

Problems of American Socialism

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(Continued from Last Issue)

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 affects 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 A. F. of L., who do not belong there and who are betrayed by the aristocracy of labor; a large number of independent unions, the radical character of which might develop into more revolutionary consciousness; the I. W. W. 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 I. W. W. 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.

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 enquiry 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 third International—the international of revolutionary Socialism and the final struggle.

WHY ARE YOU OUT OF WORK?

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spiracy in restraint of trade. It brings a relatively small, though absolutely large, run of free income to the special interests which benefit by it, at a relatively, and absolutely, large cost to the underlying community, and so it gives rise to a body of vested rights and intangible assets belonging to these special interests.

Of a similar character, in so far that in effect they are in the nature of sabotage—conscientious withdrawal of efficiency—are all manner of excise and revenue-stamp regulations; although they are not always designed for that purpose. Such would be, for instance, the partial or complete prohibition of alcoholic beverages, the regulation of the trade in tobacco, opium, and other deleterious narcotics, drugs, poisons, and high explosives. Of the same nature, in effect if not in intention, are such regulations as the oleomargarine law; as also the unnecessarily costly and vexatious routine of inspection imposed on the production of industrial (denatured) alcohol, which has inured to the benefit of certain business concerns that are interested in other fuels for use in internal-combustion engines; so also the singularly vexatious and elaborately imbecile specifications that limit and discourage the use of the parcel post, for the benefit of the express companies and other carriers which have a vested interest in traffic of that kind.

Comprehensive System of Vexation and Delay

It is worth noting in the same connection, although it comes in from the other side of the case, that ever since the express companies have been taken over by the federal administration there has visibly gone into effect a comprehensive system of vexation and delay in the detail conduct of their traffic, so contrived as to discredit federal control of this traffic and thereby provoke a popular sentiment in favor of its early return to private control. Much the same state of things has been in evidence in the railway traffic under similar conditions. Sabotage is serviceable as a de-

terrent, whether in furtherance of the administration work or in contravention of it.

In what has just been said there is, of course, no intention to find fault with any of these uses of sabotage. It is not a question of morals and good intentions. It is always to be presumed as a matter of course that the guiding spirit in all such governmental moves to regularize the nation's affairs, whether by restraint or by incitement, is a wise solicitude for the nation's enduring gain and security. All that can be said here is that many of these wise measures of restraint and incitement are in the nature of sabotage, and that in effect they habitually, though not invariably, inure to the benefit of certain vested interests—ordinarily vested interests which bulk large in the ownership and control of the nation's resources. That these measures are quite legitimate and presumably salutary, therefore, goes without saying. In effect they are measures for hindering traffic and industry at one point or another, which may often be a wise precaution.

Even the Mail Service Insufferably Efficient

During the period of the war administrative measures in the nature of sabotage have been greatly extended in scope and kind. Peculiar and imperative exigencies have had to be met, and the staple means of meeting many of these new and exceptional exigencies has quite reasonably been something in the way of avoidance, disallowance, penalization, hindrance, a conscientious withdrawal of efficiency from work that does not fall in with the purposes of the Administration. Very much as is true in private business when a situation of doubt and hazard presents itself, so also in the business of government at the present juncture of exacting demands and inconvenient limitations, the Administration has been driven to expedients of disallowance and obstruction with regard to some of the ordinary processes of life, as, for instance, in the non-essential industries. It has also appeared that the ordinary equipment and agencies for gathering and distributing news and other information have in the past developed a capacity far in excess of what can safely be permitted in time of war. The like is true for the ordinary

facilities for public discussion of all sorts of public questions. The ordinary facilities, which may have seemed scant enough in time of peace and slack interest, had after all developed a capacity far beyond what the governmental traffic will bear in these uneasy times of war and negotiations, when men are very much on the alert to know what is going on. By a moderate use of the later improvements in the technology of transport and communication, the ordinary means of disseminating information and opinions have grown so efficient that the traffic can no longer be allowed to run at full capacity during a period of stress in the business of the government. Even the mail service has proved insufferably efficient, and a selective withdrawal of efficiency has gone into effect. To speak after the analogy of private business, it has been found best to disallow such use of the mail facilities as does not inure to the benefit of the administration in the way of good will and vested rights of usufruct.

These peremptory measures of disallowance have attracted a wide and dubious attention; but they have doubtless been of a salutary nature and intention, in some way which is not to be understood by outsiders—that is to say, by citizens of the Republic. An unguarded dissemination of information and opinions or an unduly frank canvassing of the relevant facts by these outsiders, will be a handicap on the Administration's work, and may even defeat the Administration's aims. At least so they say.

Press Misinformation Sabotage on the Public

Something of much the same color has been observed elsewhere and in other times, so that all this nervously alert resort to sabotage on undesirable information and opinions is nothing novel, nor is it peculiarly democratic. The elder statesmen of the great monarchies, east and west, have long ago seen and approved the like. But these elder statesmen of the great monarchies of the dynastic regime have gone to their work of sabotage on information because of a palpable division of sentiment between their government and the underlying population, such as does not exist

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