
State Convention

by Alexis E. Georgian

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Managing Editor was Alexis E. Georgian; Assistant Editor was Stella Campbell Georgian.

The State Convention of the Socialist Party of Minnesota [Minneapolis: Feb. 23-25, 1918], like every national convention and like nearly every state convention in the country, found itself divided into two fairly distinct factions.

One faction claims to be ultra-revolutionary and styles itself “the Reds” and at the same time styles the opposing faction “Yellow.” These terms are objectionable in that they imply a reproach to one faction and do not in fact indicate the actual character of the factions. They indicate the character of the factions only as seen from the point of view of the self-styled “Reds.” Since the so-called “Yellows” are in the majority and the so-called “Reds” are in a minority in the United States, *The New Times* prefers to refer to these factions as the majority and minority faction.

As revealed in the Minnesota State Convention and in the national conventions, the cleavage between the two factions manifests itself on two points: first, the question of immediate demands and second, the question of endorsing the Industrial Workers of the World.

On the question of immediate demands the minority faction is opposed to including these in our platform. It would have us state only the fact of the class struggle and have us conduct our campaigns solely on our demand for the abolition of the class struggle.

Such a point of view is Utopian in the extreme. While laying verbal stress on the “class struggle,” these Utopians would ignore the daily

struggle between the classes that rages between the classes on the political arena as well as on the industrial field. Such an attitude on the part of a political party that is a minority is as absurd as it would be for an economic organization, still too weak to accomplish social revolution, to go out on strike for the abolishment of the wage system. But the Industrial Workers of the World, when they strike, do so to accomplish certain immediate demands under capitalism, such as an 8-hour day, higher wages, more sanitary working conditions, etc.

A minority Socialist would be the first to see the absurdity and Utopian nature of the contention that the IWW loses its revolutionary character by carrying on a daily struggle for immediate demands through industrial action and that by so doing it tends to sink into a mere reform organization whose object is only to make capitalism tolerable.

On the contrary, they can readily understand that it is only by waging a constant struggle on the industrial field for immediate demands to better the present condition of the workers that their organization is strengthened and that the workers acquire the necessary experience, intelligence, and numbers to accomplish the overthrow of capitalism.

The same thing holds true in the political field. It would be just as absurd to conduct a campaign exclusively on the issue of the abolishment of wage slavery as it would be to conduct a strike

on that issue. It is by means of immediate demands that the class struggle is made concrete and real. Because we are unable at once to accomplish our ultimate aim, is no reason why we should neglect to struggle for those conditions which will improve the lot of the workers and which are within our reach.

It is, in fact, only by a struggle for immediate demands in the political field that the workers can be attracted to the Socialist Party and can acquire the necessary experience and develop the necessary strength to accomplish our final aim.

Immediate demands are as a compass in a dense forest or on a vast ocean. They point out to the workers the direction in which they must travel to reach their goal.

Those Utopians who insist on the elimination of immediate demands ignore the fact that long periods of evolution are necessary to prepare for the period of revolution. They would detach themselves from the evolutionary processes and await in lofty isolation the approach of the revolution. On the other hand the majority Socialists would utilize the evolutionary processes to hasten the revolution. They would seize every advantage that changing social conditions bring within their grasp and thus gradually strengthen themselves until they are able to seize all.

The daily struggle for immediate demands strengthens the working class and prepares it for the final accomplishment of its historic mission — the overthrow of capitalism.

Therefore the inclusion of immediate demands in our program and the struggle for their attainment in political campaigns does not diminish the revolutionary character of the Socialist Party, but, on the contrary, increases it.

The other principle point of difference between the majority and minority faction is the question of endorsing the IWW. The majority are perfectly willing to endorse the principles of industrial unionism, but this does not satisfy the minority. They must have an endorsement of the IWW organization.

So long as the IWW repudiates political action, the Socialist Party cannot endorse the IWW without endorsing the repudiation of political action — the very thing for which the Socialist Party is organized.

By endorsing the principle of industrial unionism the Socialist Party not only endorses this aspect of the IWW, but it also endorses and encourages those efforts to introduce industrial union principles into the old craft unions which have grown up in response to new industrial conditions.

The Socialist Party in endorsing the principle of industrial unionism has already gone farther to meet the IWW than they have come to meet the Socialist Party. When the IWW cease their opposition to independent political action of the working class, then the Socialist Party may be willing to endorse the IWW.

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