

MORE VIEWS ON WORK OF THE CONVENTION

OBJECT AND METHODS OF A SOCIALIST PARTY

A Practical and Progressive Platform is in the Line of Social Development—The "Revolutionaries" and Step-at-a-Time Reforms

By BEN ATTERBURY

In the construction of a platform that will meet the wishes and receive the endorsement of a large majority of Socialists, it is not necessary that it contain an argument for Socialism or constitute a statement of Socialist principles. A statement of the principles and an argument can not be made short—not short enough to print on the corner of an envelope or a membership card. A statement and an argument must necessarily define terms, set forth basal principles and inquire somewhat into the nature of a Socialist society.

These are matters for the lecturer and propagandist to deal with. They do not belong in a platform at all; or, if they do, then Socialism is strangely unfitted to the ways of practical politics, to which we are, in a large measure, compelled to submit. But I believe that Socialism can be made to fit, if Socialists themselves can be made practical and rational, instead of utopian, sentimental and revolutionary.

Without compromising by so much as a syllable our attitude toward capitalist industry, or abating by one jot or tittle our firm adherence to that form of Socialism which has for its ultimate purpose the complete overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of Social Democracy, we will, if we be practical men and rational, do something not inconsistent with our philosophy to induce other men who love freedom and hate tyranny (and will never all be in our party) to help us "overthrow" as much as possible of the system we oppose.

I am one of those who, in spite of all the heroic babble of the "revolutionaries," believe that a man can be a Socialist—a revolutionary Socialist, mark you!—and yet favor a practical and progressive program of measures designed expressly to alleviate the condition of the workers now living. My interest in the human race is limited to people now alive and doing the world's work. If there is anything that can be done to lessen their sorrows and burdens, I want to contribute to it. I object to following the "tactics" of priests and preachers who have deened the people with the spiritual soporific that makes them resigned to the trials of this life in the hope of a "blessed existence hereafter." Let us hope there will be no revival of that doctrine in the Socialist movement, that Socialism will not be "spiritualized" in that sense.

It is in the power of the people to make their own economic heaven. What they lack is the consciousness of their power. They will do well not to heed the Socialist phrase-makers who promise a millennium in the sweet by and by for all who have suffered in the army of the proletariat here and now.

While a statement of the principles and an argument for Socialism cannot be made short enough to serve the purpose of some "scientific" platform makers, and would be of no practical value to the cause if it could, nevertheless, a working program, such as common sense suggests, conditions require, and Socialists will accept, can be made short enough to print on a small card.

What is it that Social Democrats want? What is our object? AN INDUSTRIAL COMMONWEALTH FOUNDED UPON THE SOCIALIZATION OF LAND AND CAPITAL.

Very good; let us say so. Let that be the first sentence in the platform, expressing the OBJECT of the party. More than that is unnecessary; just so many phrases to be explained, and since whatever we say we will have to explain, the less said the better.

So far as we are concerned in the attainment of the industrial commonwealth, what methods do we propose? In a condensed form our methods are as follows:

THE EDUCATION OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIALISM.

THE INDUSTRIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKERS.

THE INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATION OF SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES ON ALL PUBLIC BODIES.

So much for our OBJECT and METHODS. It is enough. It covers every essential point in our present long and entirely useless preamble. It is better than the hotch-potch of words of either the S. L. P., the "Kangaroos," or the Social Democrats. And in saying so this writer is not throwing bouquets at himself. It is a statement, almost word for word, of the object and methods of the Independent Labor Party of England, a party which has, I believe, elected more Socialists on public bodies than any other Socialist party in the world.

As to "immediate steps" to be taken, when we are anywhere in a position to serve as public administrators, common sense says "have a practical program in line with social development." No argument the "revolutionaries"—foreign or domestic—have yet made, has influenced me against the enunciation of a progressive (I had almost said "step-at-a-time") platform. One step at a time, well taken toward the co-operative commonwealth, even though it be the common ownership of a street railway system in Chicago, is far better than fanatical air fanning. It is on the line of social development and ownership. I have observed that wherever we have succeeded in electing men to office they have, without a single exception, chosen the step-at-a-time policy—from necessity, as it were—just because there was no other course open to them. I have further observed that all the strictly "revolutionary" Socialist publications are very largely made up—again from necessity—of step-at-a-time reading matter. It's funny, but true. "Cut out the immediate demands," says Max Hayes, but he edits a paper—the official organ of the Central Labor Union of Cleveland, of which body he is secretary—which carries at its masthead twenty-six immediate demands for city, state and nation. Among them I find the single tax; as to the rest, they are in the main excellent.

