



Kitchener Local S.L.P. Slams the Social Democrats.

Comrades:

The letter from your secretary, Comrade Bainbridge, dated March 6, was read before what is now a Kitchener Section of the Socialist Labor Party. The undersigned were instructed to forward the following reply:

The news of Comrade Bainbridge's release was received with pleasure by Kitchener Socialists. Such incidents as his arrest contribute to the day when the ruling classes will be shorn of their power to persecute their opponents.

After an agitation conducted for some months inside the local, a large majority of the active members voted on March 3 to sever all connections with the S.D.P. and to join the S.L.P. Those who have not yet joined the S.L.P. are not friendly disposed towards your party, which consequently has practically no following here.

The S.D.P. is a reform party. Its candidates compromise with other parties. Its paper, *The Canadian Forward*, has blurred class lines; its Socialism is decidedly shady. At the present time the whole party is agitated with the proposal to aid in forming on some basis of union or federation with other bodies, a Canadian labor party. The *Forward* is the vehicle which peddles this proposition to the members. The party is not large, for this reason the ideas of men like Curry, Rigg, Mance, Simpson, Bruce, Bancroft, Conner, etc., play an important role—reformist, unfortunately. We are opposed to the views of these men, and to a party which harbors them. You will understand that our opposition does not consider what they are personally, nor does it necessarily question their motives, but it condemns their "Socialism." At a time when from radicals there comes praise for the Bolsheviks, these men should remember that the Bolsheviks in Russia had to make civil war on reformers such as they to attain their goal. The Labor party towards which the S.D.P. is heading is the last line of defence for Canadian capitalists.

To be sure, we condemn the D.E.C., but we do not place all blame for the reactionary tendencies, the disorganized condition of the party, the compromises, the attitude of *Forward*, on their shoulders: They permit these conditions, the party engages in the practices. The D.E.C. stand practically with the reformers, and they merit their share of our general condemnation of the party.

However, even if the S.D.P. were free from undesirable practices as a political party, the Socialists of Kitchener now organized in the S.L.P. would oppose and not support the S.D.P. Only industrial unionism practically worked for now will form the foundation for future Socialist administration. We contend that a political party cannot operate industry, that a victory won by purely political action could not organize itself practically, but would lead to confusion, reaction and counter-revolution. We are aware that these ideas do not meet with favor from influential members of the S.D.P. Though they believe in economic organization and action their policy favors

trade unionism. As in political matters, so in the matter of industrial organization, the S.D.P. is found in our eyes to give its tacit support to reactionary movements.

Too weak, too cowardly to stand in its own strength as a Socialist party proudly defending the principles of revolutionary Socialism, the S.D.P. has been lost to the Socialist Movement. It is only natural, perhaps, that S.D.P. members should look for a labor party. As for us, we will not support you.

We believe that the workers should organize politically and industrially to overthrow the capitalist order and to operate the industries on a Socialist basis. You may also believe this—theoretically, but practically, S.D.P. action loses itself in the swamp of capitalism. We want a Socialist victory. The S.D.P. can never lead the workers to success. Therefore we have left the S.D.P.

Signed by order of Kitchener Section, S.L.P.,

A. W. Bowles,
Secretary,
Mervyn Smith,
Organizer.

JIMMIE HIGGINS REPLIES TO KITCHENER S.L.P.

R. R. No. 23,
Dubbville P.O.,
April 20, 1918.

Mr. Mervyn Smith,
Organizer,
Kitchener Section S.L.P.

Our Local has received your circular letter announcing the severance of Kitchener Local from the S.D.P., and its formation into a section of the S.L.P., and in which you give to the world your views on Socialist tactics, Socialist parties, and Socialists. Our local has not replied to this pronouncement officially, thinking perhaps in these days of conservation and high cost of living that it did not merit the expenditure of the paper and a three cent postage stamp necessary for a reply. But as the document makes its reappearance in the columns of the *Weekly People*, judge that you consider it of some importance, historic perhaps, a modern Communist Manifesto. I therefore take it upon myself personally to make a reply, which I address to you, believing you to be the actual author and also the presiding genius of Kitchener Section of the S.L.P.

The question of tactics in the Socialist movement is as old as the movement itself, and the piffle contained in your letter clearly shows you to be a mere novice in the movement. The course about to be taken by the S.D.P. for allying itself with labor organizations has been endorsed by men whose knowledge of Socialist philosophy and economics, integrity of purpose and moral courage cannot be questioned. As an instance, I will quote "Frederick Engels." I think you will allow, was some authority on Scientific Socialism. He says: "It is far more important that the movement should spread, proceed harmoniously, take root and embrace as much as possible the whole working class, than it should start and proceed on theoretically correct lines from the beginning. The one great thing is to get the working class to move as a class. That once obtained they will soon find the right direction." Again he says "Had we from 1864 to 1873 insisted on working only with those who openly adopted our platform, where should we be to-day. I think all our practice has shown that it is possible to work along with the gen-

