

"NOW WE HAVE BEEN MOVED"

By JAY LOVESTONE

Within the thirteen months that have elapsed since its Detroit Convention, the Socialist Party has been moving definitely to the right at an accelerated pace. The NEC Boston sessions of last November laid the political basis for speeding up the process; the Buffalo meeting only provided additional ammunition for the extreme Right in its consistent and determined war against the Left and the "Militants." The NEC decisions just made in New York mark the end of a whole period in the life of the Socialist Party. They bring into bold and painful relief the collapse of the whole "Militant" movement, the definite ideological bankruptcy and organizational disintegration of centrism in the S.P.

No expert mystery-solvers need be called upon to explain the why and the wherefore of the "Versailles Treaty" forced upon the NEC by the reactionary New York State Executive Committee. Sarah Limbach, Secretary of the right wing Pennsylvania organization, unwittingly gave the clue as to what was coming when, at the opening of the sessions, she declared: "We may not get unity on principle but we do expect to accomplish organic unity and this is extremely essential." Temporarily and superficially this "essential" was attained.

It is the political line and not the immediate organizational provisions that are decisive in this "peace treaty." The spectre of communism has been haunting the NEC beginning with the very morning after the Detroit convention closed in June of last year. Finally—but not for a long time—the NEC and the New York SEC have succeeded in laying low, in overcoming this "foreign spirit," thanks largely to the skillful Right generalship of Milwaukee's Mayor Dan Hoan. The latter now has the undisputed and indisputable leadership of the American Socialist Party.

An Anti-Red Drive

The central problem was not what was to be done with the New York YPSL; nor was the disposal of the "Socialist Call" a bone in any one's throat. The cardinal question was that of heresy-hunting. The best heads and utmost efforts were pooled to secure agreement on a decisive drive against revolutionary socialism in the ranks of the S.P. A

Last Socialist NEC Meet Marks Collapse of "Militants"

chase was organized to hunt and ferret out communism. Except for Hapgood, Daniels, and Kreuger, everybody was doing his best to help evolve such a comprehensive, all-inclusive, sufficiently ambiguous, and all-confusing definition of communism as to purge the S.P. of all pretense to Marxism and to disabuse even the most self-deceiving of any notions or suspicions that the Declaration of Principles makes even the slightest pretense to revolutionary socialism. Of course, the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO was not consulted or accepted as an authority. Instead, there was fabricated a conception of revolutionary socialism or communism, very much rooted in the juridical approach of the Daughters of the American Revolution and of Fascism.

Here is the knock-out blow as embodied in POINT ONE of the "Peace Pact" against revolutionary socialism: "The adherence to the resolutions of the NEC providing the ineligibility of advocates of communism and violence in the party . . . shall be interpreted as applying to persons who practice or advocate: 1. violent insurrection. 2. Dictatorship or abandonment of democracy either as a fact within the party or as an ideal method of achieving Socialism. 3. Subjection of the party to a bureaucratic, mechanical discipline from abroad such as that imposed by the Third International. 4. The use of deceitful, disruptive or underground tactics even as a means to a worthy end."

Only honorary members of the American Bar Association could concoct this. Hitler and Hearst could ask for no more. Here we have the outlawing of Marxism. Here we have a repudiation of the best traditions of the Second International—the glorious struggles of the Russian and German Social Democratic parties which for years were compelled to work underground. Here is an outright pledge to the ruling class of this country that the S.P. will faithfully abide by the law of the land as laid down by any bourgeois state, by any capitalist government—whether it be republican or Fascist in form. Here is advance notice to the

French Socialist Party in particular and to the Second International in general that the American S.P. will not brook in the least any united action, any united front, any step leading towards co-operation with the communist movement against capitalist reaction, against the rising menace of Fascism. Here is the tombstone marking the burial of the American S.P. in the extreme right corner of the cemetery of the Labor and Socialist International (LSI).

That's why Waldman's NEW LEADER hailed this decision as "an agreement that would lead to harmony and stabilization" and would insure "the process of healing wounds." That is why Algernon Lee, chairman of the N. Y. organization, could gleefully proclaim: "I am well satisfied with the outcome of this gathering . . ."

A Logical Outcome

There is nothing sudden or cataclysmic about this veritable counter-revolution in the S.P. For months the "Militant" NEC gave the right wing openings as wide as church doors. The mouth-made vows of Thomas to his "Militant" flock were always broken ere the sweat had dried that accompanied their utterance. The "red" NEC of Thomas and Hoan treated the extreme right NY SEC with the very pink of courtesy. At the same time it consistently allowed hostile measures to be taken against those suspected of the slightest left inclinations. The NY "Militants" certainly set out their charges against Waldman-Gerber & Co. in an impressive catalog. In a confidential caucus a couple of days before the decision was framed, Thomas pledged them unstinting support. The next night, Saturday, this titular leader of the S.P., repeated this pledge before nearly a thousand members in a public meeting. Net result in action: zero.

