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# The Struggle in the USA

by A.K.

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## The Movement of the Blind.

America badly needs a Socialist Party. The deep ignorance of the workers here is reflected in the profound ignorance of the organized labour movement. The American Federation of Labor continues on its capitalist road, exchanging thorough support of the war for the enslaving policy of our masters' peace. The Industrial Workers of the World has been paralysed by anti-Syndicalist laws and persecution of its leaders — mostly now in Federal prisons. The Workers International Industrial Union — the child of the Socialist Labor Party — does not grow, and is always busy with internal fights, especially with its parent, the SLP. It refuses to endorse the SLP as more than half its membership belongs to the rotten Socialist Party of America.

## “My Country, 'Tis of Thee.”

The war found the SP leaders pro-Ally and anxious for the popular side, many getting government jobs and increased publicity. These leaders seceded or were finally expelled and they formed the Social Democratic League similar to the Hyndman clique in England. Today the SDL is little heard of and is represented in print by Allan Benson's paper, *Reconstruction*. Rose Pastor Stokes returned to the SP fold, while her millionaire husband still continues with the jingoes.

A.M. Simons, when not busy misleading Europe, writes lies for the capitalist press with Charles E. Russell, William English Walling, Allan Benson, and John Spargo. They flourish in the pages of that worst of all papers, the *Appeal to Reason*, now known as *The New Appeal*, of Girard, Kansas.

The leading writer of that journal is Upton Sinclair, who is trying to explain away his jingoism in his monthly magazine, *The New Justice*, of Los Angeles.

### **Debs and Debsism.**

Eugene V. Debs was enthusiastic for the SP anti-war stand at the St. Louis Convention in 1917, but began to wobble when America entered the war. In the pages of the *Social Builder*, a social reform magazine of St. Louis,<sup>1</sup> Debs argued that the anti-war stand should be modified, especially in view of the approaching election. All the capitalist papers reprinted his statements to show that the SP was becoming "sane."

When Debs saw that his new attitude was losing him support he wobbled back to his former position, though at his recent trial he reminded the court that he did not agree with the St. Louis platform. Debs sought to hold his democratic following, and received 10 years at Cleveland Federal Court for speaking against the war at Canton, Ohio. He is now in Atlanta prison.

Kate Richards O'Hare, a reformer and leader of the SP, is also in prison, though her danger to the ruling class is infinitesimal. Victor Berger, one of the most anti-Socialist leaders of the SP, has been given 20 years, though he supported the Mexican War and militarism. He was widely known as a pro-German. While Berger wrote the pro-German articles for the *Milwaukee Leader*, Simons did the pro-Ally work on the same periodical.

### **The Lawyer Leaders.**

Even after many of the openly pro-war gentry had left the party the great bulk of the leadership and many members refused to take the working class position on the war. The mass of SP membership can be estimated by their continual support of the official clique and by sticking to such a rotten organisation. Morris Hillquit, the "brains of the SP," one of the many lawyers on the National Executive, offered to organise an army of Socialists to help explain democracy to the Germans overseas. He also admitted that if he had been a member of Congress he would have voted for the war.

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<sup>1</sup> Successor to *The National Rip-Saw*, for which Debs wrote from 1914.

Algernon Lee and six other SP aldermen voted \$80,000 in New York for a "Victory" arch on which the American "victory" at Murmansk was inscribed. Louis Boudin — another lawyer, and author of *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx* — rallied in support of the League of Nations, and refused to adopt any views on the Russian situation as he would not condemn Plekhanov and his other friends thousands of miles away.

### **Such a Happy Family!**

When Kerensky got control in Russia the SP rallied for that capitalist government, and when Ebert rose to power in Germany they duly celebrated the German "Revolution." Their support of much AF of L officialdom, the sickening reform programme, the lack of party discipline, the general ignorance of Socialism, caused a growing revolt in certain centres in the States. More than 50 percent of the membership is composed of foreign language federations. These have always been hotbeds of reform propaganda and general ignorance. The Finnish, Jewish [Yiddish-language], and German federations supported every reactionary policy. Until the Bolshevik uprising in Russia the various Russian federations in the SP were small, but they sprang up like mushrooms after the coup of 1917. The Russians wobbled from the defense of Plekhanov to that of Kerensky, and through their ignorance rallied to the policy of SP reformism.

