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# For a Mass Movement

by Adolph Dreifuss

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In accordance with a decision of the last convention of the Socialist Party at Detroit [June 25-29, 1921], our NEC issued an appeal to all radical and labor organizations to unite, more or less loosely, in the struggle against reaction.

No one can yet prophecy to what that action will lead to.

The National Executive Committee of the party was not given full power by the convention to form alliances. All answers to its appeal must be submitted to the next convention, and only if the convention sees the advisability to do so further negotiations will ensue. Only "upon a platform not inconsistent with that of the party, and on a plan which will preserve the integrity and autonomy of the Socialist Party," a basis for cooperation is to be found.

But even if a conference of the different groups will take place and make a program and a plan for cooperation, its decisions shall not be binding.

The whole matter, therefore, is as yet only in a stage of discussion and it is desirable and necessary that this discussion becomes general in order to create satisfactory results.

The proposition to cooperate with other organizations is, in fact, a deviation from the tactics hitherto pursued by the Socialist Party. Up to this time we felt ourselves strongest when alone, like Stockman in Ibsen's play.

But right here I want to do away with the accusation that the "reformists" won out in this question at the convention against the resisting "revolutionists." A narration of the proceedings at the convention on this question will prove how silly such an accusation is.

With the idea to make a united opposition against war in the future possible, even if that should

lead to a general strike, Comrade [Dan] Hoan from Milwaukee submitted a motion to "direct the National Executive Committee to arrange for, in place of the next annual convention of the Socialist Party, a conference of all organizations of producers in the United States who recognize and are organized upon working class lines."

Hoan presented at length the dilemma in which he was placed as Mayor of the city of Milwaukee. On the one hand the St. Louis Resolution and on the other hand the laws he had to obey unless he resigned. He himself was willing to resign, he said, but his comrades prevented him from doing so, for his resignation would not only have been a useless demonstration and have brought a successor who would not have been satisfied with obeying the law, but who would have helped to abrogate all civil rights. If it was expected, Hoan continued, that anybody in the future under similar conditions should do more than he did, it would not suffice to pass resolutions but create a power to back up and execute the resolutions. But this, he said, could not be done by keeping aloof from everybody who does not agree with all our views.

Hoan's motion strove to secure class-conscious action by excluding all organizations from participation in the proposed conference who would not subscribe to the following:

1. The collective ownership and democratic management of all means of production and distribution monopolistically owned.
2. To oppose and abolish war.
3. To restore our liberties.
4. The attainment of these aims by the employment of both economic and political action along working class lines.

These explanations of Comrade Hoan were ap-

plauded by almost every delegate at the convention, the loudest by the representatives of the so-called radical faction. [Louis] Engdahl and [Bill] Kruse called Hoan's motion a step in the right direction that might serve to break down the Chinese wall we built around us. For better security and quicker results Kruse even moved to hold the conference in connection with the next convention.

[Morris] Hillquit was the first to sound a note of warning: We should not be too hasty in things like these. The 4 points in Hoan's motion he did not consider strong enough securities. Right from the start the autonomy and integrity of the party must be safeguarded. Just now, when we are smaller in numbers, it is our duty to be more careful than ever with whom we associate.

He therefore moved as a substituted for Comrade Hoan's motion "That the incoming National Executive Committee be instructed to make a careful survey of all radical and labor organizations in the country, with a view of ascertaining their strength, disposition, and readiness to cooperate with the Socialist movement upon a platform not inconsistent with that of the party, and on a plan which will preserve the integrity and autonomy of the Socialist Party," and "that the National Executive committee reports its findings with recommendations to the next annual convention of the Socialist Party."

And thus it was then resolved.

The appeal of the National Executive Committee to the radical and labor organizations was the natural result.

The object is to bring about an organization similar to that of the British Labour Party, which is composed from autonomous parties and groups, like the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the various labor unions, etc. Each one of these parties retains its integrity and autonomy. But their representatives in Parliament form one group; in their defense against their oppressors these parties act and demonstrate in one great mass. Their conception about things in general differ; their position toward the state as such differs; their views

about the future differ. Each of these organizations has its own platform, based on its own principles. But the struggle of the present against their common enemy they fight together.

The British Labour Party is in principle recognized as necessary by the most "radical" and "revolutionary." Even the Communist Party of England has made application for admittance to the British Labour Party.

The question now is: Do the American conditions necessitate or justify a formation like the British Labour Party if the desirable elements are here or may be developed?

Let us see:

We have 6 million unemployed, they may shortly increase to 7 million. We have a strongly fortified employing class that is about to choke the bill of rights of their workers. We have a judiciary about as rotten and hostile to the working class as anywhere in the world. We have the American Legion. We have the Ku Klux Klan. We have the 2 party system that throws us from the scilla of one political party to the charibdis of the other.

But we have no opposition that amounts to much. None of the "revolutionary" parties, however they may call themselves, reach the masses. Instead of arousing people to action, the economic crisis makes them servile, submissive.

It must be every worker's aim to get out of this slough to strengthen his class. To cooperate with others is one means to achieve liberty of movement.

You need a mass movement to achieve this liberty of movement, to make elbow room. For this reason, and for no other, the comrades at the Detroit Convention, from Engdahl to Berger, demanded to create, if possible, a mass movement, and for that purpose call a conference of all class-conscious workers and producers — industrial workers, agricultural workers, tenants, etc.

Upon this basis the matter ought to be discussed calmly and to the point, regardless of what the opponents of our party say and write.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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