What happened? And why? We turn to the NEW LEADER for the explanation. In its issue of July 20th, W. M. Feigenbaum truthfully tells us: "To Mayor Daniel W. Hoan of Milwaukee belongs the credit for leadership in all the negotiations and also to the work of his three colleagues (Hoopes, Coolidge, Krzycki) in the sub-committee of four." Elsewhere in the same issue we are further told: "Guided by Daniel W.

Now the Socialist aPty Will Steer a Course Firmly to Right

Hoan, the New York State committeemen and the members of the NEC thrashed out all the points of difference that had resulted in party paralysis . . . arguing and seeking a way out of the wilderness."

We hasten to add that it did not take this new Moses forty hours, let alone forty years, to lead his chosen people into the promised land of bourgeois legality and capitalist democracy. Hoan came between the "Militant" dragon and his wrath and disposed of both of them in one-two-three fashion. So there was the job he performed, that Thomas, declared in "At the Front" (in the Socialist Call), that it "gives the Party a chance to go forward with new energy and new devotion to constructive work" and that it will aid "in restoring some confidence in democratic procedure within the Party." To the NY YPSL's this last stricture was simply heaping insult upon injury. To the adult "Militants" the worst indignity was Thomas stating: "Emphatically that definition (Point 1) is not in contradiction to the Declaration of Principles." This is really a case of singing at grave-making. Some embittered but enlightened "Militants" characterized the whole show as one in which the NY SEC revoked the charter—lifted the mandate for leadership—from the NEC!

Why this downright collapse by the "peerless leader"? Apparently a fundamental perspective and far bigger stakes are involved here, besides the general political basis. Thomas and his friends see a Labor Party of some sort on the way. The head of the S.P. believes that the best contacts his party has with this labor party in the process of birth is thru a limited number of top AF of L officials. Again, Thomas thinks, rightly or wrongly, that Waldman's right wing has the best connections with these union leaders. Hence, in order to insure the SP and its present leadership playing a real role in the labor party to come tomorrow, Thomas has found it "just, practical, and necessary" to surrender to the "Old Guard" today. We are convinced that this is a sort of horoscope reading that can lead only to political suicide. It is one of the lamest and most impotent conclusions Thomas has ever reached.

The "Militants" in Misery

It's bad enough to be defeated, but it's even worse not to realize the cause of the defeat and the way out. Of this the "Militants" brain trust is guilty, as is evident from the editorial comment of the Socialist Call to the effect that the NEC "preferred to be practical rather than just." There is nothing practical in the NEC flaunting the will of the majority of the membership, violating the spirit and letter of the Detroit convention decisions. Worst of all, the SOCIALIST CALL still clings like a spent swimmer to a soaked straw, to the most worthless illusions. It still sees the possibility for something good coming out of the "peace treaty" in the event that "the Old Guard makes a sharp about-face and abandons the disruptive tactics hitherto practiced."

The root of the "Militants" fallacy is to be found in their very evaluation of the Detroit convention. They assumed that the ideological and organization setback suffered there by the Old Guard was final and fatal. Thus, Max Delson, in the Chicago Socialist Appeal, still boasts that "at the Detroit convention the Old Guard lost the ideological and organizational control of the party . . ." and "that they are more concerned with the loss of the organization than their theoretic leadership." This is erroneous from beginning to end. The homogeneous Old Guard, unlike the heterogeneous "militants," always understood that it was necessary for them first of all to recover all their lost ideological ground and that then their organization recovery would follow. Besides, in the real centers of SP strength, N. Y., Milwaukee, Reading, Bridgeport, the right wing was never dislodged. Using these bases and realizing the vital importance of sticking to their crass reformism, the Old Guard vigorously set about to make up for their partial defeat at Detroit. But the "Militants" have yet to wake up to the real situation.

This false approach of the "Militants" is not new. It is entirely in line with their confusion in theory and vacillation in practice. They have been totally unable to discontinue their sheepish helplessness before Thomas whom they have chosen to pastor them, to shepherd them to some Left pasture. That is why they still have day-dreams about their party's crisis being settled "in a dignified manner." (Socialist Call, July 20th.)

Outlook For RPC

The RPC will undoubtedly soon face fierce fire. Its Buffalo followers will be given a chance to endorse the NY NEC decisions. This will be a killing concession. Unless the RPC breaks finally with the confused and compromising "Militants" and wages a much more energetic principled struggle, it will be doomed. The RPC can save itself only if it will not hesitate to bring to bear the heaviest pressure for clarity in principle, for sound Marxist ideology.