The great bulk of Jews in the party read *Forward*, the national daily edited by Abe Cahan — the supporter of war and defender of reaction in the party.

Many prominent members of the Socialist Labor Party have climbed back onto the SP waggon — Frank Bohn, Louis Fraina, Solon DeLeon, Karl Dannenberg, Seidel, Dr. Julius Hammer — and some of them began the contest for leadership in the SP. They preached Industrial Unionism of a kind, and men like Fraina saw in the rising Bolshevik wave in the party a chance to build up a large following.

### **All Aboard for Bolshevism.**

One point should be well noted. The elements here who took front rank in their support of Bolshevism were the very ones who were against revolutionary methods and who ridiculed Socialist edu-

cation. Their feelings ran high when Allied intervention in Russia welded working class sentiment against the capitalist international. And the anti-political ideas preached for years were good material for “abolish the State immediately” propaganda. Soviets were formed here but were mere parodies of the Russian example. Some, like in Philadelphia, advocated the armed rising of a minority, whilst most of them degenerated into veteran’s reform organizations.

### **The Left Wing and Its Feathers.**

The Left Wing of the SP comprises every variety of fool and freak, just like the Right Wing. There is, however, *some* good material in the Left Wing, but it is powerless while it remains together with such an army of ignorance. The test question is not whether you understand Socialism and are in favour of it, but whether you are a Bolshhevik. And Bolshevism here covers almost every conceivable idea except the scientific principles of Socialism — Mass Action on the streets against machine guns, Minority Rule, To Hell with Democracy, Action not Study, such are some of the ideas of the Left Wing.

The SP have suspended seven language federations — Russian, Lithuanian, Lettish [Latvian], Polish, South Slavic [Slovenian and Croatian], Ukrainian, and Estonian — on account of their affiliation with the Left Wing party within the party. The state of Massachusetts and many locals in New York were expelled for the same reason, making nearly half the membership. The state of Michigan was expelled for adopting a “no reform” constitution. Michigan was not affiliated with the Left Wing organisation as they objected to the Mass Action, Industrial Unionist, and other confused ideas preached in the Left Wing manifesto and the Left Wing official organ, the *Revolutionary Age*. The support of Michigan only existed where study classes had been organised by Michigan’s Proletarian University, a Marxian study class-promoting body organised by a number of Detroit workers.

### **The Left Wing in Pieces.**

The Socialist Propaganda League was formed in 1916 to preach Industrial Unionism and Mass Action within the SP. Fraina and S.J. Rutgers (now in Russia), and Bukharin the Bolshhevik Commissar, were prominent members. They published the *New International* at Boston, and they eventually merged into the Left Wing group and

gave up their paper for the *Revolutionary Age* — a parrot-like edition of Lenin’s and Trotsky’s speeches. It falsifies Marx and dupes its ignorant following.

All Left Wing branches, locals, and states were invited to send representatives to the Left Wing Convention at New York on June 21st [1919]. The Convention was dominated by Jim Larkin, the supporter of Labourism, John Reed, the war correspondent lately returned from Russia, and Louis Fraina, the political gymnast of the SP, SLP, and Socialist Propaganda League. The whole business was a miserable farce, being a sordid struggle for control. The Michigan delegates presented an ultimatum demanding the immediate formation of a Communist Party on the basis of a platform adopted by Michigan at its Special Convention on June 15th. The Russian Federations<sup>2</sup> — the backbone of the Left Wing — also objected to the policy of the Left Wing leaders in trying to capture the rotten SP at their coming National Convention on August 30th; the Russians, therefore, wanted to form a Communist Party immediately. Thus Michigan found itself withdrawing from the Conference in company with 30,000 Russian members who would easily dominate Michigan’s 6,000. At the time of writing Michigan has been pledged by its delegates to work with the Russian Federations and they have formed the Communist Party. In doing so Michigan has adopted a programme of Mass Action, Industrial Unionism, and “Abolition of the State at Once” but many well-informed members in Detroit are determined to undo this underhand work of the delegates.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport*

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<sup>2</sup> Federations, plural — meaning the various language groups of the multinational Russian empire: Russian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Polish, Yiddish, etc.