
The Left Wing Manifesto

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This article opens a discussion that will be continued in the columns of The Socialist for the next few weeks. The Manifesto and program will be analyzed in full, and the fallacies, misstatements, and full implications of the document will be made clear. It is our opinion that the document is in part misleading, in part vague, and in part foolish. There is so much, however, that must be said in an analysis of the whole that space does not permit a complete discussion in one issue.

On February 16, 1919, a convention of some hundred members of the Socialist Party in a group of four or five hundred adopted at New York City a document now known by the name of the “Manifesto of the Left Wing Section of the Socialist Party of New York City.”

This document has been printed in pamphlet form and has been sold to members of the Socialist Party and to the general public. Many people unaccustomed to analytical reading and not well versed in Marxian terminology have been imposed upon by the pretentious pseudo-scientific tone of the Manifesto. For a time the more reasonable elements in the Socialist Party looked upon its sponsors as a collection of scatterbrained fanatics and upon the Manifesto as the inevitable product of such a crew. It has gradually dawned upon the consciousness, however, of those who have the welfare of the party at heart that such an attitude, while essentially correct, must be abandoned in view of the almost religious revolutionary dementia that is sweeping over the party. It therefore becomes necessary to treat this document seriously, to analyze it, to expose its weaknesses, to follow out its implications to their logical conclusions, and, if possible, to prevent the party from committing an irretrievable blunder by adopting this Manifesto **as it stands**.

There can be no doubt in the mind of any observer of international affairs that the socialist parties of the world have taken an emphatic step to the left. It does not follow, however, that the socialist parties of the world must adopt wholesale and without change the program which means ultimately the abandonment of political action.

As students of the science of sociology, we must never forget that only like conditions can produce like effects,

and that the conditions of revolution such as they exist in Russia, Germany, Hungary, and Bavaria are totally different from conditions in Italy, France, Spain, England, Belgium — to say nothing of the United States. The attempt, therefore, to sweep us off our feet and to force on us an ill-considered program at a time when such a program is impossible of realization, is not to serve the best interests of the movement. Yet this is the final implication of the Manifesto of the Left Wing.

It is perfectly natural that such a program should appeal to the nationalistic groups within us — the groups that in their own language federations are far more concerned with the development of the social revolution in their own countries than they are in the progress of the proletariat in America. These groups talk of internationalism. Yet their internationalism consists entirely of worshipping at their own national shrines. These groups, entirely ignorant of and indifferent to American conditions, imagine that because in their own former countries revolutions have occurred, therefore, revolutions can and must occur in America in the near future. The full implication of the Left Wing Manifesto and Program — as I shall show in later sections of this article — is that there will be a revolutionary uprising on the part of the proletariat now, or at least within a comparatively short time.

It must be perfectly apparent to even the most casual observer of American conditions that at a time when less than 10 percent of the laborers in America are organized in any way (and this includes the conservative trade unions, the more radical industrial unions, as well as the IWW and the Socialist Parties) such an attempt at revolution is

foredoomed to bloody failure. It must be apparent to anybody but a fanatic that to lead the proletariat into a revolution at this time is nothing short of a crime.

The Preamble.

Let us first consider the preamble to the Manifest. At the very beginning, the "Left Wing" Manifesto states, "We are a very active and growing section of the Socialist party who are attempting to reach the rank and file with our urgent message over the heads of the powers that be, who, through inertia or lack of vision, cannot see the necessity for a critical analysis of the party's policies and tactics.

"The official party press is in the main closed to us; therefore, we cannot adequately present our side of the case.

"In the various discussions that arise wherever party members or delegates assemble, both sides grow too heated for calm dispassionate judgment."

It is true that the leaders of the "Left Wing" are a very active group in the party but a group whose activity has in the past been confined almost entirely to agitation within the party for certain changes. Almost without exception, this group has been remarkably quiescent while the party agitated among the proletariat at large for its views. It took the position, whenever called upon to explain this phenomenon, that so long as the party did not adopt its particular views of party propaganda, which will be explained in full below, it would not cooperate with the party's general propaganda work, but would, on the contrary, work within the party for a change of views. This in itself is not wrong, but it throws a light on the type of activity referred to in the preamble of the Manifesto.

