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# Problems of American Socialism

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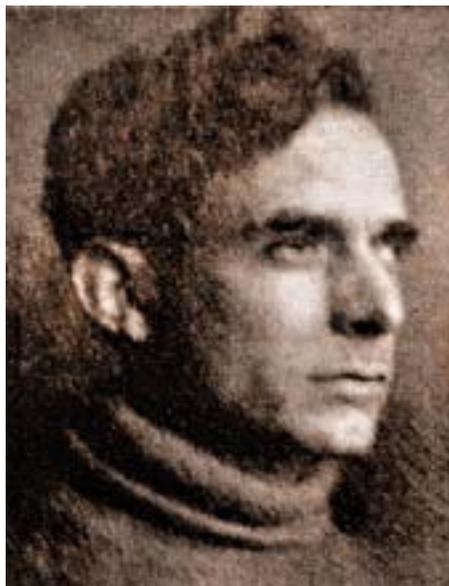
The ultimate decision as to whether Capitalism or Socialism shall control the world will be rendered in the United States. As American Capitalism is now the arbiter of international Imperialism, so the American proletariat will become the arbiter of international Socialism. This imposes a great responsibility upon American Socialism, determines its problems and the *international* character of its policy...

Even now, after the accomplishments of the war, the enormous power of American Capitalism is not fully appreciated. It is not appreciated because of the rapid ending of the war, of America's small sacrifice of men; one must probe below the surface to understand the decisive role of the United States in the war. But facts are facts. The United States provided the men and munitions that steadied the wavering front in France, providing means for the offensive; and it provided that deceptive ideology of democracy which steadied the wavering morale of the French, British, and Italians, that seduced large sections of the masses, and, in Britain, Belgium, and France, seduced the dominant Socialism and Laborism. The threat of American Capitalism to Socialism is not alone physical, it is equally moral; moral in the sense that its deceptive democracy is a splendid means for promoting Imperialism and seducing the masses.

The United States as become a world power. It will maintain that position — potential of evil — un-

less the proletariat acts for Socialism. American Capitalism is perhaps the most highly developed in the world, the most efficient, the mightiest; it controls a large section of the world's richest territory, bursting with natural wealth; it has tremendous resources of raw materials within its own borders; and it can at any moment seize upon the tremendous resources of Mexico, Central and South America, convert them into means of conquest. Imperialistic finance-capital nowhere is as aggressive, commands as much power, as in the United States. The wealth of the United States is twice as large as that of Great Britain — which is much more wealthy than its nearest rival. And this wealth is simply a symbol expressive of the enormous capacity for productivity inherent in American Capitalism — a terrific power. The United States has a large navy, has proved that it can easily develop a large army, and is laying plans for the largest navy in the world, and will retain universal military service in one form or another. American Capitalism has all the physical reserves for aggression and is becoming the gendarme of the world.

These physical reserves are supplemented by moral ones. In no other large nation is the labor movement as reactionary as in the United States; in no other large nation is organized Socialism as loose, as purposeless, as petty bourgeois, as in the United States. Should Great Britain, France, and Italy decide upon complete military intervention in Russia, the revolutionary proletariat may march into action — surely in France and Italy; but should the United States decide upon this brutal military adventure, the American proletariat on the whole will acquiesce, and its representatives will manufacture



justifications for the offensive against Socialism and the coming new civilization. And all this, not because the American proletariat is not possessed of reserves for action, but because of the organizations of this proletariat. This is one aspect of our problems.

### **Aggressive Class Struggle Fettered by Petty Bourgeois Party Spirit.**

The American proletariat has an inspiring history of aggressive struggles. The great Homestead strike, the American Railway Union strike in 1894, the implacable industrial struggle in Colorado, at Coeur D'Alene and Goldfield, the strikes at McKees Rocks, Lawrence, Paterson, Passaic, Ludlow, the Mesaba Range — all these are expressions of an aggressive proletariat, of a proletariat capable of great things. The American radical Labor movement first clearly formulated the principles, forms, and purposes of industrial unionism, yet industrial unionism has made infinitely larger strides in Great Britain, Australia, and elsewhere than it has in the United States. The American Labor Union, 20 years ago, formulated the industrial union program, but it went the way of all flesh; the Western Federation of Miners adopted industrial unionism, waged inspiring struggles against Capitalism, and then was captured by the reaction; the Industrial Workers of the World started with great purposes and expectations, contributed a vital and aggressive spirit to our movement, in spite of all its faults; but the IWW is incapable of rallying the revolutionary proletariat, and never built definitely upon the basis of its achievements.