eral movement of the working class at every one of its stages without giving up or hiding our own distinct position, or even organization." Thus says Engels, though, of course, you might object on the grounds that he never had an opportunity of consulting with Kitchener Section of the S.L.P. William Liebknecht, he of the "No Compromise, No Political Trading," has written in a similar strain to Engels. Then Marx says of the International: "It was founded to establish a real organization of the working class in place of Socialist and half-Socialist sects." Instead of treating the question of policy in the way a well informed Socialist would do we find you dogmatizing about the S.D.P. being "a reform party," its Socialism shady, it is lost to the Socialist movement, etc. This kind of dogmatism simply recalls to mind Douglas Jerrold's definition of dogmatism as being "puppyism come to maturity." The British Labor Party, as you are aware, has been taken as the model upon which to pattern the new Ontario Labor Party. Now the British Labor Party is not what a revolutionary Socialist would like to have it, yet it included in its membership some of the clearest sighted and best grounded Socialists in the British movement. These comrades, unlike so many who proclaim themselves to be scientific, believe that the law of evolution operates in a labor party as in any other living organism, and the progress of the British Labor Party from the days when "no politics in the union" was a common cry to the present time when it has adopted as clear and distinct a Socialist plank for its constitution as is possessed by the S.L.P. is ample justification for their presence within its ranks. The chief cause (outside of social and economic developments) of this progress was the propaganda carried on by the Socialist body, the I.L.P., who allied themselves, as the S.D.P. of C. now does, with non-Socialist labor bodies in order to convert them and solidify them into a real Socialist working class organization having the "two arms"—the political and industrial—necessary to overthrow capitalism and establish the republic of labor. Yet the S.L.P. pretends to scoff at the policy "boring from within." Why, a local of the S.D.P. has been known to transform itself into a section of the S.L.P. by adopting this very policy. You, in your narrowness and ignorance say that the S.D.P. is "too weak, and cowardly to stand in its own strength as a Socialist party." This kind of dryel only invites the observation that some people would appear to be out to make of themselves heroes (minus any risks), though in such case I beg to remind them that the singing of the National Anthem at the behest of a few soldiers makes a rather ignoble and unpromising beginning for the career of a would-be Trotsky; it might even be presumed to invalidate their propriety to impute cowardice to others. The matter of policy is not one (at the present time at least) of courage or cowardice, but one of common sense. Engels, unlike De Leon, was no lop-sided scientist. He gave some heed to the psychological and educational aspects of the subject, and the contrast between the progress made by the British Labor Party and the stagnation of the S.L.P. demonstrates that the former moved in accord with the law of natural evolution while the latter did not. If the class-conscious spirit of the British Labor Party develops at the same rate in the next

few years as it has done in the past (and after war conditions will even accelerate it) then the economic organizations within the party will, by their numerical strength, be able to back up any decision made at the ballot box. Even if a revolutionary crisis should be precipitated the Socialist policy of the I.L.P. will still be vindicated as by their social (fraternal) and co-operating attitude they have won the ear of the trade unions and in consequence their respect and confidence. At this point I would reply to your reference to the Bolsheviks having to make civil war on reformers. I have been informed by a reliable Russian comrade that when the testing time came many of the former shouters for blood and iron methods "rattled" to the bourgeoisie side and the Social Democrats flocked in hundreds to the Bolshevik side. We have witnessed a somewhat similar phenomenon in other countries, when such as Herve, Hyndman, Tillet and Grayson have deserted Internationalism and the "reformist" I.L.P. in Britain have been its bulwark, Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden standing the most villainous abuse heaped upon men by a reptile capitalist press.

The sort of industrial union that you advocate, one that will "lock out the capitalist" and form the basis for the new social structure, must of necessity be composed wholly or mainly of class-conscious Socialists. But the S.L.P. method reminds one of the tip given of catching a rat by applying salt to its tail—you have first got to catch your rat, and so you have first got to make your Socialists. Now craft unions are democratically controlled organization, and while primarily they were formed for defence, to resist the encroachments of Capitalism, they can be changed and are changing into offensive organizations with political objectives. We can find innumerable instances of organizations being diverted from their original purpose. One of the chief arguments against the capitalist project of a league of nations to maintain peace is that armies of defence would become armies of offence. So instead of trying to set up a new theoretically correct union in opposition to the present old and well-established unions, and thereby raising a wall of prejudice and insurmountable antagonism the wiser and shorter course to pursue is to settle down to a determined education of the rank and file. This is the only sure way to depose the "fakirs" and "misleaders" of labor so strenuously denounced by the S.L.P. The workers within labor parties and trade unions are part of the material which must be converted to make up the army of the Social Revolution. The S.L.P. policy can only be compared to the practice of the monks in keeping themselves aloof from the world in order to preserve their purity, or, as has been said, trying to establish Socialism by founding a Socialist colony that will expand until it envelops the whole of society.

Now in this letter I have not tried to accuse the S.L.P. of cowardice because they have deserted old organizations, and instead of standing to their guns and ousting the fakirs (both real and suspected) they have left them in possession. I simply believe their policy is a mistaken one. I have read expositions and defences of the S.L.P. position which gave one food for thought, but the only thought aroused by the Kitchener

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