The Manifesto then states that this group is attempting to reach the rank and file with its message "over the heads of the powers that be." Here we have a clear statement of the lawless intention of the "Left Wing" group. Not content to use the channels provided by the party constitution, such as the referendum, the party meeting, the various committees, the party press, etc., it proceeded to organize a compact body which was to be used as a club to compel the party to adopt this Manifesto, without adequate discussion.

The Manifesto then proceeds to criticize the party leaders, complaining of inertia or lack of vision. During the two years of the war, the Espionage Act and the general policy of suppression practiced by our government forced the party into a state of inactivity. Many of our leaders are in jail. Activity has been almost impossible. For this, it is

unfair to blame the party officials, and when our friends of the "Left Wing" speak of lack of vision, they mean, in simpler terms, that the party officials do not agree with them, which, I submit, is no offense.

When the "Left Wing" complains that the Socialist Party press is in the main closed to it, it tells a deliberate untruth. For the past four months the columns of *The Call* have — to the disgust of a great many readers — been filled with letters pro and con on the "Left Wing" situation. I have no statistics to prove my point, but I am sure that every discriminating reader of *The Call* will agree with me when I say that out of every three letters concerning this question printed in *The Call*, two will have emanated from "Left Wing" sources.

The only incident which lends color of truth to this accusation is the fact that *The Call* refused to print an advertisement of a "Left Wing" meeting **under that name**, but it printed the advertisement of that very meeting without the name "Left Wing" attached. This may or may not have been a wise policy on the part of *The Call*, but it does not constitute justification for the statement that "the official Socialist Party press is in the main closed to us."

The preamble then goes on to state that in the various discussions of the situation the atmosphere grows too heated for calm dispassionate judgment. True. The antics and the tactics of the "Left Wing" leaders make calm discussion impossible. At the State Committee on April 13, one leader of the "Left Wing" called for blood. On another occasion, another announced that "fairness was a crime." On still another, the same revolutionary comrade loudly called for a revolver. We know that at a party meeting in Local Bronx, the "Left Wing Manifesto and Program" was carried almost without discussion by tactics that would have been a credit to the Tammany machine. The chairman, a member of the "Left Wing," called for a vote on the Manifesto without any discussion worthy of the name. It is true that the issues of the party are such as to arouse the passions of both sides. This is the most cogent argument why the party should not now rush into the adoption of this Manifesto without cool and deliberate discussion.

The Manifesto Itself.

"Two things only could issue forth; either international capitalist control, through a League of Nations, or social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Both of these forces are today contending for world power."

"The Social Democracies of Europe, unable or un-

willing to meet the crisis, were themselves hurled into the conflagration, to be tempered or consumed by it.”

We have here a typical piece of bombast calculated to catch the unwary and to impose upon the noncritical. It is easy enough to be a prophet after the fact. When this manifesto was first approved in January and February, 1919, the peace conference was already sitting; the social revolutions in Europe were already a fact. It is a simple matter for our prophets of the “Left Wing” to look upon the apparently accomplished fact of the League of Nations, and the other accomplished fact, the social revolutions, and say to us: “Lo and behold: this has issued from the conflict; nothing but this could have been the issue.”

Social Democracies During the War.

When the Manifesto speaks of the “Social Democracies of Europe being unable or unwilling to meet the crisis,” it uses words in such a way as to give a false impression. The Social Democracies of Europe were unable to meet the crisis, but why? Because they did not wish to? Because they wished to betray the proletariat? — or because they could not? — Because they were too weak, and the forces opposing them too strong?

The Social Democracy was strongest in Germany. Of some 400 seats in the Reichstag, 110 were held by the Socialists. In France, less than 100 seats were held by Socialists. In Great Britain about 50; in Italy about 80.

