
Our National Executive Committee

[an editorial]

by Ludwig Lore

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More than 9 weeks have passed since the 25th of [October, old style] 1917, when the revolutionary Russian proletariat took the power of government into its own determined hands. And the Socialist Party of the United States has not yet taken a stand.

Not for lack of opportunity; on the contrary the situation has fairly clamored for action from our controlling party authorities. On the 16th and 17th of December [1917] the National Executive Committee met in Chicago in its regular quarterly session. A more suitable occasion for a declaration can hardly be imagined. It eliminated even the necessity of an initiative by one of the 5 members of the Executive Committee. Local Kings County (Brooklyn), and, as we have recently learned, Local Boston, Mass., as well, requested the NEC to issue a call to the locals throughout the country for the holding of meetings in support of the demands made by the Lenin-Trotsky cabinet for an immediate armistice and a democratic peace on the basis of no annexations or indemnities, and the self-determination of nations. The report of this session of the Executive Committee that appeared in the December issue of the National Office Review shows how the question was decided: by motion, action was deferred until the question of party policy could be taken up.

In other words, our 5 national leaders, the comrades Victor L. Berger, Morris Hillquit, Anna Maley, Seymour Stedman, and John M. Work, felt that the time had not yet come to take deci-

sive action on this question, on a matter that in importance overshadowed all other questions a thousandfold. They preferred to wait for developments in Russia, to see whether or not the Bolsheviks would be maintained in power. After all, where is the wisdom of compromising oneself for a course whose "stability" is by no means assured, which tomorrow may have become a "dead" issue?

How very differently the European Socialist parties have acted. The national convention of the Swiss Social Democracy that met at the end of November sent heartiest greetings to the Russian revolutionary government, assured it of its solidarity, and endorsed its program. The "British Socialist Party," the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain, the French party, the Social Democratic parties of the three Scandinavian countries, the minority and majority parties in Germany, the Socialist movement of Austria, the Italian Social Democracy, and even the Labour Party of Great Britain, declared their solidarity, in one way or another, with the Bolshevik government. In a word: all parties formerly affiliated with the International, even those whose social patriotic inclinations made them obviously sympathetic to the overthrown Kerensky government, sent messages of sympathy and solidarity to the courageous comrades in Russia — all, that is, except the Socialist Party and, of course, the hopelessly sterile "Socialist Labor Party." Arm in arm the two American Socialists organizations, or rather their

Executives, have sternly called the Socialist world back into its bounds. They prefer to play safe, and, like respectable business concerns, virtuously decline to undertake anything that smacks of adventure.

Now, to be sure, we may expect an official declaration of our “leaders” at any moment. For, in the meantime, the highest official of the United States has uttered words of highest appreciation for the revolutionists of Russia. Under the circumstances it is not likely that the opportunistic politicians that make up our Executive Committee will hesitate much longer, especially since the party membership is clamoring more and more urgently and unanimously for a declaration of sympathy. Our leading elements recognize this and will draw the consequences.

But it would be a mistake to assume that our National Executive postponed decisive action because it feared the consequences of a declaration of solidarity with our Russian comrades. Though our Executive Committee has never been remarkable for its courage, it could and would have found some way, some “safe” form of expression. What really prevented a declaration was honest distaste for the Bolshevik tactics. These people were so uncompromisingly revolutionary, so little respectable, so ridiculously proletarian. It must be admitted that the Bolshevik government, under the leadership of Lenin, Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, not only brought its plan of action into the fullest accord with socialist theory, but that they

have thought out and planned their activity down to the minutest detail. But the iron consistency with which they have carried out their resolutions, the infallibility with which their plans become action, are so different from the habit of coining high-sounding phrases without going out of one’s way to carry them out. In a word, our leaders are wholly out of sympathy with the Bolsheviki — it could not be otherwise.

In the new epoch of severe social struggles into which the world is evolving, the Socialist movement of the world, and certainly that of the United States, will sorely need the socialist clearness, the revolutionary determination, the proletarian fearlessness and consistency of the Bolsheviki.

Spirit and tactics of the Third International will be permeated with the spirit of the Bolsheviki, or it will cease to be. The new election of the National Executive that is already under way gives the Socialists of the United States the opportunity to “do their bit” in preparing the Socialist movement to cope with the problems that are awaiting it. *L.*

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As the magazine goes to press the National Executive Committee is heard from. The declaration comes too late to have the influence that should be exerted by such an important appeal of our Party.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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