Why? There are a large number of reasons, material and ideologic; but one alone that can be considered here, and that is the *petite bourgeois* spirit that animates American Socialism — the Socialist Party, even the Socialist Labor Party. All these great instinctive revolts of the proletariat, under the impact of which new forms of industrial organization and struggle, a new ideology, were being developed, met the open hostility or lack of understanding of Socialism. Instead of accepting these forces as the initial expression of new tactics and forms of action, the dominant Socialism tried to compress them within the stultifying limits of *petite bourgeois* and parliamentary Socialism — make them serve the ends of the middle class and petty

bourgeois, “liberal” democracy. The Socialist Labor Party, which was an active force in the initial development of the new unionism, savagely attacked it and the IWW when they did not pursue the road charted by an essential petty bourgeois conception of the Revolution. To attack the unskilled proletariat rallied by the IWW as a “lumpen-proletariat” — that was the characteristic expression of the fundamental defect of the SLP in action, its *petite bourgeois* ideology, which, while it rejected the gradual, peaceful conquest of power by the Socialist proletariat, accepted an equally fallacious policy, the gradual, peaceful conquest of power by the proletariat through organizing the majority of the working class into industrial unions. The Socialist Party majority was even worse — it rejected the IWW while serving the monstrous reaction of the American Federation of Labor — its attitude toward the new ideas compounded of hypocrisy and animosity. American Socialism has not yet developed a realistic, revolutionary policy — a policy able to arouse, integrate, and direct the revolutionary energy of the proletariat.

The *petite bourgeoisie* is the slave of the illusions of democracy, avoids the implacable industrial struggle, rejects movements and struggles that refuse to proceed within the orbit of parliamentarism; the *petite bourgeoisie* pursues and anemic policy, a routine activity, chained to the old and rejecting or camouflaging the new — refuses to consider the actual problems of the Revolution and the violent struggles necessary to realize the Revolution. What the American proletariat requires is a Socialism that has snapped asunder its *petite bourgeois* fetters, that issues to the proletariat the clear call to the revolutionary struggle — and which the proletariat will answer.

### **Failure to Lend Real Support to the Epochal Russian Revolution.**

The attitude of American Socialism toward the Bolsheviki is characteristic of its general policy, of its anemic, petty bourgeois spirit.

The accomplishments of the Bolsheviki are epochal. They have maintained for 15 months a revolutionary dictatorship in Russia, have accomplished the first stage of the international proletarian revolution. They have organized a new state, upon the basis of

which alone can Socialism be introduced. They have issued the clear, magnificent call to the international proletarian revolution; and they have been a decisive factor in the coming of the proletarian revolution to Germany. They are active in the struggle to develop the Revolution in the rest of Europe, and the world; and they are preparing to wage a revolutionary war against international Imperialism, if necessary, in cooperation with the revolutionary proletariat of Germany. The Bolsheviki have subjectively introduced the revolutionary epoch of the proletariat, objectively introduced by Imperialism and the war. *Socialism in action, Marxism become life* — that, in sum, constitutes the accomplishments of the Bolsheviki.

But while the Bolsheviki have issued the clear call to the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism and Imperialism, they have equally issued the clear call to *the revolutionary struggle against the dominant, petty bourgeois Socialism*.

In Russia and in Germany, the great enemy of the proletarian revolution was not Capitalism, *per se*, but moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism — that majority Socialism become part of the national liberal movement, corrupted by petty bourgeois politics, allied with the middle class and with social-Imperialism. *Before the proletarian revolution could conquer Capitalism and Imperialism, it had to conquer the dominant Socialism*. Why? Because the dominant Socialism, operating in an epoch of peaceful, national struggles, had become moderate, had become part of the governing system of things, indirectly its ally and protector, had, it is true, accomplished great things, *but which did not and could not adapt itself to the new requirements of the revolutionary epoch introduced by Imperialism and the war*. Instead of promoting the proletarian revolution, the dominant Socialism was a fetter upon the Revolution and betrayed the Revolution. This is not true alone of Russia, Germany, and Austria; it is true of every European nation, except Norway and Italy, where the tactics and requirements of the new revolutionary struggle are being adopted. Everywhere else, including the United States, the dominant Socialism pursues its old legalistic and corrupting policy, is the slave of petty bourgeois illusions, has its face turned to the past and not to the future, is not aware of the call to international action.

