
Aping Our Elders.

by Oliver Carlson

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While the forces within and out of the Socialist Party are fighting bitterly as to what the attitude of that party should be regarding this, that, or the other; or whether a new party should be formed or attempts made to “capture” the old one, we, as an organization of young people, should seek to orientate ourselves. The issues in the great controversy were at first about Tactics, but these have passed entirely out of sight by this time, so that the issue now is one of “for or against the NEC.” The party fight has centered about a few persons, and all activity has, during the last couple of months, been a series of attacks by the present officialdom of the SP against those who have sought to gain control of the organization; and vice versa. This has led to a collapse of the Party; and the membership is very little wiser now than it was before the fight just because the REAL issue has been neglected, has been passed over.

Our members have also taken an active part in this controversy — this could not be helped, as so many of them were active in the affairs of the Party. Our own ranks have been classified into “Right,” “Center,” and “Left;” and now last of all come the “Communists.” We are merely aping the actions of the adults. This in itself is not so bad, but the sorry part of the whole matter is that the largest percentage of our membership does not fully realize what such a classification means. How can a young man or woman, who has never stud-

ied socialism carefully, be able to decide upon the issues? This cannot be expected. What we must do is to FIND OUT what socialism is. What we must do is that which our League is organized for: To Train Ourselves in the Principles of International Socialism. We cannot hope to grasp the situation in a moment. We cannot become able fighters for the Cause in a day or week or month. Ours is not a creed or dogma which one can embrace at a moment's notice. Ours is a complete philosophy which we must learn. Not to BELIEVE but to KNOW should be our motto. We are not “converted” to Socialism; we do not all of a sudden “see the light.” It is only by consistent plugging and hard work that we become class-conscious socialists.

We have a new world to face, and with it come the thousands of new problems. The rupture in the Socialist Party has come about through these problems, and how to solve them. The general membership has become the followers of one or another group instead of itself trying to solve these problems. But as long as most of the time in the affairs of the Party is devoted to “business meetings” or “vote catching,” that is the logical result. Dühring in Germany manage to lead off a considerable element from the party when he came to the front with his “new and revised” conception of Socialism. In this country we still have some who unhesitatingly follow the “Little Old

†- Oliver C. Carlson of Detroit was elected the 3rd National Secretary of the Young People's Socialist League (youth section of the Socialist Party) in May 1919. Carlson, who first joined the YPSL in late 1914, emerged victorious in a 3 way race, garnering a plurality of 689 votes (37.4%) out of 1841 cast. Carlson later was an important youth leader in the Communist movement and was the YCL delegate to the ill-fated August 1922 Communist Unity Convention at Bridgman, Michigan.

Appeal,” while others romp along behind Walter Thomas Mills, Allen L. Benson, or any one of a dozen others.

We must meet the new issues with a clear vision. We must take a stand for revolutionary socialism. But above all we must become free so that as an organization we can develop ourselves mentally to a level where we will not be followers, where we will not be led this way or that way, but as young men and women who UNDERSTAND Socialism we will decide for ourselves what our attitude is going to be. When issues arise we should be able to fight them out on that plane.

“There is no royal road to knowledge,” says an old proverb. Once we realize that, as start has been made. The intellectual level of the YPSL will be the determining factor as to how big and important a part we are to play in solving the problems of a world which faces the collapse of an entire system.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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