Let Socialists look out, lest by indifference and a too rigid insistence upon the "idiocy" of "reforming" anything, they be rightfully charged with aiding the establishment of a spurious Socialism, ruled by a class and bestowing no benefits upon the people.

Then I am in favor of the "immediate demands?" Why, certainly. Hurrah for the social revolution!

It is a conviction that forces itself continually upon the minds of American Socialists more than another, it is that the movement has not yet found its best expression organically—that the existing forms of organization are entirely inadequate to requirements. There is very great diversity of opinion on the subject. The Herald will, therefore, devote this page to the discussion of plans for organization. Correspondents are requested to be as brief as they can and present their ideas on this important subject. Wanted—A Form of Organization: Who Has It?

THE CLASS STRUGGLE FORCES REVOLUTION

In an oration at Cambridge, Mass., June 27, Wayne MacVeagh, United States Attorney General under President Harrison, made this statement in recognition of the struggle between capitalist and wealth producers:

"Now it is at least quite possible that in the not distant future American politics may transform Mr. Webster's warning into history, for our electorate is already beginning to be divided and must, in obedience to the law of social evolution, continue more and more to be divided by that sharp cleavage which separates those who are contented with their lot from those who are discontented with their lot.

"Under whatever disguises, called by whatever names, inheriting or seizing whatever partisan organizations, the alignment of the two great political divisions of American voters who will sooner or later struggle against each other for the possession of the government will inevitably be upon the basis I have named.

"The party of the contented will be ranged under one banner and the party of the discontented will be ranged under the other, and that alignment will steadily develop increasing sharpness of division, until the party of the discontented, being the majority, has obtained the control of the government, to which under our system they are entitled, and then they will be sure to remodel the present system for the distribution of wealth, unless we have previously done so, upon bases wiser and more equitable than those now existing.

"The one party will be, under whatever name, the party of capital, and the other party will be, under whatever name, the party of labor."

Jay Gould first went to New York City in 1853, with his improved mouse trap. He enlarged it to catch bulls and bears and judges. He was so successful that he caught old Commodore Vanderbilt. He secured a fortune of \$70,000,000 or more, died, and sleeps in a \$50,000 mausoleum. He knew the value of a judge, and paid spot cash.

A NEW VIEW FROM TEXAS

By E. S. PRICE

Margaret Haile's article in last week's paper (6-22) very properly emphasizes the need of something different as the result of our approaching convention, from the merely political unity accomplished last year; that satisfied no one, because there remained as before two separate national organizations, each claiming to be the real head of the movement for a more liberal Socialist party and at the same time out-heroding the De Leonites in the narrowness of their acts and policies. The leaders, moreover, all seemed mistrustful of each other, and the personal abuse and misrepresentation that followed so disgusted many people that they gave up all idea of union. Now if there is to be any substantial coming together of the liberal forces, these leaders must bury their personal suspicions and animosities, or at least keep such to themselves.

Next, we must organize as one party, in fact, and obliterate all the old party lines. Let the S. L. P. stay out. Every great cause has its factions, representing, generally, the radical and the conservative sides of the movement, and it matters little whether these work in the same harness or not; their opposition is wholesome, because it generates new ideas and prevents on the one side case-hardening and stagnation, while on the other it heads off undue looseness and waste, thereby forestalling corruption. There is much in the uncompromising conservatism of the S. L. P. that we would do well to copy, their criticisms

of our loose methods are often only too well deserved, I am sorry to say.

Most Texas Socialists whom I have talked to favor a national organization on the general lines of the existing parties, but want to see a more rigid system for regulating the admission of members and a more effective plan for the collection of funds. In our state organization we have the contributive system; no dues or fees. My plan for raising the national revenue would be practically the same; have the national committee or its executive board notify the various state board or committees when money is needed and what it is for; the state officers, in turn, to notify their respective locals or branches. Many a man, who will pay 50 cents or \$1 dues and think he has done his whole duty, will respond much more liberally to a call for a specific fund or purpose; on the other hand, there are many to whom the payment of even 50 or 25 cents dues is, at times, impossible. They are out of work, maybe, and this little money may mean half a week's living; yet for the lack of it they must not only go hungry but must stand suspended. I want no such system.

While steadily advocating the contributive system, however, as opposed to dues-paying, I must as steadily oppose Comrade Johnson's suggestion (in the same paper) that our state and national secretaries be required to work for nothing; this work is heavy, and, if properly attended to, will take up the whole working time of any person filling such office, often requiring assistance, particularly during active campaigns.