Out of life itself, and the relation of Marxism to

life, the Bolsheviki and the proletarian revolution in Russia and Germany have developed the new policy and tactics of revolutionary Socialism: rally the proletariat for the immediate revolutionary struggle against Capitalism and Imperialism; abandon the old tactics of parliamentary conciliation and compromise; depend upon the proletarian class struggle alone; carry on this class struggle by means of revolutionary mass action and the dictatorship of the proletariat!

These are the immediate purposes and tactics imposed upon Socialism by the prevailing conditions; these are the immediate purposes and tactics of the Bolsheviki, which alone can make Socialism vital and vitalizing.

Nor are these simply the purposes and tactics required when the proletarian revolution is actually in action: they are necessary in preparing the Revolution, in preparing the forces that will direct the Revolution to the conquest of power by the proletariat....

While the proletariat is revolutionizing Capitalism, it is equally revolutionizing Socialism: what is the response of American Socialism to this epochal circumstance?

The Socialist Labor Party never responded adequately to the Bolshevik call to action, in spite of its revolutionary pretensions. Shortly after the Bolsheviki conquered power, the National Secretary of the SLP [Arnold Petersen] published an article in the *Weekly People* declaring, in substance, that a proletarian revolution was impossible in Russia, because of its economically undeveloped condition and because the proletariat was not organized into industrial unions; that the day of the Bolsheviki victory was the day of their defeat; that the Bolsheviki should not have seized power, but should have labored hard and waited — precisely the policy proposed by the counterrevolutionary Mensheviki. The SLP did not act upon the Soviet proposal for an armistice; and in this, the SLP, together with the NEC of the Socialist Party, missed a great revolutionary opportunity and perpetrated a real betrayal of trust. This SLP policy of partial repudiation and misunderstanding was pursued for months; now it is trying to atone, by claiming that it *was* for the Bolsheviki. But in what way? The SLP does not understand the Bolsheviki; its attitude is something like this: what is good in the Bolsheviki is implicit in the SLP program; what is not in the SLP program, is

not worth anything. They have forgotten nothing and learned nothing; they do not realize the infinite broadening of tactics made necessary by the new conditions and the experience of the proletarian revolution in action; they do not understand the functions of revolutionary mass action and dictatorship of the proletariat; we have the truth, have always had and always will have the truth: three cheers for the SLP!

The official majority in the Socialist Party adopted a disgraceful policy toward the Bolsheviki. It never answered the call to agitate for the armistice proposal; it was silent about the great proletarian revolution in Russia, until the upsurging feelings of the membership compelled them to speak — and then they spoke in the terms of the politician, in terms of camouflage. They cheer for the Socialist Republic in Russia, and simultaneously they cheer for — the Socialist Republic in Germany, the bourgeois, counterrevolutionary republic of Ebert, Scheidemann & Co., which is betraying the revolution!

The representatives and officials of the party refuse to penetrate beneath the surface of events, refuse to “take sides.” They deny, as did Morris Hillquit, and still deny, I believe, that the International collapsed during the war; they speak much about the “revival of Socialism” — but *which* Socialism? They do not admit the fact that this Socialism is in relentless hostility to the old Socialism, that the implacable struggle against the old petty bourgeois Socialism is a phase of the “revival of Socialism.” They adopt this attitude because their “Socialism” in fundamentals is identical with that of the Mensheviki in Russia, with that of Ebert, David, Scheidemann & Co. in Germany, with petty bourgeois “majority” Socialism everywhere. They do not want to accept the new, and so they pervert, disguise, and distort events.

Where do you see, in the official Socialist Party press, appreciation and analysis of the problems of the Revolution? Of mass action and proletarian dictatorship? Of the decisive struggle in Russia, of the decisive struggle in Germany — the struggle between “minority” revolutionary Socialism and “majority” petty bourgeois Socialism? Socialism is split asunder by the Revolution — but this fact is carefully concealed; it is concealed because the struggle in Germany and Russia against petty bourgeois Socialism and majority Socialism is a fundamental struggle developing implacably

in international Socialism, of universal necessity and significance.

