing to relieve the situation, except to introduce bills which obviously will not pass both houses of Congress, or such as will only help the big fellows in the end. Our progressive politicians are also worse than useless, so long as they hang on to the coat tails of the old parties, because these progressives are simply assisting in the sham battle.

"No matter what beautiful phrases this or the other great progressive leader may use in order to get the votes of the 'plain people,' the policy of both, and especially of the republican party, is invariably dictated by Wall Street and high finance."

Yet, today, three months after this speech Berger has driven his party to become part and parcel of the LaFollette movement, of the LaFollette organization which is supporting many republican and democratic congressmen, senators and governors who are avowed enemies of the workers. In Wisconsin, for instance, LaFollette is backing Governor Blain who is scores of miles away from progressivism. In New York, for example, LaFollette is supporting the republican congressman Dickstein against the socialist Meyer London. In Montana, LaFollette and Wheeler are behind Senator Walsh whom the State Federation of Labor has denounced in its last convention as a bitter foe of the workers and as the author of the vicious state criminal syndicalist laws.

What About Members?

What will the rank and file of the Socialist party say to this complete right-about-face of their leaders? How will they look upon their party committing hari-kari as an independent political organization? Is there no way in which they can square accounts with their misleaders who have stabbed in the back the movement for independent working class political action?

Will they be satisfied to follow the leadership of and put their faith in LaFollette who has for years done everything in his power to thwart the attempts of the workers to organize themselves as a class to fight politically against their exploiters?

Merely to put these questions is to answer them for the class-conscious workers of the entire country.