
What Heinous Crime is This?

by H.M. Wicks

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In the April [1923] issue of *The Proletarian*, official organ of the Proletarian Party, the Workers Party is charged with the odiously sinful scheme of trying to destroy the Proletarian Party. After perusing the article beneath the accusing headline we learn that it is not really the Workers Party that is at fault, but the Communist International for the crime of sending its communication to the Proletarian Party through the Workers Party. Since the International did not know the address of the Proletarian Party and since the Workers Party is the only Communist Party recognized by the International, this seems to us quite a logical procedure.

However, the Proletarian Party leaders became hysterical because the communication was published in *The Worker* before the Proletarian Party had had time to officially place it before its National Executive Committee. Since this committee is so active that it meets an average of once a year, it is hardly likely a communication affecting the Communist movement of this country should be kept a profound secret that length of time.

In a burst of indignation, *The Proletarian* asserts:

Thus it will be seen from the action of the WP that UNITY WITH THE PROLETARIAN PARTY is not their object, but the DESTRUCTION OF THE PROLETARIAN PARTY.

“And why,” asks *The Proletarian*, “should they resort to using the influence of the Communist International?”

For the reason, my dear sirs, that you have complained in the most childish manner that the Communist International has never even considered the Proletarian Party seriously, there fore it that was your sole objection to remaining out of the recognized Party, the Communist International itself should speak. The

CI has spoken and now you resort to the subterfuge that the communication is objectionable because “the whole affair was conceived in New York, though possibly signed in Moscow.”

Here is the plain implication that the Third International is an incompetent organization that takes orders from New York and is so stupid that it allows its officers to sign documents that it knows nothing about. This would be insulting were it not so funny. At any rate it reveals the low opinion held of the general staff of the World Revolution by those who fatuously pose as super-Marxists.

In their article attacking the WP and the CI, they are forced to concede that the Party program is a genuine Communist document, though they do not concede that it is far better and more applicable to American conditions than is the program of the Proletarian Party.

Then, in conclusion, we are informed that the Proletarian Party intends to reply to the Communist International and that meantime “our offer of UNITY, which the Workers Party is trying hard to dodge, still stands.”

This last bit of comedy is for the purpose of befuddling the Proletarian membership with the notion that the Executive Committee of that party is so anxious for unity it constantly pursues the WP with its demand for unity of Communist forces.

Unity Forever!

So strong is the Proletarian Party Executive Committee for unity that at the only meeting it has held for a year, it devoted most of its time to the discussion of unity. Here are a few of the achievements of that historical meeting, taken from the official minutes as

sent out to the favored of the membership:

Moved by Batt, seconded by Renner, that the Secretary [John Keracher] be instructed, on the basis of the findings of the NEC, to instruct the membership to give no further support to the Trade Union Educational League, and make plain to the membership our stand on the issues before the labor movement; that our members in the labor movement continue to agitate for independent political action; that in the opinion of the NEC the forcing of a Labor Party upon the unions by hothouse methods is not commendable and that the development of a Labor Party can only be healthy if brought on by the rank and file. *Motion carried.*

Then in a so-called “thesis” on the trade union movement, which was adopted and appears in the minutes, we discover the mandate that:

Members of the Proletarian Party working in the unions must not accept the discipline or become a part of the Trade Union Educational League.

So while still professing to be Communists, this party now denounces the Communist International and the Red Trade Union International, for the Trade Union Educational League is the American branch of the Red International of Labor Unions. The Proletarian Party by its silly slurs against the Communist International exposes its leadership as anti-Communist.

The Proletarian Party favors independent political action of labor, but that action must be confined to the Proletarian Party and does not embrace a Labor Party. However, it will favor a Labor Party “if brought on by the rank and file.” What sort of leadership is this? Here are those who pretend to be a part of the vanguard of the proletariat waiting for the rank and file to act, then they, as gallant leaders, will follow. What, we ask our Proletarian friends, is the vanguard of the proletariat for, if not to direct the mass of the workers into ever more decisive action?

To the Communist who knows the rudiments of Marxism, it is not the demand of the mass of the workers alone that forms the basis for a political party of labor, but the development of economic forces entirely independent of the will of the workers. If the Communist, taking inventory of the objective conditions, is convinced that a Labor party should be launched in a given country, it is his duty to agitate for it even though the masses of organized workers, still suffering from bourgeois illusions, bitterly oppose its creation.

On the other hand, there might arise a situation wherein great masses of workers would imagine their only salvation is the creation of a political party, while the Marxist would know, from a careful analysis of economic forces, that such a party is foredoomed to failure. In that case, instead of agitating for it, he would be forced to point to its inevitable failure.

In the present case it is clear that the objective conditions for such a Labor Party are here, and evidence is accumulating every day that the subjective condition, viz., *a strong demand for such a party from the rank and file of labor*, also exists.

The position of the Proletarian Party is as ridiculous as the opposite position held by J.B. Salutsky and his Centrist group publishing *The American Labor Monthly*, who hold that the Labor Party cannot be successful at this time because the Gompers machine and “the overwhelming mass of its local machinery” is opposed to it. While the Proletarian Party waits for the rank and file to act, without the stimulus of leadership, Salutsky, Boudin & Co. wait for the business agents and walking delegates to follow the AF of L machine into a Labor Party. Surely the leadership of the Proletarian Party does not want to be pigeonholed with the Salutsky Centrists! But a few more meetings of its National Executive Committee will land it safely in the camp of Centrist reaction. And it is this element that asserts that the program of the Workers Party is a “fig leaf to cover old Centrist Leaders.” *The Proletarian* forgets that individuals constantly learn through experience, and that the “old Centrists” of a short time past, through actual participation in the struggle, have developed an understanding of the principles and tactics of Communism that will enable them to put to rout the shabby pretenses of the boastful hypercritical super-Marxists (?) of the Proletarian Party Executive Committee.

They Are Modest Men.

The self-effacing modesty of the Proletarian Party writers is revealed in the May number of their official organ, when one of their particular bright and shining lights affirms that “*the Communists of America are in the Proletarian Party.*” And that “no Communist can remain in that organization (the WP) without losing all caste.” Whatever that might mean!

We learn on another page that this person is doing “great work” among the trade unions in certain sections of the country, although a trifle over a year ago he was giving an exhibition of the type of union man he is by engaging in the delectable business of scabbing and strikebreaking in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Quite a competent authority on which party embraces the Communists of America, we should say!

Now just what is the heinous crime we are charged with? That we desire the existence of but one Communist Party in the United States, and that we concede there are elements in the Proletarian Party that should be in the ranks of the recognized Communist Party in the United States, which is the Workers Party.

Furthermore we might venture a word of warning to the Proletarian Party members who are Communists. Unless you affiliate with the recognized party and become a part of the vanguard in labor’s struggle here, you will soon find yourselves alienated from Communism and floundering in the quagmire of sectarian Centrism, whither some of your leaders are rapidly drifting.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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