The “representatives” of the party cannot completely avoid the Bolsheviki issue, so they adopt the policy of words, of camouflage. The Bolsheviki are acclaimed — miserably, in words; not daringly, in deeds. There is no clear call to the reconstruction of Socialism, no clear call to accept the new purposes and tactics of the revolutionary Third International, no clear call to the revolutionary struggle. Indeed, the NEC of the Party has definitely aligned itself with moderate Socialism in Europe, with the betrayers of Socialism, by delegating, with Oneal and Work, who do not represent revolutionary Socialism, Algernon Lee to the International Congress. Lee is a typical petty bourgeois Socialist; he has been as silent as the proverbial clam concerning the revolutionary events in Russia and Germany, concerning the Bolsheviki (although he, too, has “jubilated” over the Socialist Republics in Germany in Russia, in the approved style); he accepted the war for democracy (indeed, much worse, declared in April this year [1918] that the war should be supported as it was a war to save the Russian Revolution!); he has, in the New York City Board of Aldermen, voted in favor of the Liberty Loan campaign, adopted the disgraceful policy of the petty bourgeois reformer and bureaucrat — Algernon Lee, in short, is a typical representative of that “Socialism” which collapsed during the war, and which is directly counterrevolutionary in Europe. According to the policy promulgated in the St. Louis declaration against the war, our party should align itself with the Italian Socialist Party, with the Bolshevik Communist Party of Russia, and the Bolshevik Communist Labor Party of Germany; but Lee will align the party with Haase and even Ebert, with the Mensheviki, with the “majority” party in France, which greets Woodrow Wilson enthusiastically, with the British Labour Party. This is the reactionary, official policy of the Socialist Party; considering this, how much value is there in accepting the Bolsheviki in words?

Action is necessary. Emphasizing the implications of accepting the Bolsheviki is necessary — the necessity for the revolutionary reconstruction of Socialism.

### Party Must Prepare for the Final Struggle with Capitalism.

The international situation, at this moment, is characterized by the developing revolutionary struggle against Capitalism and Imperialism, and for a Socialist peace.

Peace with revolution — that is the tactic of the revolutionary proletariat, in Russia and in Germany, and developing in the other European nations. But the official majority in the party still prates of a “democratic” peace, of a peace without annexations and indemnities, of a “liberal” peace on the basis of Capitalism. This is sheer petty bourgeois ineptitude — as if there could be any real peace without the overthrow of Capitalism! The Socialist Party cannot determine a revolutionary peace? But it can at least maintain its Socialist, proletarian integrity, in theory and in practice, develop reserves for action in the days to come....

The proletarian revolution in action: that is a definite fact. And equally definite should be our relation to this fact.

The immediate requirement imposed upon us is the struggle to prevent intervention in Russia and in Germany. The party officially is pledged against intervention; but an infinitely larger and more aggressive campaign could be carried on against intervention. The party will spend thousands of dollars, will use tremendous energy, to elect Socialist incompetents such as Algernon Lee and Meyer London; but apparently, in most cases, it is satisfied with a gesture concerning intervention. Resolutions and declarations are not enough; they should become life in intensive agitation, developing the ideology of action, at least, as a preliminary to action itself.

Moreover, our agitation against intervention pursues, largely, a petty bourgeois policy. Faith in President Wilson, demands upon Congress, the attempt to create “understanding” with the “liberals,” the policy of petty bourgeois democracy — all this characterizes the campaign against intervention. This is a clear abandonment of Socialism and the class struggle. The campaign against intervention should in all its aspects assume the character of Socialism and the class struggle — that alone develops power. The campaign should become a campaign to *move the masses*, to set them in motion; the campaign should center in the large in-

dustrial plants. Get the workers to march out of the plants, go to other plants and pull out other workers, broaden the scope of this industrial action into mass action — that is the policy of the militant proletariat and revolutionary Socialism; only the aggressive action of the industrial proletariat can prevent the government from “putting over” its reactionary plans.

The workers won't move? But where is that written? And, moreover, is particular agitation justified only if immediate success is assured? That is hopelessly petty bourgeois and reactionary; that is the contemptible attitude of the “majority” Socialism everywhere. When the war was declared, “majority” Socialism justified its acceptance and justification of the war upon the miserable plea that since the proletariat had not answered the declaration of war with an immediate revolution, the only other course was acceptance of the war. But the revolutionary Socialist declared: no one counted upon immediate revolution; the war creates a revolutionary crisis, which compels us to carry on an uncompromising propaganda for the revolution; the proletariat may not immediately answer this call to revolutionary action, but the Socialist must persist; sooner or later, the answer will come, and we must prepare by means of an intensive agitation for the revolution. The moderate Socialist, who is corrupted by the mercantile ideals of the *petite bourgeoisie*, justifies a policy only if it is capable of immediate success. That is not the policy of Socialism. The question is: is particular agitation in accord with Socialism, with the prevailing situation and the tendency of the revolutionary proletariat? If it is, do not fear; success must come.