All the Social Democracies of Europe, including even those sections which later supported the war under the specious pretext that for them the war was a war of defense — were unanimous in their earnest efforts to prevent the war. That they were unable to do so is their misfortune, not their crime. We in America passed the St. Louis Resolution in 1917. How far did we dare to go in our attempt to enforce it? How far did even the “revolutionary Left Wing” leaders dare go in their efforts to put into practice the precepts of the resolution? Have the “Left Wing” leaders read the Keswick resolution produced by the Independent Labour Party, and in which the ILP goes on record as being opposed to all wars — even wars of defense? To imply even faintly that the Social Democracies of Europe were unwilling to meet the crisis, is to imply a falsehood.

“Moderate” Socialism.

The third section of the Manifesto is devoted to the development of modern socialism. The old DeLeonite ar-

gument is brought up that capitalism cannot be legislated out of office. The Manifesto pooh-poohs the idea that it is worthwhile to work in parliaments within the bourgeois state and claims that because of the parliamentary activities of the socialists in Europe, they have lost sight of their ultimate socialist goal.

In so far as their argument is a criticism of modern parliamentary action, there is a grain of truth in it. It is a fact that within countries in a state of revolutionary turmoil, such as Germany, Russia, Hungary, etc., it is futile to try to bring about changes by means of legislative action. But, in so far as the statement is a criticism of socialism in the past, the argument is unscientific and not historical.

The “Left Wing” in this statement forgets that conditions determine our actions. With an unorganized proletariat, with undeveloped industry, with a condition of international peace, the only form which revolutionary activity could take on the political field was parliamentary action. If our “Revolutionists” wish to take the stand that we need do nothing whatsoever to oppose the aggressions of the capitalists on labor; if they wish to deny the validity of the surplus value theory, and of the fact that capitalists will take as much as they can get and that the workers will receive only as much as they can extort from the capitalists in the form of shorter hours, higher wages, better working conditions — then, of course, they are logical in their position. They must then take the attitude that labor without the aid of forward-looking, parliamentary action could have roused itself out of the ditch into which the industrial revolution had thrown it. They must deny then the value of the English Factory Laws, of the legislative repeal of the Corn Laws, and of the extension of the suffrage. They must then denounce as futile the action of the most revolutionary parties in Europe for the extension of the suffrage. They must then take the position of the Bakuninites and the anarchists that political action is futile. No matter what political action may mean today, in the period that closed with the Great War, the only form of political action conceivable to the proletariats of Europe was parliamentary action.

In the same section of the Manifesto, we are told of the negligence of the Briand ministry. We challenge the “Left Wing” to produce a single statement on the part of any of the Social Democracies of the world in support of Briand’s activities. The name of Briand has become a name for contempt and hatred throughout the proletarian world.

Cooperation of Classes.

In this same section, the socialist parties of the world are accused of favoring a cooperation of classes. Here again we have a shuffling of phrases with full intent to deceive. Cooperation of the classes implies an abandonment of the class struggle and the “Left Wing” would have it appear as if the socialist parties have actually abandoned the class struggle. The truth of the matter is that the so-called cooperation of the classes referred to has consisted entirely in an attempt to bring home to the middle classes the undeniable fact that in the ultimate analysis they, too, are proletarians, and that they ought to throw their lot with the proletarians rather than with the capitalists in the coming struggle.

Proletarian — by definition — is any propertyless person whose support comes in the main from his own labor. Under this definition, we must class a great many more than those who merely work with their hands. We must class the great mass of professional men, and in fact, a great many even of the small shopkeepers and tradesmen who are nothing but distributing agents for the great corporations, and whose so-called profits are nothing more than a distributor’s wage.

The Revolutionary Proletariat.

It is, of course, a simple matter to say that the construction of the socialist system is the task of the revolutionary proletariat alone. It does not, therefore, follow that this revolutionary proletariat must necessarily be recruited only from the machine hands, the mill hands, and the ditch-diggers.

