

# MANIFESTO

## Of The Workers' and Peasants' Party of India.

The National Congress has answered the insolent challenge of imperialism by the resolution to boycott the Statutory Commission and by declaring that its object is to gain complete independence for the Indian people. These decisions of the National Congress, if they are taken seriously, mean repudiation of the policy that the bourgeois nationalist parties have followed in the past. The policy of bourgeois nationalism is to come to an agreement with the imperialist rulers as regards the share in the profit derived from the exploitation of the Indian masses. The programme of self-government within the British empire is determined by this policy. The nationalist bourgeoisie hoped that the junior partnership in the profitable business of exploiting the Indian masses would be granted to them by the imperialist overlords as reward for their subservience. This hope has been dashed. Imperialism has sternly refused to grant the most moderate demand of bourgeois nationalism. The lesson of this is obvious. *Nothing can be had for asking.* The more ready Indian nationalist movement is to come to a compromise with imperialism, the more insolent becomes the latter. If the Madras Congress has taken its decisions about the boycott of the Statutory Commission and goal of the nationalist movement with clear understanding of this relation, then it marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the nationalist movement. In that case the Congress must break away from the bankrupt tactics of the past, and boldly adopt new tactics corresponding to the new resolutions. In this it will be fully supported by the toiling masses as has already been demonstrated by the decisions of the Trade Union Congress and individual unions to support the boycott of the Statutory Commission.

That the bourgeois nationalists and their leaders are disappointed by the rebuff is clear. A distinct tone of disappointment is discernible in the outburst against the "insult to the Indian people." Here in lies the weakness of the whole opposition. The astuteness of the imperialist rulers has taken notice of this weakness and will use it very advantageously.

The weakness of the boycott resolution of the Liberal Conference is evident. Very clearly there is a rift in the liberal flute. The mover of the resolution, Sivaswami Aiyer, made it quite clear what the Liberals wanted. They did not content the right of the British Parliament to judge what sort of government India should have. They would be satisfied only if the representatives of the Indian bourgeoisie could cooperate with the imperialist overlords

in framing the constitution. Then there are sections of the Liberal Federation, for example in Bengal, which are from the beginning opposed to boycott. The Moslem League is split. It will simply be self-deception to believe that the following of the Lahore centre is inconsiderable. All the reactionary elements are sure to rally there. The follies of the nationalist movement, particularly the cult of linking nationalism with Hindu orthodoxy, have aided imperialist policy of fostering religious animosity. Today British imperialism can count upon the support of a considerable section of the so-called politically minded-Musalmans. The professional politicians claiming to represent the depressed classes are also against boycott.

If the statements of the leaders are analytically studied, even inside the Congress germs of eventual back-sliding are as well noticeable.

Taking stock of the situation imperialism has decided its tactics to meet it. The actual work of the Commission has practically been postponed till the next year. It has already been announced that the first visit of the Commission will be "no more than than a reconnaissance." The hope of imperialism is that during this year the big bourgeoisie will be persuaded to abandon their opposition to the commission in return for some measures of readjustment and that after they have made enough noise to save their political face the "saner" elements inside the Congress will also be more tractable. Meanwhile, the boycott movement will frizzle out, as it surely will to the gratification of imperialism, if the resolutions of the Madras Congress are not followed up with actions involving the workers' and peasants' masses.

Simultaneously with this tactics of temporisation to win over the vasillating elements, imperialism shakes its mailed fist to terrrise those who, otherwise, may deviate towards a real struggle for freedom. It is has already been made amply clear that imperialism is not afraid of the boycott movement. In view of past experience it is not fool hardy for imperialism to take this defiant attitude. In his farewell address to the Legislative Council the retiring governor of the U. P. said that the boycott "will not fatally obstruct or hamper the enquiry, which in any case will go on". That this was not just a humbug of a colonial proconsul is evidenced by the following statement in the officially inspired London Times of January 4: "With ample time for reflection it may be hoped that responsible Indian leaders will finally realize that their failure to grasp the opportunity of cooperation with the representative of the Imperial Parliament will neither enhance their political reputation outside nor advance the cause which they have at heart. *They will otherwise be forced into an unwilling cooperation is probable enough.*"

Imperialism is confident of the eventual cooperation of the big bourgeoisie and speculates upon the inability of the Congress to stick to the boycott resolution in view of that cooperation. It must be admitted that imperialism estimates the situation correctly. The boycott will really not be of any practical value in forcing a change of the imperialist politics, unless it is used as the lever for a mass movement to resist imperialist attack. There is no doubt about it that the bourgeoisie do not contemplate such an action. Nor could we expect such action from those who dominate the Congress, if we recollect the history of the Swaraj Party.