Our campaign against intervention, which is our immediate revolutionary task, must proceed together with the emphasizing of the revolutionary implications of the policy of intervention: that it is an expression of the international class struggle, a struggle between Imperialism and Socialism, and that the struggle against intervention is simultaneously a struggle for Socialism. Equally, the revolutionary implications of Bolshevism must be emphasized; that is a necessary part of our task, a necessary aspect of awakening the proletariat and preparing it for action.

The policy of revolutionary Socialism is a policy applicable to immediate and ultimate problems; the revolutionary struggle is not alone a phase of the Revolution, it precedes and prepares the Revolution. Revo-

lutionary agitation is itself an act of revolution.

The revolutionary crisis in Europe is spreading, becoming contagious. It is admitted that if Germany becomes definitely Bolshevik, all Europe will become Bolshevik. And then? Inevitably, this will develop revolutionary currents in the United States, will develop other revolutions, will accelerate and energize the proletarian struggle. The United States will then become the center of reaction; and imperative will become our own revolutionary struggle. Is American Socialism prepared for the struggle? It is not; and it is necessary that we prepare ideologically and theoretically for the final revolutionary struggle in our own country — which may come in 6 months, or in 6 years, but which will come; prepare for that final struggle which alone can make the world safe for Socialism.

### **Strike Wave Provides Opportunity for Revolutionary Mass Action.**

Revolutionary Socialism does not mean the abandonment of the immediate struggle; it engages aggressively in this struggle. But revolutionary Socialism accepts that struggle, or phase of the immediate struggle, which is fundamental; and pursues this struggle by means in accord with revolutionary Socialism — promoting the final struggle, and developing reserves for the revolutionary conquest of power.

While the moderate Socialist nobly wages the class struggle by conciliating the *petite bourgeoisie*, by introducing in legislative bodies bureaucratic reform measures, by ascribing to parliamentarism a creative and revolutionary significance which it does not possess, the revolutionary Socialist accepts a proletarian ideology, engages in the aggressive mass and industrial struggles of the proletariat, awakens in the proletariat a consciousness of its control of industry — out of the mass strikes of the proletariat the revolutionary Socialist tries to develop more effective forms of organization and means of struggle. Socialism *is the class struggle* — this is decisive in our policy. The moderate Socialist depends upon the petty bourgeois parliamentary struggles, and degrades politics; the revolutionary Socialist depends upon the proletarian mass struggle, and makes politics one phase, and an auxiliary phase, of the proletarian struggle. Vary as the immediate conditions may, revolutionary Socialism always expresses

its fundamental policy in theory and *in action*...

The necessity of revolutionary Socialism in the United States does not depend upon the immediate coming of the final revolutionary struggle; but revolutionary Socialism develops the coming of the final struggle by adapting itself to the prevailing conditions: out of these conditions emerge revolutionary consciousness and the final struggle.

The revolutionary crisis in Europe is surely influencing the consciousness of the American proletariat, which it is our task to express and bring to a focus; and this influence will become stronger as events sweep on. But certain objective conditions are developing which, in proportion as Socialism appreciates the opportunity, will accelerate the development of class consciousness and revolutionary action.

Capitalism in the United States has profited enormously from the war. But, precisely because of this fact, Capitalism must aggressively and consciously accept Imperialism. The new industrial efficiency developed by American Capitalism, the lower costs, the increasing volumes of profits, and surplus capital and goods — all this implies the necessity for new markets, for undeveloped territory, for investment and markets. American Capitalism must pursue the practice of Imperialism. An understanding of Imperialism, as marking a new and final stage of Capitalism and introducing the revolutionary epoch, is necessary; and equally necessary is the adoption of revolutionary tactics to fight Imperialism. Yet American Socialism to these *problems* of revolutionary theory and practice....

