
Proclamation of the Finnish Socialist Federation

by Henry Askeli

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Editor's Note: The proclamation of the Finnish Socialist Federation, composed of 10,000 members, which appears below ought be carefully studied by all Socialist Party members. We note, of course, that it contains reservations which many Left Wing Socialists, in the heat of battle where the controversy rages worst, will not agree with. However, it places the Finnish Socialist Federation on the side of the Left Wing movement, demands reinstatement of all expelled subdivisions of the party and their full representation at the national convention, and ends by announcing that should a split occur in the party, this federation will affiliate with that section of the Socialist Party that follows the wake of the uncompromising class struggle. In the light of the foregoing criticism made of the NEC, which dubs this body as opportunistic and petit-bourgeois, this can only mean that the Finnish Socialist Federation will join with the Left Wing Section should a rupture in the organization occur. This proclamation has not been edited and is here published just as it was received from Henry Askeli, Translator-Secretary of the federation.

[—Elmer Allison.]

Proclamation of the Finnish Socialist Federation.

1. We declare as disruptionists of the international socialist movement those leaders and groups of the socialist parties in different countries, who already in 1914, immediately after the first bomb had exploded on the battlefield of the imperialistic world war, abandoned the principle "The working class and the capitalist class have nothing in common," upon which principle our international movement has been built since 1864. We further declare that the workers have nothing in common with these renegades, who even after that, instead of returning to the revolutionary viewpoint emphasized by the decisions of the Second International at the Stuttgart [1907] and Berlin Congress,¹ have joined the rank of the counter-revolutionists as the apologists of the capitalists, to oppose and murder the workers struggling for power.

2. We refuse to give any support to the attempts of these traitorous leaders to organize international unity. We condemn the Berne Conference [Feb. 3-8, 1919] for its bourgeois chauvinistic spirit, which controlled it, and contend that it was nothing else but an attempt of opportunistic socialists, playing into the hands of capitalists, to organize their powers against the real class struggle of the proletariat. We condemn all international conferences and endeavors toward unity commenced by the so-called war socialists, and refuse all cooperation with these traitors and renegades.

3. As a natural result of the above, we, with the greatest of pleasure, desire to give our full support to the new communistic Third International, organized at the Moscow Conference [March 2-6, 1919], with which among others the Italian and Norwegian Socialist Parties, the Swedish Left Wing Socialists, the German, Hungarian, and Finnish Communist Parties have affiliated themselves. We desire that our party be affiliated with it by inseparable ties of international proletarian brotherhood and solidarity. We contend that this Third International is the only international organization which is founded on revolutionary working class principles as represented by Marx and Engels. It is innocent of the bloodshed of capitalistic imperialism, and

¹ There was no Congress of the Second International held at Berlin. This may be an erroneous reference be to the 1910 Copenhagen, 1912 Basle, or 1914 Brussels Congresses.

it promotes and serves the power of the working class in those countries where it has already won out, and aids the workers on to the road of victory where the workers are still under capitalistic tyranny and dictatorship. That is the reason why we demand that we be affiliated with the new Third International. It is the only international organization of the oppressed, exploited, and enslaved proletariat of today. To it belongs victory, to it belongs the future.

II. The Program and Tactics of the American Socialist Party.

We demand the renewal of the program of the American Socialist Party, and demanded that the general principles outlined below be taken into consideration therewith:

The Socialist Party shall reject the viewpoint of petty bourgeois socialism and shall adopt Marxian revolutionary socialism.

Capitalistic society is in the greatest crisis of history. The bulwarks of the capitalist system, whose existence is based on the private ownership of the instruments of production and on the exploitation of the working class, take advantage of the most violent methods, terrorize society, and carry out the most cruel dictatorship of the exploiting class against the working class movement. The dictatorship protecting capitalistic exploitation is made possible by the fact that the capitalistic class uses political power, and we demand that this power be taken into the hands of the working class by means of the class struggle.

The Socialist Party declares that its final purpose is a social revolution. A social revolution means nothing more or less than adoption of a system of production, distribution, and consumption which is based on social ownership in place of the present inconsistent and anarchistic system of private ownership based on the brutal power of capital, which has passed its historical period. These inconsistencies in the economic system have been followed by the awful suffering and misery through which the world has lived during the past few years.

Democracy, i.e., the equality of rights and duties of citizens in a political significance, can be fully realized only when a social revolution has abolished the inherited privileges of private property and the slavery of the working class.

During the existence of capitalism we demand the extending of the economic as well as the political rights of the working class. But we realize that capitalistic democracy is only capitalistic dictatorship

in a covert form and against it we set the absolute dictatorship of the working class, which, as the most important and the largest portion of humanity — the great majority of the people — will only then bring about real democracy.

