

Marxism and the Labor Party

III.—By J. Fineberg.

(In The Call, England.)

It may be urged that the objections to Socialists, as individuals, belonging to the Labor Party, are not so great as the objection to a Socialist organization affiliating thereto. Away from politics we escape the dirt and turmoil thrown up by the ignorant herd and, making ourselves clean, we saunter along the olive groves in company with our equals. What then is the function of a Socialist organization? Clearly its business should be the propagation of the principles of Social Democracy; to teach the workers how the wealth their labor produces is taken from them; to inculcate a sense of their duty to themselves and the part they have to play in completing the emancipation of mankind. The Socialist organization must carry its propaganda to the workers; the workers will not come to us in order to receive it as a gift from our hands. Nay, more than that, we must carry our propaganda to that section of the workers upon whom it will be most effective. That section is the organized workers. No doubt there are as good Socialists outside the trade unions as in them. Indeed, there are some insular Socialists, who cling so tenaciously to the individualism they dare not or cannot shed, that they religiously refuse to join any organization, and thus dissipate their well-intentioned but ineffective energy. Depreciate the labor movement to the full extent of our natural impatience, decry it because it is unconscious that it wages a class struggle, the labor movement is, nevertheless, bound to take power ultimately. We are not at fault; it is no use complaining that Socialist theory came at a later stage in working class history, and therefore, that we could not build around the Socialist bodies a movement like that of Germany or France.

The Socialist Parties are an integral part of the working class movement. They are the centre from which propaganda is disseminated; their members in the trade unions should be the agents of the Socialist Parties. The stronger the Socialist body the better can it permeate the working class movement. It can do more than that. The activities of Socialists in the trade unions are diffused and scattered, and without a central organization of Socialists we must wait until their work bears fruit, seen in a general change of opinion. Organized, the strength of all the Socialists becomes a united and definite section. As a body it gives expressions to Socialist opinion; it voices the demand for Socialist activity. By insistence and un-deviating purpose it becomes the left wing of the workers' movement, identified by its reiteration of the need for revolutionary change. The Socialist organization is not submerged in the reactionary mass; its different tones distinguish it from all the rest. Its difference is more notable besides the reactionary indifferent mass than apart from them. The Socialist effort is not hampered. On the contrary, contact with the labor organizations provides greater opportunity for action and in directions that are effective.

It may be disappointing, but the Labor Party is the political expression of the working class movement. It will remain so, and will become a

revolutionary instrument just so far and as rapidly as the workers permit. The affiliation of the B.S.P. does not mean only that we send delegates to a conference once a year. It means that the B.S.P. takes part in the national and local life of the working class movement. The local organizations are even more important than the national. It is in the constituencies that the party machinery works. In the local organizations we are in touch with the rank and file, and there the B.S.P. when participating in counsel, should be effective. Where the B.S.P. branches are definitely related to the local labor movement, they are as a rule most active, and rank as a force to be reckoned with. In rare instances only does a Socialist branch command a position apart from, or independent of, the rest of the local labor bodies.

From the point of view of the national organization, and its general welfare and advancement, the question whether the B.S.P. is affiliated to the labor party is of great importance. The Labor Party speaks for the organized workers. If the Socialist organizations stand apart confusion arises. That which is declared to be labor's aim is all that the labor movement can stand for. The inclusion of the Socialist parties gives color and life to the movement. They give to the labor party elements of virility, clear thinking and set purpose which must have a cumulative effect. We can do one of two things. Come out of the labor party and leave the field to the non-Socialist elements that control it now; or remain in, taking part in this political expression of the class conflict, striving to impress it with a Socialist character. If we leave the labor party we delimit the future of the B.S.P., and voluntarily condemn ourselves to hover round the fringe of labor's action, holding street corner meetings and drifting to stagnation. Marx did not envisage that kind of desultory life when he called upon Socialism to fire the masses of the working class with their own ardor and determination.

Let those who say that by affiliation with the labor party we damage the B.S.P. and hamper our efforts for Socialism, show how it has so affected us. We know of no hampering influence. Our opposition to capitalism has been as consistent and emphatic though we are affiliated to the labor party, as it could ever have been were we apart from that body. Rather than having damage the B.S.P. its reputation and influence has gained immeasurably by our affiliation. The small self-righteousness of isolation is no longer ours, but we are conscious of no responsibility for the misdeeds of any of the labor party leaders or members. Those who would make us responsible for all that Mr. Henderson, or Mr. Purdy, or Mr. Macdonald has done, wish us to be so. In that desire they prove their readiness to act as stupidly as those who sought to make us responsible for the manufactured infamies of Alec Gordon.