Simultaneously, American Capitalism will itself provide the objective conditions out of which can be developed the spirit for the revolutionary struggle. The war has sharpened imperialistic appetites and antagonisms. Capitalism has been shaken. Capitalism must “reconstruct” itself. In this reconstruction, new and more acute problems will develop, new forms for the exploitation of the proletariat, coincidentally with the development in the proletariat of a more conscious and aggressive spirit.

But Capitalism cannot reconstruct itself. Capitalism cannot solve the multiplying antagonisms of a system of production that is decaying, that is becoming international while its forms and control are still national. Demobilization will offer enormous problems of providing employment. Adapting industry

again to peace conditions means new complications. The sharpening of imperialistic competition and the new industrial efficiency, each will contribute in a measure to unemployment, to the necessity of still more oppression of the proletariat. Crises and antagonisms, industrial dislocation, will characterize Capitalism in the days to come.

Without considering the influence of the developing international revolutionary crisis, the coming period will be characterized by giant industrial revolts, by strikes larger and more numerous than in the past, by an intense unrest of the industrial proletariat. These strikes, which will assume the form of mass revolts, will particularly affect the larger, basic industry, where the industrial proletariat is concentrated. Conciliation, reconstruction, "understanding" between employer and employee will not prevent the coming of this period of great strikes, of mass industrial revolts, of potential revolutionary mass action.

This situation will offer a great opportunity to Socialism. But if, as in the past, the Socialist Party uses these great strikes to make political capital, to prove to the workers the futility of strikes, and the power of the vote — then a great opportunity will be wasted. That is the petty bourgeois policy, which tries to compress the elemental action of the proletariat within the stultifying limits of parliamentary action, as such.

The Socialist Party, revolutionary Socialism, should use these strikes and mass industrial revolts to develop in the proletariat the consciousness of revolutionary mass action, to develop the conception and practice of political strikes, to make it realize that its action should center in the large plants, that when it wants to act, its action should develop out of the mill, mine, and factory. Our political action should become part and parcel of this mass action, should promote the aggressive industrial struggle. To broaden a strike into a demonstration, to develop, out of these, revolutionary mass action against Capitalism and the state — that is the policy of revolutionary Socialism, that is the policy which will transform the coming period of strikes definitely into a period of revolutionary action, preparing the mass action of the Revolution.

The proletariat must be made to realize that the futility of industrial action lies not in its being industrial action, as such, but in that it is incomplete, does not broaden and deepen itself into class action, is not

sufficiently general and aggressive. The proletariat must be made to realize that its great strength lies in its control of industry; and it is necessary to develop the *consciousness* and *forms* of workers' control of industry. The proletariat must be made to realize that its characteristic tactics consist of industrial mass action developing into revolutionary mass action, and that through this *class struggle of the industrial masses* alone can the Socialist proletariat conquer.

And Socialism must be made to realize that the value of parliamentary action lies not in "constructive legislation" and bureaucratic, petty bourgeois reform measures, but in *revolutionary criticism*, in developing the industrial action of the masses, in awakening their revolutionary consciousness; and that when the class struggle turns into a test of power, it is the revolutionary mass action of the proletariat that will conquer; parliaments and parliamentary activity will disappear; politics may assist in developing the Revolution, but can never become the instrument of Revolution, unceasing practice of Socialism must be revolutionary mass action; the unceasing object of Socialism must be the revolutionary conquest of power, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

### The Growth of "Laborism."

An important problem is the movement developing among the unions of the American Federation of labor to organize a Labor Party; in some cities this has been done, in others the proposal has been approved.

This may, in a measure, be a reflex of similar action among the Canadian unions. It is, in still larger measure, an expression of the new currents that the war and events in Europe are developing in the world's working class — expressed in immature and conservative form. It is, accordingly, a move that, while it should not meet enthusiastic and uncritical acceptance, merits the serious study of the Socialist who does not flee from reality by means of phrases, nor accepts every "reality" as real, but who studies the social alignment, its development and peculiar forms, as the basis for appropriate Socialist tactics.

The organization of an American Labor Party may prove a step forward for the AF of L, but not necessarily a step forward for the American proletariat.

The AF of L, which has insisted all along upon “no politics in the unions” while dickering and compromising with Republican and Democratic politicians, may develop a cleaner sense of independence by means of independent politics, in spite of the petty bourgeois forms these politics will necessarily assume. It may, moreover, by showing the futility of AF of L politics, impress upon the proletariat the necessity of revolutionary Socialist action.