Imperialism flouts India's right to self-determination, because of the repeatedly demonstrated inability and unwillingness of the bourgeois nationalist parties and the National Congress, to conduct an effective struggle to conquer that right. The real significance of setting up a commission to decide the political future of India, without one Indian on it, is that the power of imperialism is not in the least impaired by the parliamentary opposition of the nationalist bourgeoisie whose offer of compromise is, therefore, disdainfully rejected.

The failure and reluctance of the Congress to organize an effective struggle for freedom were due to its subserviance to capitalist and landowning interests. The parties and people consciously representing these interests left the Congress and advocated cooperation with the imperialist rulers. The Congress talked of noncooperation, but drifted towards co-operation. There is no mid-way between cooperation and non-cooperation. The Congress and the Swaraj party went bankrupt in the vain search for this mid-way & should non-cooperation not mean absolute political passivity, which, in effect, would be worse than cooperation, resignation, then it must be resistance to the existent order of things. The power of a state can never be resisted except by organized action of the masses. A movement requiring active and abiding participation of the masses must be ready to take into consideration social and political demands of the workers and peasants. That is, a real, effective resistance to imperialist domination can be conducted only by those who are not afraid of a certain change in the existing social-economic relations, which will inevitably take place in course of this resistance. All the classes, that are benefited by the present miserable conditions of the workers and peasants of India, therefore, are opposed to any real struggle against imperialism, because such a struggle cannot be organized and much less be victorious without, at least partially, injuring their interests. The workers and peasants will fight for national freedom, because it will place them in political and economic conditions better than under imperialist domination.

The Congress and the Swaraj Party talked about the masses, but acted according to the interests of the capitalist and landowning classes. Consequently they were obliged to abandon all resistance

to imperialism, except in words, and placed themselves in a position where they could be treated contemptuously by these in power. This disgraceful position can be altered, when the whole social outlook of the Congress is altered. Because without a radical change in the social orientation the resolutions of the Madras Congress will remain dead-letters. These resolutions can be enforced only by organizing a militant action of the masses.

Boycott, by itself, is but a negative slogan. When we reject something, we must say what we want instead. The future of the movement depends upon the positive demand that supplements the negative slogan of boycott. The seriousness of the boycott, therefore, can be judged from the nature of the positive demand. The demand of the Liberals is clearly stated. They want place on the commission or something that could be interpreted as analogous to it. What is the concrete demand of the Congress? Independence has been formulated as the goal. Since no concrete proposition as regards the realization of this goal has been made, the resolution on that question does not have any immediate practical value. It is only the expression of a desire. The vital question is what does the Congress demand instead of the commission that it rejects? In the absence of a definite resolution of the Congress one must judge by the statements made by its leaders, which statements have official character. However, the absence of a resolution formulating immediate demands concretely is significant, and leaves the way open for eventual climb down.

Pundit Motilal Nehru is obviously the leader of the boycott movement. He is hailed as the Zaghul of India. Let us see what has he got to say as regards the positive programme of the movement? In a letter to the Labour Members of the British Parliament dated London, November 23 Motilal Nehru corrects the belief that the commission has been set up in compliance with Indian demand. For what the Indian demanded he refers to the "national demands" presented to the Legislative Assembly. As Motilal Nehru writes in the letter "the first of these resolutions (on national demand) demanded a representative Round Table Conference to frame and recommend a scheme of constitution for India to Parliament". In the same letter we find also the following declaration: "Those of us who desire cooperation between the two peoples must regret this (increasing bitterness), and it is in the hope that you so desire I am addressing this to you." Clear conclusions can be drawn from these statements, and Motilal Nehru has made no other of contrary nature. The issue is not sharpened to the extent of challenging the right of the British Parliament to sanction a constitution for India, and the door is left open for negotiation. It is a very interesting coincidence that Motilal Nehru is compared with Zaghul Pasha. It seems that he is going to play the similar role played by the latter in connection with the Milner Commission. The mass movement against the Milner Commission was utilized by Zaghul to

carry on negotiations in England about the report of the commission which was boycotted. It should be remembered that Zaghul induced the Egyptian masses to make a revolutionary demonstration against Milner Commission, but finally he himself accepted the recommendations of that commission as soon as under the pressure of a powerful mass movement imperialism made some concessions to the Egyptian bourgeoisie.