We beg to submit this fact, that the revolutionary proletariat consists of all those who see the injustice of the capitalist system, who recognize the class struggle, and who recognize that the solution of the class struggle is the transfer of ownership of capital from the present owners to the hands of the community at large.

In so far as socialist parties everywhere have been turned into vote-catching associations, we do not attempt to defend them. It did not need the “Left Wing Manifesto” nor the “Left Wing” organization to show us the futility of this policy. Many of the despised “moderates” have been loud in their denunciations of such tactics and have been the prime movers for their elimination. To blame the “moderate” socialists for the “patriotism” and nationalism displayed by the people of Europe and of America in the past few years is dishonest in the extreme. Do our comrades of

the “Left Wing” entirely eliminate from all consideration the effect of the church, the press, the school, the theatre (all of them engines in the hands of the bourgeoisie) in the forming of public opinion? Do they think that even the powerful Social Democracies of Europe have a press equal in strength to these? They know better than to claim such an absurdity. They should be thoroughly ashamed to present such an argument for earnest consideration.

The Spartacans.

The fifth section of the Manifesto is devoted to the philosophy of the Sparticides. It is worth noting at this time that only in those countries which were ruined by the war did extreme revolutionary socialism make any headway. Is there no lesson in this for us in America? Does this not bear out the attitude of the so-called “moderate” parties everywhere that the policies advocated by the “Left Wing” may be followed in time of revolution, but make no headway with the proletariat in time of comparative stability of industry? When did the Sparticides and Bolsheviki assume strength in their respective countries? Was it not when the people had been thoroughly disillusioned regarding their rulers and the promises of their rulers? And what disillusioned them? Arguments? Mass meetings? Manifestoes? Propaganda? The “Left Wing” knows history better than this; knows that starvation, hunger, misery, machine guns, and despair produced the conditions in which the Bolsheviki and the Sparticides flourished.

Do they really wish to carry out the logic of their position? Do they really favor Bolshevism to the extent of wishing to see America first suffer from hunger, starvation, pestilence, machine guns, and despair? If so, why then do they organize into a political party at all? Why do they not simply declare themselves black anarchists and proceed — in so far as lies within their power — to produce the conditions under which alone Bolshevism can flourish? It is a common argument of the “Left Wing” when confronted by the question, “Do you favor the eight-hour day?” to say that they favor the eight-hour day, if it is obtained by means of industrial action, but that they do not favor parliamentary activity tending toward the eight-hour day. But if they are so anxious for the shortcut to socialism which the Bolsheviki took, they ought logically to oppose the eight-hour day or any ameliorative measure on the industrial field as well, on the ground that such measure postpones the revolution.

Revolutionary Conditions.

“Moderate socialism was not prepared to seize the power for the workers during a revolution,” continues the Manifesto of the “Left Wing”; “It believed that bourgeois democracy could be used as a means of constructing the socialist system.”

We are here concerned with a difference interpretation of certain social facts. What the “Left Wing” Manifesto overlooks is that the conditions of revolution are not the same as conditions of peace. When a revolution has actually been precipitated, all society is in a state of flux, and when society is in a state of flux, it is folly to try to reconstruct the old machinery along the lines of the proletarian dictatorship. When, however, society is not in a state of flux, when comparative industrial stability prevails, it becomes folly to use the same methods which are perfectly proper in a time of active revolution.

War and Revolution.

In so far as the Manifesto of the “Left Wing” condemns those moderate socialists in Russia and Germany who refused to recognize that the revolution had actually come and that open revolutionary tactics had to take the place of parliamentary tactics, its condemnation meets with the approval of the socialist movement throughout the world, but in so far as it implies, without so stating, that because revolutionary conditions had arrived in Russia and Germany, that, therefore, it was the duty of the socialist movement everywhere to apply the tactics of open revolution, the manifesto is stupid, and its suggestion is a crime against the proletariat.