The *New York Call* wails that there is no necessity for a Labor Party, since the Socialist Party has been in the field for 20 years. This is either an admission that the Socialist Party **in practice** is no more than a Labor Party, or a characteristic Menshevik refusal to admit the fundamental differences between a Labor Party and a Socialist Party. In either case, it is counter-Socialism.

What is a Labor Party? The Labour Party in England and Australia, has been, from the standpoint of revolutionary Socialism, hopelessly reactionary, consistently unproletarian. The British Labour Party’s policy is a petty bourgeois policy, a counterrevolutionary policy, as has been clearly apparent from its unity with imperialistic Capitalism in the British cabinet, its declaration that the war was a war of democracy, its accepting petty bourgeois liberalism instead of proletarian Socialism, its nationalistic proposals concerning Ireland, its virtual acquiescence in the expulsion of Maxim Litvinov from England, its accepting the resolution of the Inter-Allied Labor and “Socialist” Conference favoring “democratic” intervention in Russia, its bureaucracy through Arthur Henderson acting against every development of revolutionary energy in the British proletariat. The British Labour Party has been a typical party of laborism, in that it struggles for a place in the governing system of things, for petty advantages to the upper layers of the working class, instead of struggling for the overthrow of the governing bourgeois system. The British Labour Party has been and is a party of social-Imperialism: a policy characteristic of laborism and petty bourgeois Socialism.

A characteristic of laborism is that it acts against the broad masses of the industrial proletariat, against the unorganized proletariat of unskilled labor. The “labor” government of Australia, once in power, used armed force to break the strikes of unorganized, unskilled workers. Moreover, the “labor” government,

instead of introducing Socialism, as was expected by the gullible Socialist, strengthened Capitalism, became the unifying center of bourgeois reaction camouflaged in “labor” and “liberal” colors. When the war broke out, “labor” Australia was even more patriotic and imperialistic than bourgeois Canada, “labor” Premier William Morris Hughes becoming the particular pet of the ultra-imperialistic forces of British Capitalism. There has been a revolt in the Labour Party against the “excesses” of Hughes, and more radical currents are developing under pressure of the industrial proletariat and revolutionary Socialism, but the tendency still remains characteristic of a party of laborism.

An American Labor Party would be an expression of the AF of L. The policy of the AF of L is clearly reactionary. It acts against the great masses of the unorganized and the unskilled, as is proven by its attitude during IWW strikes. The AF of L is an organization of craft unions that splits the working class; an organization, moreover, that represents only a very small part of the working class, being largely an organized system of “job trusts.” The AF of L during the war has pursued a policy of the utmost reaction, even more reactionary than many circles of Capitalism; it united with Capitalism against Socialism in the United States, *and in Europe* through its “Labor Missions”; and a Labor Party would pursue an identical reactionary, petty bourgeois policy.

There are elements in the Socialist Party, whose policy is not at all Socialist but the policy of reactionary trade unionism and laborism, who would welcome a Labor Party, and urge merging with it. That would be suicidal; there must be an independent Socialist Party: to merge with a Labor Party would promote confusion, compromise, and disaster.

But it must be admitted that the official majority policy of the Socialist Party **in action** is, in substance, the policy of laborism disguised with “Socialist” phraseology. Should our party retain this policy, it would become the fifth wheel of the wagon, serve no necessary mission, and would either decay or become absorbed in the Labor Party. The Socialist Party would have to irrevocably separate itself from a Labor Party and wage war upon it by means of revolutionary Socialism.

The movement to organize a Labor Party, all the developments now transforming the world, are a call

to Socialist reconstruction, to the annihilation of moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism. The Socialist Party must reorganize in accord with the new conditions, must adopt the policy of revolutionary Socialism, of the Bolsheviki — accept the ideas now developing a new pulse in international Socialism, and which alone represent Socialism and Marxism.

The way to wage war upon a Labor Party, should it eventuate, is not to promise more reforms than the Labor Party, is not to plead and placate, but to develop the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat, to awaken to action the great, unorganized industrial proletariat, which is the dominant force in industry, and which will determine the destiny of the Revolution. This would mean a broadening of the conception and practice of politics — a broadening fully in accord with Marxism and fundamental Socialism. The AF of L does not represent the elements of the real proletariat — the industrial proletariat massed in the basic larger industry. The AF of L, except in the case of anachronisms such as the miners, represents the skilled workers, the aristocracy of labor, men who have skill and consider this skill “property.” Their ideology is a petty bourgeois ideology, and their domination of Socialism and the industrial proletariat would prove a calamity. The answer to the AF of L compromise and petty bourgeois policy is to awaken the industrial proletariat, and pull out of the AF of L unions, such as the Miners, which belong to the industrial proletariat.