Next, let us examine the position of V. J. Patel. In a statement to the press on December 13 he says: "Indeed, I and my friends of the Congress have consistently maintained that the question of relations between Great Britain and India can only be finally adjusted on the basis of India's right to Dominion Status being acknowledged without any reservation and the method of giving effect to this decision being examined in a joint and equal conference between the plenipotentiaries of the two countries. I am also aware that the general scheme of procedure sanctioned by the British Parliament in so far as it ignores that claim and also by reason of the exclusion of Indians the Statutory Commission stands condemned in the eyes of the politically-minded Indians."

This statement is also clear. The demand guardedly made therein is the same as made by the Liberals. The only bone of contention is the presence of Indians on the commission. That concession made, the Congress, as led by Patel and his friends, will join the Liberals in placing the constitution for the final sanction of the British Parliament. Concretely, the quarrel is not as regards essentials, but details.

In the beginning Rangaswami Iyenger came out boldly for a "new programme" which, however, he declared, he was going to draft on the "fundamental principles embodied in the Swaraj Party's national demand." Finally a week before the Congress met he declared the following as the "new programme": 1. "An Indian Federation, in which will enter the Native States, as a Dominion within the British Empire; 2. The King (British) will have the right of veto on the decisions of the Indian parliament; and 3. On the questions of foreign affairs and national defence India will have similar right as the Dominions.

Practically all the important Congress leaders, who are talking volumes against the commission and agitating for its boycott, can be quoted as making statements avoiding the vital issue of a struggle against imperialism and keeping the way open for a retreat. This being the position of its leaders the resolutions of the Congress cannot be enforced as long as the leadership is not changed. The representatives of the capitalist and landowning interests inside the Congress will not permit it to become a fighting organ supported consciously and actively by the masses. The bourgeois leaders have allowed the radical resolution as regards the goal of the Congress to

be passed to deceive the rank and file. They hope that, satisfied with this formal expression of the desire for freedom, the revolutionary rank and file of the Congress will be indifferent to the immediate positive demands, and enthusiastically carry on a mass agitation against the Simon Commission. The bourgeois nationalists will exploit this agitation to secure some concessions, and as soon as some sort of agreement with imperialism has been reached, will sabotage the agitation. In the light of past experience it can be anticipated that they will not allow the mass movement develop beyond the limit of agitation and that they will sabotage it in any case, even before imperialism has been forced to make some concessions. This was the case at the time of the Non-cooperation movement. Had the movement been allowed to develop a little further, imperialism would have made substantial concessions to the nationalist bourgeoisie. But these were as afraid of the movement as the imperialist rulers and liquidated it frantically to the great joy of imperialism. The insulting treatment, that the nationalist bourgeoisie today receive from the imperialist over-lords, is the reward for the services they rendered six years ago. Imperialism knows that the bourgeois nationalists will not fight; therefore it does not take their vituperations seriously and rejects their peace offers with contempt.

The Workers' and Peasants' Party supports the decision of the Congress to boycott the Simon Commission, but warns the rank and file nationalists against the bourgeois leaders. The issue should be approached not from the point of view of constitutional technicalities, with view to a possible compromise. The opposition should be not to this or that commission, owing to its composition or manner of appointment. The opposition should be to the right of determining the political future of the Indian people arrogantly assumed by a foreign power. By boycotting the Simon Commission the Indian people challenges this pretention of British imperialism. The next step should be to assert the right of self-determination. That is, the negative slogan of boycott should be supplemented by positive actions to assert the right of self-determination. This action should be **THE ELECTION OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY** which will decide all the outstanding political questions.