The question resolves itself down to questions of facts. Has the social revolution in all countries reached the state of open and avowed conflict limited merely to several countries? And in the second place, is it not possible for one country to reap the benefits of social revolution elsewhere, without itself going through all the bloodshed and misery involved? It is noteworthy that to the time of this writing, open revolution has occurred only in those countries that were actually defeated in the war. In each case, revolution was precluded by famine, disease, pestilence, and widespread despair. People turned to revolution, not because they saw in the proletarian dictatorship a solution of their difficulties, but because conditions could not very well be worse than they were. They were in the position of the drowning man clutching at the straw. In those countries not defeated in

the war, there have been revolutionary rumblings, but nowhere has there been an open outbreak. In the United States, in particular, capitalism has emerged from the war stronger and more arrogant than ever. So far removed are we from a revolution in this country that in fact capitalism is actually seeking to precipitate a premature outbreak in order to administer a bloody lesson which would keep the proletariat in subjection for at least another generation. The May Day riots, openly aided and abetted by government employees, are indications of this intention. The “discovery” of a bomb outrage, time peculiarly enough for May 1st, ought to serve our revolutionary friends as a lesson of what capitalists in this country intend and feel strong enough to do.

The American Proletariat.

And what has the American proletariat to offer as against the united forces of capitalism? Is the American proletariat sufficiently well organized to meet today or tomorrow or next year the cohorts of the enemy? Of 25 million industrial workers in the United States, only three and one half million are organized. Of the three and one half million, fully 80% belong to old, staid, conservative craft unions that are no more imbued with the revolutionary fervor necessary for the type of “mass action” our comrades of the “Left Wing” suggest than are the white-collar slaves who represent so large a portion of the unorganized proletariat. With organization of the workers on the industrial field so inadequate; with revolutionary spirit almost nonexistent; with the forces of capitalism so well-organized and so arrogant as today they are, it becomes an offense against the proletariat to urge that the few class-conscious revolutionists should precipitate themselves upon the machine guns of the foe.

Evolution.

One thing that the “Left Wing” seems to overlook is the possibility of evolving by a process of borrowing. In England, the industrial revolution originated. Was it therefore necessary for America, Germany, France, Italy, and Russia to go through all the painful steps by which England progressed in order to change feudalism into capitalism? Was it not possible for these countries simply by copying from their predecessors to install the industrial revolution more or less ready-made, and was this copying done chiefly by means of fighting?

France smashed up her feudal system in a bloody revo-

lution in so far as her political interests were concerned. England accomplished the same goal by legislation and reached the goal years earlier than France. France had setbacks whereas England proceeded in a slow, steady march to bourgeois democracy. Russia is leading the way in the social revolution. It is unnecessary to point out that in Russia there existed no parliamentary means of expression of the will of the proletariat; that in Russia, the tactics of revolution were necessarily those of terrorism, of "mass action," and of violence.

Russia has apparently established an industrial state. Are we so impatient as not to be able to wait and borrow, step by step, from the Russian organization? Are we quite sure that we would attain our goal if we imitated Russia in every particular? Surely the good tactician modifies his strategy according to the conditions under which he must work.

Surely, also, conditions in this country differ radically from those that existed in Russia before the revolution, first, in that there is a means for the expression of the will of the proletariat; second, in that capitalism is far more powerful and aggressive; and third, in that the people are not hungry, they have not suffered so intensely. Nor does it therefore follow that we as Socialists should wish to see the proletariat go hungry in order that the revolution may come the sooner. It has been our experience that the more the worker has, the more he demands; that, so long as the machinery for granting him his demands exists, he will not resort to revolution; that in fact, the slow revolution is to be preferred to the violent revolution.

American Socialism.

Under the heading of "Problems of American Socialism," the Manifesto goes on to say: "Already there is formidable industrial unrest, a seething ferment of discontent evidenced by inarticulate rumblings which presage striking occurrences. The transformation of industry from a war to a peace basis has thoroughly disorganized the economic structure. Thousands upon thousands of workers are being thrown out of work."