As against the Labor Party, a *Socialist* Party; as against the aristocracy of Labor, the masses of the industrial proletariat; as against AF of L unionism, industrial unionism; as against conciliation with Capitalism, the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism.

There is no magic in “labor” — it depends upon what labor represents, its tendency and action. There is no magic in “Socialism” either; both may be reactionary and counterrevolutionary. The great task of Socialism is its own reconstruction — this animates its policy on all problems.

### **Socialist Party Must Promote Revolutionary Industrial Unionism.**

Socialism must have an economic basis — industrial power. That is one argument made in favor of a union Labor Party. But does conservative unionism

use its industrial power for large purposes? Is it using it for the release of Tom Mooney? Did the British Labor Party use its industrial power to secure for its delegates access to Conferences held in other nations?

Socialism must possess industrial power. But industrial power emerges only out of the class consciousness and revolutionary activity of the proletariat. Socialism must have industrial power, but this will develop not out of parliamentarism, not out of unity with a reactionary Labor Party, but out of the aggressive mass action of the industrial proletariat, out of awakening the masses to independent revolutionary activity, out of industrial unionism.

The moderate Socialist has never concerned himself with the struggles of the revolutionary Socialist to develop industrial power by means of industrial unionism; the moderate Socialist thinks of this only when it may promote reactionary purposes, never when it may promote the Revolution.

But the task of developing this industrial power is important. The coming period of strikes will provide an excellent opportunity for the development of more effective forms of organization, for the construction of industrial unionism, for the building up of a revolutionary labor movement. This is a task that Socialism cannot shirk. The argument that the Socialist Party is a political party, and therefore cannot concern itself with problems of union organization, is a miserable subterfuge; a Socialist Party is a party of Socialism, of the proletarian class struggle, of the Revolution; and it must concern itself with every problem that effects the revolutionary struggle and the coming of Socialism. The problem of unionism, of revolutionary industrial unionism, is fundamental — all the more, since in its theoretical phase, the construction of an industrial state, the abolition of the political state, contains within itself the norms of the new proletarian state and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

A revolutionary union movement — that must be an integral phase of our activity. Life itself will determine the most appropriate means of accomplishing this task; but a general revolutionary attitude and activity are indispensable. The constituent elements for a revolutionary union movement are here: unions of unskilled workers in the AF of L, who do not belong there and who are betrayed by the aristocracy of labor; a large number of independent unions, the radi-

cal character of which might develop into more revolutionary consciousness; the IWW and the masses of the unorganized industrial proletariat.

This is an important problem. But it is not the decisive problem. The Revolution will not develop out of industrial unionism, but out of a crisis developing into *revolutionary mass action* and *proletarian dictatorship*. Not organizations, but *revolutionary class-consciousness* — that is the instrument of the Revolution. Industrial unionism must not become an end in itself; even the IWW is becoming conservative. The proletarian revolution annihilates the old bourgeois order and the old organizations. The Revolution is the act of the organized producers; but the producers are not organized before but during the Revolution — by means of Soviets.

The revolutionary struggle by means of mass action — that constitutes the process of the Revolution and the Revolution itself in action.

### **For the Revolutionary Conquest of the Party by the Party!**

I am simply *projecting* some of the problems of American Socialism — there are others, but these are

fundamental. My purpose is to arouse discussion of these problems. The fatal defect of our party is that there is no discussion of fundamentals, no controversy on tactics. The bureaucracy and representatives of the party discourage discussion and controversy: where the spirit of inquiry prevails, there is potential opposition. Let us, together and in fraternal spirit, discuss our problems and build the new Socialism of the final struggle, and victory!

Let us reconstruct the party. As a preliminary, let us integrate the revolutionary elements in the party, *an organization for the revolutionary conquest of the party by the party!* The American Socialist Party needs a definite, organized, vocal Left Wing, a unified expression of revolutionary Socialism in theory and practice. Thus alone shall we prepare for the coming struggles; thus alone shall we become a decisive factor in the new, the third International — the International of revolutionary Socialism and the final struggle.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Ellipses in original. Topical headings new to this edition, inserted at Fraina's own breaks.*

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