We cannot define the method by which the social change will occur. The methods of revolution are dependent largely upon the blindness or the clear-sightedness of its opponents in their attitude towards this necessary progress in history.

But even now, during this stage the Socialist Party does not confuse revolution and violence with one another. Violence and bloodshed do not make any movement revolutionary, and essentially they have noting in common. We are aware of the fact that events are of a revolutionary nature more on the basis of their results than on their forms. Being a party which stands for the brotherhood of humanity, and directing its activities toward the attainment of general happiness and well being, the Socialist Party hopes that its victory will be accomplished by systematic and peaceful organization. But in its attempt to capture political power the working class cannot reject any weapon and the form of its revolution will finally depend upon prevailing conditions, and especially upon the opposition directed against its right of suffrage, other political rights, and against all other activities for gathering the forces of the working class, and against its endeavors for social reform.

Our party, the American Socialist Party, is also aware of the fact that the success of the social revolution is guaranteed only when it occurs at a historic moment, at the moment when the minds of the people and the events have matured for it. The realization of the system which the working class is planning depends on the stage of development of the working class organizations and institutions, organizations which form the first organism of the socialist system. Therefore, our greatest duty is to educate and organize the working class so that it will become capable of carrying out this historic duty. But just as we cannot define the form of the revolution, neither can we determine the moment. The Socialist Party cannot overlook any opportunity which the failure of the bourgeoisie may present. On the other side the social revolution is the hope of the oppressed people. Those upon whom the working class has set its faith must not betray this hope.

Be the form whatever it may by which the transfer of power will occur, the rise to power of the organized workers will be followed by

an era of proletarian dictatorship. Bourgeois dictatorship has made this necessary. By it the proletariat keeps counter-revolutionists [from] control, crushes the opposition of the bourgeoisie, upbuilds the new society, and thereby finally makes all class domination and the centralized establishment of the bourgeois system — the state — unnecessary. The first real democracy will then take its place, a system serving the cause of the producers and the common good of all.

The proletarian dictatorship cannot be a condition selected arbitrarily, but it is the result of the progress of the struggle between the classes; and the same is true in regard to bourgeois dictatorship. Such is the doctrine which is continually slandered in the reactionary press. History presents sufficient proof that the new society, let it be social or political, when drawing up a new legal system, can never act within the legal limitations of the old system, a system which it will replace. The revolutions of the 19th Century succeeded and failed in accordance to the extent that they complied with this principle. This transition from the old to the new forms the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The socialistic system, which the working class conscious of its mission is planning, will be carried into power by one class, the proletariat, but it will be carried into power for the benefit and the well-being of all people. In the same way as the new legal system which it precedes and for which it is preparing the way, the unpersonified dictatorship of the proletariat, is used in the name of all humanity and for its benefit.

We hope that the transition period from capitalism to socialism will be as brief as possible, but the issue is not dependent upon our hopes. Its length will fluctuate with the conditions of economic production, the preparedness and the stage of the organization of the working class, as well as the nature and the violence of the opposition.

The Socialist Party works for the revolution when its struggles for the well-being, for the self-respect, and for the self-consciousness of labor. It works for increasing the value of their labor-power whenever it endeavors to obtain for the working class still larger political liberties for the expression of their opinion, and whenever it endeavors to preserve social wealth from capitalistic exploitation. In all its endeavors, however, it takes into consideration the limited possibilities of the capitalistic economic system, and secures reforms therein principally for the purpose of strengthening its power for the decisive struggle.

We approve only such reforms which the working class can obtain by its own efforts, adhering strictly to the principle of the class struggle. Such viewpoints which bind the workers to absolute parliamentarism or to the one-sided antiquated methods of the strike movement must be condemned. The mass action of the working class is shown by history to be the principle form to which the struggle will lead. In fighting for reforms it is our duty to measure them with this yardstick of the mass movement, to determine if they hasten its rise and whether or not the benefit it otherwise.

At a time like this when the course of events is so uncertain and so full of surprise, no one can foretell when the hour of the working class shall strike. But be it near or far, the same practical work is necessary of educating and organizing the working class continually, upholding its faith in the success of its aims. Being the heir of the capitalistic world, a world whose riches are composed of the accumulated wealth of generations of labor, the present duty of socialism is to preserve this inheritance and to prepare to receive it.

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The party's declaration of principles, in our opinion, should be in accord with the above. The practical program should be renewed in accordance with the demands of the present time, and in drawing it up the foregoing declaration should be considered among others:

1. The party should put into effect a more stringent and uniform discipline in regard to its representatives in state legislatures, in congress, and in municipal governments, so that they shall at all times consistently comply with the strict principles of revolutionary socialism, and not act inconsistently and in contradiction with another, and not relax from these principles in their practical activities.