None of the existing political organization has the right to speak in behalf of the entire people. A Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage will be the incontestable custodian of the sovereign right of the people. The Indian people do not need the sanction of a foreign parliament to create such an organ of theirs. The campaign for the election of the Constituent Assembly should begin immediately. Committees for the election of the Constituent Assembly should be created throughout the country. There should be a committee in each village as well

as in each town. The masses should be involved in this campaign. Workers' and peasants' representatives should sit on the committees. The participation of the greatest possible majority of adult men and women should be secured in the election.

Thus the attention of the country will be focussed upon a constructive work. Instead of only the negative slogan of boycott a positive programme of action will be placed before the movement. Some concessions as regards the composition of the Statutory Commission will knock the bottom off the boycott movement; but the agitation for the election of the Constituent Assembly will continue. The movement for national freedom will develop, the fighting energy of the masses will be mobilized for a constructive purpose, irrespective of the attitude of the bourgeois parties and leaders. By placing itself in the centre of this campaign the Congress will become organically connected with the masses. But to win the confidence of the masses and secure their conscious, active firm, and abiding participation in the movement for national freedom the redress of the immediate political and economic grievances of the workers and peasants must be incorporated in the programme of the movement. The workers and peasants will enthusiastically participate in the election of the Constituent Assembly and defend its sovereign right provided that it is made clear to them that it will consider their demands and defend their interests.

The Workers' and Peasants' Party will mobilize the toiling masses in the campaign for the boycott of the present commission or any other commission, irrespective of its composition, and for the election of a Constituent Assembly as the only organ competent to determine the political future of the Indian people. The programme for the realization of which the Workers' and Peasants' Party will organize this campaign is : 1. establishment of free national democratic state; 2. nationalization of land (abolition of the Native States and landlordism); 3. abolition of all levies on the agricultural population except land tax not exceeding 15 per cent of the net income; 4. Exemption from taxation of peasants cultivating "un-economic holdings"; 5. annulment of peasants' indebtedness; 6. control over usury (interest not to exceed 6 per cent per annum); 7. nationalization of public utilities (railways, telegraph, waterways etc.) and mines; 8. minimum wages guaranteeing an irreducible standard of living for the industrial workers; 9. improvement of labour and housing conditions; 10. 8 hour day and 44 hour week; 11. free primary education; 12. insurance against unemployment, sickness, old-age etc. and maternity benefit (employers and the state to contribute 75 per cent to the fund); 13. freedom of press, speech and assembly 14. right to strike and carry arms; 15. freedom of religion and worship; 16. abolition of caste privileges; 17. equal political and economic rights for women.

This programme corresponds to the interests of the overwhelming majority of the Indian people. The proletariat, peasantry and the oppressed middle class must unite in a struggle for the realization of this programme. Indeed all those who want national freedom as the door to political, economic, social and cultural progress of the entire people, must subscribe to this programme. Only the feudal landowning class representing social reaction will be against this programme, because it cannot be realized without destroying them. The refusal to subscribe to this programme and the unwillingness to fight for its realization will indicate the desire to sabotage the struggle for national freedom. For a real, effective struggle against imperialist domination can never be organized without active, conscious and abiding participation of the masses and this can only be secured when national freedom will hold out before the masses some concrete alteration of the present conditions.

A Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage will represent the entire people, and therefore will comply with the above demands of the overwhelming majority of the population. Consequently the oppressed masses (proletariat, peasantry and the middle class) should brush aside the controversy over the Constitution and demand the **ELECTION OF THE CONSTITUENTS ASSEMBLY** as the only effective answer to imperialist challenge to the Indian people's right of self-determination.

Proletariat, Peasants, Students, Employees, Poor Intellectuals, Small Merchants, Artisans and all others that are oppressed by imperialism and the native exploiting classes! demand the election of the Constituents Assembly; set up committees to prepare for the election. Every one of you must actively participate in the campaign; otherwise the bourgeois nationalists and their agents in the Congress will sabotage it. Don't be deceived by the oratorical radicalism of the Congress leaders. Demand a real struggle against imperialism by asserting in practice the right of self-determination.

**DOWN WITH THE SIMON COMMISSION !**

**LONG LIVE THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY !**

Central Committee

of The Workers' and Peasants' Party of India.