THE UNION OF SOCIALIST FORCES IN AMERICA

What a Review of Conditions Elsewhere Shows—Causes That Stand in the Way of a Real Union—True Socialists Essential to True Unity

By J. S. McDONALD

The only country where Socialists are united and well organized is the cradle of modern Socialism—Germany. A close examination of the causes of this union and organization reveals the rather startling fact that the various Socialist groups and factions were cemented together and are kept united and organized into an apparently homogeneous political party more by the pressure from outside produced by the hostile police state, than by the inner cohesion and mutual attraction among the Socialists themselves. As a matter of fact there is more of mutual repulsion than cohesion among various Socialist groups and factions all the world over. The Socialistic movement is figuratively speaking, in a gaseous state, where the single molecular groups may be kept close to each other only by an outside pressure. The disunity and disorganization of Socialist forces is the more remarkable because it is in direct opposition to the very fundamental principles of Socialism, that (if it stands for anything at all) certainly stands for unity, organization, co-ordination of forces and co-operation. Socialism is centripetal, not centrifugal, in its most essential features.

Some superficial observers are rather inclined to place the responsibility for disunion among various Socialist groups at the doors of the so-called leaders of the movement. These so-called leaders are accused of constantly intriguing against the union of Socialist forces, either for the gratification of their petty personal ambition or out of mere cussedness and love of mischief. These accusations may be well founded in singular cases here and there in respect to some party bosses. We have, however, too much respect for the rank and file of Socialists to concede that these petty bosses are the main factors of the pronounced absence of cohesion among various Socialist groups. The actual factors in this disunion and disorganization are the rank and file of Socialists themselves, or rather some of their inherent qualities. To the overwhelming majority of Socialists, Socialism is a philosophy of life and as a program of action, is still in an amorphous condition. There are utopian, anarchistic, dogmatic, religious, rationalistic Socialists; there are evolutionary, revolutionary, state, democratic and any other imaginable kind of Socialists. There are almost as many

conceptions of Socialism as there are Socialists.

That such a pronounced divergence of the fundamental conception must lead to a divergence in views on the practical task to be accomplished in party tactics, is obvious to any unprejudiced mind. Is it then to be wondered at, that the motley crowd of people with different conceptions of fundamental principles and different views on their application, called the rank and file, of various Socialist groups, are not easily united in one political party? It would be strange if it were otherwise. Elements having little affinity to each other do not form any chemical combination under ordinary conditions. "Union and organization of Socialist forces" is the watchword of Socialists at present. The meretricious desire, however, must prove insufficient for its realization as long as actual conditions militate against it.

A real, live union of Socialist forces is only possible when the Socialists of different warring groups agree on the fundamental principles of Socialism and on a definite plan of action, or platform. No amount of good will and generous enthusiasm can mix oil and water into one homogeneous liquid. The opinion that the weakness of the Socialist movement is due to the imperfections in its organization is only a half-truth. It is true that a building may be weak, due to faulty construction. You can, however, build no brick house without cement. The absence of Social cement, of cohesion among Socialists is the actual cause of the weakness of the Socialist movement. Socialists delight to indulge in preaching solidarity, class consciousness, co-operation and many other excellent things, but do not practice what they preach. As a matter of fact there is no class of people on earth showing less solidarity, possessing less class consciousness, less inclined to co-operate in the interest of a common cause, than Socialists. As a rule various groups of Socialists care too little for each other, have too little confidence in each other, have too little respect for each other to sacrifice any of their private notions and prejudices for the sake of the common cause. Each of the respective groups is convinced that it alone possesses the genuine "ring of truth," while the rest have only cheap imitations. In short, there is entirely too much of conscious and unconscious anarchism among Socialists. Socialists have still to learn to realize that in order to succeed in their struggle against the excellently organized forces of capitalism, they need a strong and effective organization based and conducted on up-to-date business principles by the most talented, devoted and energetic members of their rank and file. Far from realizing the importance of organization, the very life-blood of Socialism, a great number of Socialists have no feeling of loyalty whatever to their own party, are jealous of the imaginary power and influence of their so-called leaders and try to crucify them wherever and whenever a chance presents itself.

It is with a feeling of deep mortification and shame, that we feel bound to state here in the interests of truth, that Socialists as a rule are far from being methodical and generous in their financial transactions with their own organizations. The ridiculously small membership dues are seldom remitted in proper time and place, if at all. Socialistic organizations are consequently in a state of perpetual financial insolvency and the paid officers in abject poverty. Charity begins at home and so does justice. Socialists feel called upon to abolish the exploitation of human labor. But we, Socialists, start with exploiting unmercifully our own trusted servants. Are there any appropriate words in the English vocabulary strong enough to chastise this financial slovenliness of Socialists? Yes! "Unity and organization" indeed, not in name only, is what Socialists need. But in order to accomplish it they have to undergo themselves quite a painful metamorphosis and turn into Socialists indeed instead of Socialists in name only, pursuing a policy of mutual strife and competition.