2. Agitation against imperialism must be made more pointed and a still greater pressure should be exerted to push through the demand that American soldiers shall not be sent to fight against the revolutionary comrades of Europe and against the real democracies built up by them.

3. The struggle for the liberation of political prisoners must be continued to the last vestige of strength and the struggle must be broadened and every party organ and newspaper must be obligated to give it more attention.

4. We deem unadaptable to the principles of socialism the method by which party officials affiliate with and bind themselves for cooperation with various petit-bourgeois and religious associations of their leaders for the promotion of certain issues of a political nature, and thereby always cause the struggle, carried on and aided by the Socialist Party, to come under the auspices of some other organization and not the party itself. Such methods do not aid the bringing together of the masses of dissatisfied workers, but instead the Socialist Party is estranged from them and from the duties of a class nature which are in accord with the interests of the proletariat. We must get rid of the notion that the Socialist Party is some kind of a holiday article. The Socialist Party is the fighting and the active party of the struggling working class.

5. *Our relation to economic organizations.* In our opinion the unionistic movement of America is still undergoing its period of upheaval and formation and no model union is in existence. Therefore we must always make our selection in a conditional manner.

The official leadership of the American Federation of Labor, based on craftsmen and on elements of the working class possessing petit-bourgeois ideas, are today more conservative than they were 20 years ago. While others have made progress these have become more reactionary and have been driven into more and more detestable associations with the greatest opponents of the working class in this country, and are doing their best to aid the mortal enemies and murderers of our brothers and comrades in foreign lands to retain their power. The recent actions of the AF of L form the greatest stain upon the labor movement of this country and the most humiliating shame in an international way. The criticism of such criminal policies must be emphasized within the Socialist Party, first for the purpose of upholding a more stringent discipline for those opportunistic bargainers who sympathize with the viewpoint controlling the AF of L, and secondly to aid the dissatisfied elements within the AF of L, who now form quite a numerous group therein, to carry on their struggle against the leading policies of the Federation.

We greet with pleasure every sign of revolt within the Federation which represents an independent class-conscious attempt of the membership, and shall aid them to the best of our ability to attain a form of unionism based on the class struggle, whether this be accomplished by the class-conscious workers at some decisive moment obtaining control of the Federation as a whole, when the old principles,

tactics, and official machinery are cast aside, or by the more radical groups and national unions withdrawing or being expelled from the Federation and forming an economic organization which shall assimilate to itself the masses of organized and unorganized workers, and adopting the principles of industrial unionism and the class struggle. The unprogressive and reactionary hull of the AF of L shall be left adrift, first as a counteractive element, but later as a dead letter in the economic class struggle movement of the country.

Of the independent unions of national significance outside the AF of L we shall mention the Industrial Workers of the World. In comparison with the AF of L it has assumed a more progressive stand in that it has declared in favor of the industrial form of organization and for the principle of the class struggle. But in its practical activities and in its agitation for the principle of the class struggle it is confused by ideas of revolt that are based on a line of thought related to individualism and coming from the decaying petit-bourgeoisie. For that reason its policies, and especially so among certain groups, have been controlled by an agitation founded on blind instincts and connected with the defending of desperate anarcho-syndicalistic methods and viewpoints which are foreign to industrial unionism. Their zealous but vain struggle is founded on these foreign viewpoints, in opposition to class-conscious socialistic political action, and for that reason they have not received our full support. While we insist that the political struggle — socialism — and the economic struggle — industrial unionism — are necessary for the working class, and that close and solid relations should be built up between the two to promote the best interests of the workers, we also content that the IWW, in order to succeed, must abandon all its syndicalistic features; i.e., unless it ceases its reckless fight against Marxian socialism, it will not receive the support of large masses of the workers, and will not be even able to uphold the leading standard of industrial unionism in the development and formation of economic organization in this country.

In reference to the immaturity of the unionistic movement in this country, it is the general duty of socialists to do their best to fill the endeavors of economically organized workers with the spirit of socialism.

III. The Left Wing Movement in the American Socialist Party.

1. When we are beset with the question, "Do we belong to the Right Wing or the Left Wing?" we declare that we belong to the Left Wing, insofar as the significance of these denominations is understood in accordance with the doctrines of Marx and Engels, the soundness of which have again been proven by recent world events. This does not signify that we do not notice among the present Left Wingers certain viewpoints which are erroneous, but they concern only tactics and their ultimate intentions are correct. On the one hand their declaration of principles is clear of all that is injurious, of all compromising opportunism, of too great a faith in the possibilities of the development of bourgeois democracy, of absolute and solitary parliamentarism, and of politics for courting trade unionists, which have formed the shoals upon which the socialist parties of different lands have been wrecked; and on the other hand it is clear of anarchosyndicalistic doctrines of revolt. The simple fact that they are struggling against endeavors which are foreign and injurious to the socialist movement obligates us to join them. And insofar as this movement still contains socialistically immature understandings, it is our duty to trim them away to promote the formation of the movement on a clear Marxian foundation.

