
Open Letter to Winfield R. Gaylord

by John M. Work

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The following reply has been made by John M. Work, Chicago, to a letter from Winfield R. Gaylord, Milwaukee:

Your letter addressed to the executive officials of the party has come to my attention. As the Executive Committee is scattered, with no meeting in sight, I take the liberty to write to you individually.

You, of course, know that in sending out the proclamation and war program we are merely obeying the instructions of the convention. When the motion was made directing us to do so, someone in the minority — my recollection is that it was yourself, but I am not certain about that — inquired whether or not it would shut the alternative proposal off the referendum ballot. The reply was that as a matter of course, the alternative proposal would go on the ballot, the purpose of the motion being that we should not have to twiddle our fingers for 2 or 3 months, without any tentative position, and possibly witness the close of the war before the referendum closed. All opposition to the motion then subsided and it was adopted. Thus the minority, including yourself, acquiesced in the arrangement, and it is rather late in the day for you to object.

It is particularly out of place for you to apply opprobrious epithets, such as "treasonable," to us, in view of the considerate and sympathetic hearing which was given by the convention to the little group of 5 minority members. Compared

with that broad-minded attitude, your intolerance is in deep contrast.

The different wording of paragraph 2, as you can readily see, is due to a typographical error in leaving out a line. As officially put forth, the document is exactly as it came from the convention. Regarding the slur which you attach to this, you are quite well aware that, if anyone is taking any chance, the executive officials take a thousand chances where opposition members like yourself take none at all.

Therefore, your insinuation that the executive officials are trying to shield themselves and place the members in jeopardy is so base and unjust that an accurate characterization of it could not be made in print. I leave it to your own conscience.

While there are no definite figures concerning the party membership, it is my opinion that you are entirely mistaken regarding its composition.

Your accusation that the party is the tool of an enemy government is both false and ridiculous. A German capitalist might with equal fitness charge the Germany Socialists with being the tool of the ruling class of the United States. The German Socialists are struggling against the oppression of the ruling class of this country. Lest someone with a fevered imagination should charge us with being pro-German, you would have us surrender the Socialist movement to the capitalist class. The common people of the United States

have more savvy than you have. The masses are opposed to the war, because they are pro-American, and they understand perfectly well that we Socialists are opposed to the war because we are also pro-American as well as internationalists. If the Russian Socialists had adopted your attitude and surrendered their principles to the ruling class, even the measure of popular government now secured in that country would not have been attained. If the German Socialists were to lie down, there would be little hope of the German autocracy being unhorsed. If we American Socialists were to subside, it would be hopeless to expect to retain even the shadow of democracy which we now have, much less to attain the reality of popular government.

In reply to your question regarding other anti-war forces, I will say that before war was declared we cooperated to a slight degree with the Woman's Peace Society and the Emergency Peace Society. At the present time we are no cooperating with any organization or force. If it becomes feasible to do so, we shall no doubt cooperate with the labor organizations and other peace societies.

We have no other organizations or individuals in mind at this time. As always, our actions are open and above board, and this is in accord with the program adopted by the convention, which provides for public opposition.

Replying to your further inquiry, we have not received any warnings or threats of any kind, except from yourself.

You can rest assured that the executives of the party feel very keenly the responsibility which has been placed upon them. In this great crisis, they request your kindly cooperation and assistance, in place of your hostility.

In closing, let me say that I am also a native-born American. My father and mother were likewise native-born Americans. Seven-eighths of my ancestral blood comes from the Allied nations. My ties of blood, sympathy, and association are on the side of the Allies. I love my country and I love the flag of my country. I love it too well to help to make it stand for a wicked cause.

John M. Work,
Chicago, Ill.

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