

SPLITS AND CLASS STRUGGLE

By JOHN PEPPER

IS IT true that Communists advocate splits everywhere and under any circumstances? Or is it true that the tactics of the united front that we must avoid splits everywhere and under any circumstance?

James Oneal, the editor of the socialist organ, "The New Leader," again attacks the Communists. James Oneal is the socialist who more than anyone makes it understandable why the Third International adopted the name Communist, abandoning the name socialist as the synonym for shame and betrayal.

James Oneal attacks the Communists as perpetual splitters, as incorrigible disrupters of every organization.

In the March issue of the New Leader, the official organ of the socialist party, he accuses the Communists of wanting to split the May 30th convention of the farmer-labor movement. Oneal writes under the heading, "The United Affront": "The Minnesota conference accepted the Communist professions of good faith and permitted Communist delegates to associate themselves with the Farmer-Labor Party is issuing a call for a national conference to meet in St. Paul next May. . . . Now then, turn to the issue of the WORKER of December 22, 1923. Here will be found an article by John Pepper on the proposed May conference. . . . But in his article he writes of the 'tremendous tasks' that face the Communists. They are always facing 'tremendous tasks,' and 'great historical tasks.' But the task he has in mind in this article is the necessity of the Communists splitting any organization that may be organized next May. This he writes, 'Is the greatest historical task, the task which stands before all other tasks.' Of course, this 'task' is justified on the ground that bourgeois elements will creep into the conference. But who are the 'bourgeois elements' in the view of all Communists. The answer is easy. All who do not accept Communist 'principles' are a part of the 'bourgeois elements.' The Pepper article is an announcement of what the duty of Communists is in the event of them getting into any conference on the score of the 'united front.'"

Is it really true what James Oneal asserts, that the Communists want to split every organization, that the Communists want to split the May conference of the farmer-labor movement, and that my article said that the task before us is "the necessity of the Communists splitting any or-

ganization that may be organized next May?"

Of course James Oneal's assertion is a lie, a conscious, deliberate lie. He cannot quote, nor does he quote a single phrase from my article or any other article published in any Communist publication, which says a single word to the effect that we want to split the May conference. And on the contrary, if he possessed at least the literary honesty, after having long ago lost his revolutionary honesty, he could quote hundreds of citizens from scores of articles and manifestos written by all Communist writers (including myself) for strengthening and building up the May convention.

I will quote here word for word what I really wrote in my article of December 22, 1923, in the WORKER, under the heading, "La Follette, the Third Party and the Labor Party." I pointed out that the following tasks face our Party:

"1. We must realize that our chief enemy is big capital, the government and the political parties of imperialism. We must understand the revolutionary significance of the political mass upheaval of all the lower classes of American society against ruling imperialistic capital. Our first task is, therefore, to throw into the scales the solid forces of this revolutionary process against capitalism. That means that we—regardless of how little we may like it—must retain a political alliance with the Third Party movement against the capitalist parties.

"2. It is in the deepest interest of the working class and the American revolution to render the split between the capitalist class and the other classes as wide as possible. It is, therefore, a paramount Communist task to shatter the capitalist united front. We must drive the LaFollette group to split with the democratic and republican parties. It is one of our most important tasks everywhere, in every trade union and farmers' organization, in every Farmer-Labor Party, in every Third Party, to begin a mighty campaign which will force the La Follette group into making the split.

"3. We must make every effort to split away the workers and exploited farmers from the well-to-do farmers and small business men. It is the greatest historical task, the task which stands before all other tasks, to develop the class consciousness of the workers and exploited farmers."

My article, therefore, really does speak of splits; but of what kind of

splits? Do I advocate or propose any split of the May 30 convention? Not at all in my article, but only in James Oneal's lying imagination. I advocate two kinds of splits in my article: (1) The split between the capitalist class and the non-capitalist classes; (2) The split of the workers and exploited farmers from the well-to-do farmers and small business men.

I, therefore, advocate the split, the breaking up of the united front of the capitalist class. I want to tear away the non-capitalist classes of our society, the farmers, small business men and workers from the leaders of big capital and political parties of big capital, and I want to separate organizationally as well as ideologically the proletarian elements, the workers and exploited farmers from the other non-capitalist classes, from well-to-do farmers and lower middle class. I say in my article that the class struggle of the working class will more easily make headway when capitalist society cannot set up a united front against the working class. I claim that the capitalist class and its government would become essentially weaker if the non-capitalist classes would lose confidence in the social and political leadership of big capital. I analyze the situation, showing that such a breaking away of the masses from the leadership of finance capital is progressing and that all signs point to the development of a Third Party movement.

At the same time my analysis goes further and makes it clear that the non-capitalist classes, altho in certain respects they have interests in common against financial capital, nevertheless, have interests which vary in many respects. Therefore, we Communists, as representatives of the proletariat, must make every effort to render the workers and exploited farmers conscious of these differences of class interests. I claim that we as Marxists must not underestimate the tremendous political significance of the breaking away of the non-capitalist classes from the leadership of finance capital, but at the same time we should not forget that these lower middle class masses will always hesitate; and only the working class, schooled and unified in capitalist production itself, will show the necessary discipline, centralization and collectivist spirit to take over the leadership in the overthrow of capitalist society.

My article advocates, therefore, two kinds of splits which must be

self-evident for every Marxist, for every consistent representative of the working class. I advocate the split of all non-capitalist elements from the capitalist class, and the split of the working class and exploited farmers from the gelatinous, formless, hesitating, atomized, non-capitalist mass. But at the same time every Communist, and of course my article too, advocates the united front of the working class, advocates and helps to organize the May 30th convention which tries to build up the united front of the workers and exploited farmers.

It is a deliberate lie to state that the Communists want to split the May 30th convention. We know that the May convention will not contain only elements of workers and exploited farmers. The class consciousness of workers and exploited farmers in our country is not yet so far advanced that they have separated everywhere and all along the line from the lower middle class and well-to-do farmer elements. But our attitude to the May 30th convention from the first moment was unconditional support. I personally have gone so far as to express the view that after we make a strong fight against it, we must accept even the nomination of La Follette if the majority of the exploited farmers and workers in the May convention will decide that way.

We are for the May 30th convention; and as against all the lies of James Oneal we are today the most loyal fighters against the postponement or abandonment of the May 30th convention. We fight for May 30th and we fight against July 4 because May 30th means the united front of the workers and exploited farmers, and at the same time it means the split from the movement of well-to-do farmers, small business men and labor aristocracy. We Communists are for splits if the split is in the interests of the class struggle of the workers, and we are against splits if they are against the interests of the class struggle of the workers. The tactics of the united front has two sides, the splitting and the unifying sides. It aims to unite all workers to fight capitalism; and at the same time it aims to split away all workers from the formless, general, non-capitalist mass as well as from the reactionary or yellow socialist leaders.

(NOTE:—This article was written before the St. Paul conference voted to postpone the May 30th convention to June 17th—Editor).