This statement from the "Left Wing" Manifesto is in part true, but the conclusion the Manifesto draws therefrom is not justified. There is "formidable industrial unrest." There is discontent. There are strikes. But there has been unrest, discontent, and strikes before, and in so far as capital may yield to the demands of labor without thereby yielding capitalist supremacy, these strikes, discontent, and unrest have been and will be allayed. Thousands of workers

are being thrown out of work, but even as yet the problem of unemployment is not so serious as it was during 1907 and 1912. There were no revolutions in those years. There is no reason to expect a revolution from these conditions now; and the conditions quoted in the rest of the paragraph — the existence of unemployed demobilized soldiers, of thousands out of work, of women trying to keep their war jobs — all do not as yet point to a revolution except in the eyes of those who seem to want revolution above everything else.

The fact that the capitalist through their Chambers of Commerce and their merchants' and manufacturers' association are trying to break up even the existing labor organizations is nothing new. These organizations have tried to do this in the past and they can continue to try for many years without precipitating an armed outbreak.

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"The temper of the workers and soldiers after the sacrifice they have made in the war is such that they will not endure the reactionary labor conditions so openly advocated by the master class."

The writers of the Left Wing Manifesto have so far confused their wishes with the facts that they seem not to realize that the soldiers and sailors of whom they speak have had no schooling in proletarian philosophy. Without the schooling, they can be bribed into submission once more by the offer of ameliorative conditions and this offer will be made. Only after the workers have had a chance to realize that even these ameliorative conditions do not go to the root of the evil, will they turn to the more radical plans of the socialists.

Immediate Demands.

The Socialist Party does not approach the whole question from the standpoint of votes and the election of representatives to legislature. In the past it may have sinned in this respect here and there, and in its eagerness, it has mistaken the shadow of strength for the reality, but the insistence of the Socialist Party on the so-called immediate demands is based upon a philosophy and not upon any vote-catching intentions. It is the theory already mentioned above, that the more the worker achieves, the more he desires and demands that is back of the program of immediate demands. It is on the basis of this theory only that the immediate demands should be framed. They should be of

a type that will carry the worker one step further in his recognition of the class struggle. They should be of a nature that will tend to make him more and more intelligently discontented with his conditions. What these demands are, we do not have to go far to seek. If we on the political field demand what the radical unions demand on the industrial field, we shall not go far wrong. We will do well to revise our programs; we will do well to standardize and make uniform — in so far as possible — the Socialist programs throughout the United States, but we must proceed slowly before we decide to eliminate completely all the immediate demands from our programs.

Labor Parties.

The Left Wing Manifesto in discussing the problems of American Socialism refers to the organization of the Labor Party by the trade unions:

“In an effort to conserve what they have won and wrest new concessions from the master class, the organization of the labor party is an immature expression of a new spirit in the labor movement; but a labor party is not the instrument for the emancipation of the working class.”

The sweeping condemnation of labor parties per se is again typical of the superficiality of “Left Wing” criticism. So long as the labor party is merely an instrument “to conserve what labor has won,” the labor party is, of course, an immature expression of the class struggle; but should the labor party develop — as it inevitably must — a greater and greater degree of class-consciousness, and should a labor party become an adherent of socialist principles, there is no reason why it should not enlist the support of all socialists. The “Left Wing” sweepingly condemns all labor parties, forgetting that unless the Socialist Party becomes a labor party in the sense that it enlists the support of labor in great masses, it is a futile expression of a cabinet philosophy.

The Manifesto claims that neither laborism nor “moderate socialism” is an instrument for the conquest of power. Here again we have a sweeping statement without any justification whatsoever. Socialism in the last analysis is laborism — not, of course, in the sense of a mere demand for increased wages and better working conditions, but in the sense that it demands for labor — in so far as possible — the full social value of its product.

In this section — more than in any we have discussed, the writers of the “Left Wing” Manifesto are guilty of playing with words.

Capitalist Imperialism.

The Manifesto next devotes a section of four paragraphs to a discussion of capitalist imperialism. After discussing rapidly the development of capitalism into imperialism and discussing the disappearance of the foreign market and the development of spheres of influence and protectorates, the document goes on to state:

“The United States no longer holds itself aloof, isolated and provincial. It is reaching out for new markets, new zones of influence, new protectorates.”