2. As to the Left Wing Manifesto, adopted in New York during February [1919], we wish to state that we do not see anything harmful in its leading principle, although a party program as a whole must be more comprehensive and all the most urgent duties of the present moment must be taking into consideration more definitely. Considering it only as a declaration of principles we realize that it is, to a great extent, in accord with the above statement. In the Manifesto we consider as the most inconsistent and erroneous clause the one wherein all action toward so-called immediate reforms is rejected. The party must be ready and able to take advantage of every opportunity to gain relief and reforms for the living conditions of the workers, for in that manner alone the party presents itself as the party of the proletariat; but in the respect that the party must not stop to covet reforms alone, but must use the reforms to its best advantage [to] develop revolutionary power and ability, we are in accord with the Manifesto. And this important fact must also be publicly expressed in clear words in the program of our party.

3. We desire also to take advantage of this opportunity to state that, insofar as anarcho-syndicalistic and elements opposing political action and the political struggle are attempting to drift along with the Left Wing movement, we sternly oppose such elements and tendencies, knowing full well that they are in contradiction with socialistic viewpoints and Marxian foundations, upon which we desire to build. And furthermore, we are of the opinion that the renewal of the party program, and making it more radical, which is the demand of all Left Wingers, is the best antidote for all the doctrines of revolt which estrange themselves from the socialistic movement insofar as such doctrines receive support among the working masses.

IV. Preserving the Unity of the Party.

1. First of all we desire to state that the unity of the party is the all important matter in our opinion. We do not look favorably upon acts which destroy this unity. We have noted, however, that the collisions of different viewpoints have brought about an unheard of split in the socialist movement of the whole world, and that the undulations reach even here. Marxians and opportunistic barterers within the socialist movement differ from one another in principles and in the determination of the leading principles of organization and agitation work. And the more critical the class struggle has developed, the greater this distinction has become. The old opportunists' viewpoint, nested in different parties, has become completely bankrupt insofar as Marxian principles are concerned, and has been driven into the ranks of the counter-revolutionists. At the same time, those standing on the unalterable viewpoint of the class struggle have, as a result of the effect of the present occurrences, rapidly attained a commanding position everywhere among the workers. Cooperation between these two groups can only be possible by the surrender of the former for the benefit of the latter.

2. From this viewpoint we look at the criss of the Socialist Party. We do not know to what extent the Left Wingers in New York and elsewhere have violated the party constitution and of what nature these violations are, but we are ready to believe that the organizing of a distinct organization within the party as such is a crime against the spirit of the constitution. And we believe that the Left Wingers elsewhere have not always been able to select for themselves the best methods for the promotion of their viewpoints. But on the other

hand, we do not know how much the official leadership confronting them has opposed and hindered the promotion of reconstructive tendencies within the party, thereby assisting in the creation of a situation where violations of the rules become the order of the day.

3. Nevertheless it is now clear that petit-bourgeois opportunistic socialism has its representatives in the leadership of the party. It is impossible otherwise to understand the decision of the National Executive Committee by which it expels almost one-third of the party membership, not daring to leave the matter to be decided upon at the party convention. The intolerance which the Committee showed by its decision toward the Left Wingers, a large group of the party membership, is the best proof of the fact that the Committee is of the Right Wing and that its viewpoint is erroneous. We condemn the expulsions absolutely and demand that those expelled shall be granted their full rights until the National Convention is held, and also in the convention. It is contended that the expulsions are based upon technical violations of the constitution, so we contend that the National Executive Committee understands its duty incorrectly, if it, for reasons of this nature and in the greater part for reasons existing as mere contentions, and without any formal investigations and hearings, strikes a blow with a few strokes of the pen which disrupts the party completely. For its autocratic nature and its fundamental purpose the expulsion becomes a crime against the socialist movement. We consider the expulsion the greatest crime of opportunistic socialism against ourselves.

We realize fully the necessity of unity and solidarity within the working class struggle, but on the other hand we realize also that the working class cannot attain its purpose with actions of such nature which are not directed by principles of the socialistic doctrines of the class struggle. If the internal crisis created within the Socialist party unavoidably leads to a division of forces, we join without hesitation those that follow unalterably in teh wake of the uncompromising class struggle. There shall be our place.

Submitted by

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Secretary.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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