For thirty years, in this country, Social Democracy was a voice crying in the wilderness. For thirty years Social Democracy resisted the clear teaching of Marxism in matters of political action. For all that time we

shirked the responsibility that our acceptance of International Socialism imposed upon us. Then we found that a Socialist organization failed in its task unless it served as the driving force within the labor movement. With common sense and ready to take our part in the hard, laborious, grinding work of labor organization, not fearing to soil our mantle if only we mould the mind of the workers' movement into the form we would have it take, we shall prove the B.S.P. to be a true Marxist party.

7,000 FARMERS' DELEGATES ASK EXEMPTIONS FOR SONS OF THE SOIL.

Charge Government With Breach of Faith.

The largest delegation that has ever been organized in the Dominion of Canada visited Ottawa on the 14th of May in order to express to the Premier and the House of Commons, then in session, their displeasure with the regulation drafting farm workers into combatant service—and to request that the regulation be withdrawn. Many fiery speeches were made denouncing the Government, which it would be inadvisable for us to print.

Premier Borden Accused of Breaking Pledge.

After citing instances in which the farmers were to be immune from the draft law in order to produce food in greater quantities, reference was made to the urgency of national production, and placed the responsibility upon the government for the dreadful results that would accrue if Canada fell short of the requirements urged by Lord Rhondda, Britain's Food Controller, who cabled as follows:

"In these stern days it is inspiring to learn that Canada is tackling the food problem with redoubled energy. The terrific pressure on our military front makes it all the more imperative that those behind the lines should straining every nerve to defeat the enemy's avowed object of destroying the British Empire. Germany hoped first to starve out the Old Country by the submarine campaign, and then to smash her land forces. She has failed to starve us and she will fail to smash us, but we cannot achieve victory without food. There never was a time when it was more needed. The Canadian farmer and the Canadian farm hand now have the opportunity to make an effective reply to the enemy's present onslaughts by bending their undivided energies to the increased production of those food supplies for which we depend to such vital extent on your great dominion.

Charge Breaking of Pledge.

"This message was cabled to Canada on April 10, 1918—and yet, Sir, between two issues of the weekly agricultural press of Canada, and with no opportunity for public expression, you, Sir Robert, and the members of your Cabinet, have broken the sacred covenants granted by your officers, under your instructions, and accepted in good faith by every young farmer, between 20 and 22 years of age.

"The members of your Cabinet tell us that an entire change in the situation at the front has taken place. We have put before you the testimony of Lord Rhondda, and we know of nothing that has transpired in the few days between the time of the receipt of his message by the Canada Food Board and the passage of this order in council by your Gov-

ernment which minimizes in the slightest degree the extreme urgency for Canada's food productive effort.

"At this crisis we have a duty to perform. As practical farmers, we understand the present critical situation on the farms of Canada as no other class can, and it is our plain duty to place the true condition before your Government, and, having done so, come what may, our duty is done, and we leave the responsibility with you.

"Therefore, as farmers, and loyal Canadian citizens, we hereby enter our most solemn protest against the great breach of faith by breaking those sacred covenants and taking from our farms the very labor which will enable us to produce and the absence of which, more particularly on Ontario live stock farms, will paralyze productive effort, and we exhort your Government to stay its hand in these proceedings by instructing the military authorities to still grant continuous leave of absence to all bona fide young farmers.

"In order to allay the existing irritation and restore the confidence in your Government of the farming community, we most humbly request a careful consideration and an early reply."

The farmers were irritated by the Government's refusal to grant a public hearing before the assembled representatives—especially as they had had a precedent by permitting Mr. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, to address the House.

WOMEN IN BRITISH PARLIAMENT

The declaration of the Keighley returning officer that he had orders from the sheriff to accept Miss Nina Boyle's nomination if it were properly signed, carries the political emancipation of women a tiny stage further. But it must not yet be assumed that women are to be allowed to sit in Parliament without further legislative effort.

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be represented, the British Labor Movement during the past half year has come over to the position of the Russian workers, and is now consciously working toward a reunion of all labor forces. More than that, it has persuaded the workers of Belgium, Italy and France to take a similar position.

Thus a unified policy of the Entente laborites was clearly emerging. The only thing lacking to prevent complete allied labor unity was the co-operation of American labor. Had Mr. Maurer been granted a passport he would undoubtedly have helped powerfully to bring about this much needed co-operation. The Gompersian delegation, headed by James Wilson will, we fear, do the very opposite. Apparently it did not even wait to acquaint itself with the reasons that have prompted allied labor to favor an international conference. It categorically affirmed a dogmatic position strangely out of harmony with the broad-minded liberalism of our European fellow-workers. It thereby measurably increased the obstacles to harmonious team work between the laborites of America and the allied world.

We confess frankly that we fail to understand why the State Department considers the work of this delegation a "necessary service" and the mission of "Jim" Maurer as "not falling within that category."

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