“The capitalist class of America is using organized labor for its imperialistic purposes. We might soon expect the capitalist class, in true Bismarckian fashion, to grant factory laws, old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, sick benefits, and the whole litter of bourgeois reforms, so that the workers may be kept fit to produce the greatest profits at the greatest speed.”

This sounds plausible and it is only upon close examination that we find that the effect of this whole list of so-called reforms may be interpreted in at least two different ways. The “Left Wing” chooses to say that these measures — which it terms Bismarckian reforms — will result in making better slaves for the capitalists, fit only to produce greater profits than before. It has, however, always been the claim of socialists that only with ameliorative conditions does the worker get any opportunity to realize his position and to work for socialism.

“Das Lumpen proletariat” is so opposed, so down-trodden, that it does not possess enough energy to rouse itself out of the despair into which economic conditions have hurled it. In the past, only those sections of the proletariat which have wrung from their masters a certain measure of leisure and economic security have developed sufficient class-consciousness to band themselves to go into the trade unions and the socialist movement.

Our friends of the “Left Wing” do not take the trouble to read history. They see only the one fact of the Russian Revolution and they do not realize that while the Russian Revolution is a success in so far as it has created the domination of the proletariat over all other classes, it still must go painfully and slowly through all the steps inherent in what the “Left Wingers” call the Bismarckian program.

The Soviet republic must enforce “old age pensions, unemployment insurance, sick benefits, and the whole litter of bourgeois reforms,” just as if it were a parliament of a capitalist state. We ask our “Left Wing” friends wherein

lies the difference whether these laws are obtained before the revolution or after it? We do not claim that this list of changes in the material conditions of the workers will bring about the revolution. That has never been claimed by any responsible socialist or by any group of socialists. All that has been claimed for this program is that by its enforcement, the worker will achieve a greater and growing degree of economic independence; that, as a consequence of this independence, he will have an opportunity to develop himself and to develop his class-consciousness; that as a result of this self-development and the development of his class-power, he will the sooner realize that the power to seize the state and to use it for its own purposes lies within himself.

I prefer a revolution — be it peaceful or be it violent — carried on by men who realize exactly what they want and how they are going to get it, than by men driven to rebel because hunger leaves them no alternative. The choice of these two types of revolution is the one placed before us by the “Left Wing.” Either we reject the program of “reform” and so invite the revolution of hunger and despair, or we accept it and so work for the revolution of independence and hope. I believe that the intelligent man cannot waver between the choice of these two things, and I believe that the socialist movement of America and of the world will prove itself to be composed of intelligent men and women.

The Dangers of America Socialism.

In this section so entitled, the “Left Wing” Manifesto discusses the possible effect of what it terms the “purely

bourgeois reforms” upon socialism in America. It says that the Socialist Party might make use of these reforms to attract the workers’ votes by claiming that they are victories for socialism and that they have been won by Socialists’ political action.

Never has the Socialist Party claimed that the gaining of these reforms has been a victory for socialism. We have always claimed that these reforms would be instituted by capitalist legislatures, as soon as the Socialist Party and the organized labor movement became strong enough to force recognition of their necessity. We have always insisted that no attention would be paid to these reforms until the labor movement became strong enough to force such recognition.

This has been true in Germany, where the growing strength of the Social Democracy forced Bismarck to adopt this program, and it has been true elsewhere as well. But the adoption of this program is not socialism and brings socialism nearer only in so far as it creates better conditions in which to propagate for socialism. This is not a danger to American socialism. It is, on the contrary, a great benefit. The real danger to American socialism is to cease agitating for the despised “bourgeois reforms.” Such a cessation would be the cue for the repeal of all labor legislation and for the restoration of conditions such as existed in the early days of the industrial revolution. This danger lies in the “Left Wing” Manifesto and not in the present program of the Socialist Party.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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