Stabilizing Disintegration And Chaos

Nothing could be further from the truth than the conclusion that the latest NEC decisions will bring harmony, stability, and progress to the S.P. Of course, the position of the Rights will be strengthened. This will make party life much more difficult for the Lefts. It will bring about demoralization and hasten realignments among the "Militants." Inside the S.P. the prestige of Thomas and faith in him as a leader "who shall not be moved" will be lowered. The "peace pact" will let loose forces undermining the authority of party leadership. Symptomatic of this was Kreuger's statement at the NEC that he "lost faith in what I (Kreuger) used to believe in, the majority of this committee."

Few realize in how serious a plight the S.P. finds itself today. Secretary Senior's report to the last NEC session confesses rather pathetically that there has been "a great increase in the number of contacts which the SP has with mass organizations . . ." but that the party has been unable to stomach this very gain which "has also led to an internal strain in the S.P., which until it is resolved will continue the turmoil within the party." Senior also tries to explain away the "drastic drop in income for the first six months of this year" by saying that "the depression seems AT LAST to be catching up with the majority of persons who have supported the party in the past." According to Senior, the S.P. membership has fallen from 22,638 in January to 17,781 in June—a drop of 4,857 in the first six months of the year. Literature sales and sustaining fund receipts show the same downward trend.

This situation will undoubtedly be aggravated by the organization steps which the emboldened Old Guard will now take. Their quest for sweet revenge, now completely legalized by their hold on the NEC, will be harsh. Those who find even the devitalized Declaration of Principles too red will be encouraged. Those who find it insufficiently left, too yellow, will be gagged and stricken from the membership roster. The NEC decisions have given the Old Guard the necessary filip for such ventures. In Point 7 of the "peace treaty" the NEC has thus declared "that it is improper and beyond the function of the YPSL or any sub-division of the party or auxiliary organization politically to attack or repudiate any recognized party paper." This was a bouquet to the NEW LEADER. Upon the request of Thomas, Kreuger withdrew his proposal to instruct the NY SEC to take action against the notorious labor racketeer Nemser whose corruption not even Woll and Green could tolerate any longer. The necessary steps to facilitate the "honorable" exit of the SOCIALIST CALL have been taken. The Buffalo RPC members are to be examined again by the SEC.

Counter-Revolution In The S.P.

Finally, and symbolic of the new trend in the S. P. is the decision of the "Militant" NEC not merely to reject the request of the "Militants" for the revocation of the NY SEC charter, but also to follow this up with a decision to appoint a committee of three to look into and "straighten out" the New Jersey state organization. The latter has, for some time, been a "Militant" fortress into which—over the Washington Bridge and thru the Hudson Tubes—such unattached and unattachable radicals as Zam, Gitlow and their families have poured.

With great regret and equal frankness we must state that we do not think that the Communist movement will be able effectively to stave off demoralization in the ranks of the S.P. workers by drawing them to Communism. The official C.P. is still very much discredited in the eyes of the S.P. membership thruout the country—despite its recent united front effusions and "comradely love." Furthermore, the latest sharp swings to the Right by the CP—particularly on the question of imperialist war and national defense have literally scared many leftward-moving workers in the S.P. away from the Comintern.

A CPO Appeal

We of the Communist Party (Opposition) once again point out to the workers in the S.P. how futile it is for them to expect to transform so dyed-in-the-wool a reformist party as such into an organ of revolutionary socialism. Certainly the latest NEC sessions must have hammered the last nail into the coffin of these illusions.

Comrades in the S.P. should not despair, should not give vent to demoralization. There is a virile revolutionary socialist (communist) force in the U.S. struggling to arouse the American working class to militant action. This force is the CPO. We urge workers in the SP—especially those in the trade unions—to join our ranks, to work closely with us in our efforts to infuse a militant spirit into the American labor movement.

Pessimism, panic, dismay, and do-nothingism should be banned by every S.P. member, by every comrade who is determined to break with reformism, who is sick and tired of dilly-dallying, of being buried in fruitless waiting and futile hoping. The CPO extends a hand of warm comradely greeting to you. Take your rightful place in our ranks, in the fight for a socialist America.

The Detroit Congress Of Errors

Second American Youth Meet Shows How Far YCL is on Opportunist Path

By ALBERT EPSTEIN

The American Youth Congress, though mothered by Viola Ilma has been adopted by the Young Communist League and Young Peoples Socialist League. If the male be still recognized as the stronger sex we are ready to hazard the guess that the Y.C.L. is the father and the Y.P.S.L. the mother. In fact, it seems that the Y.P.S.L. has been forced into this thankless task of a step-mother. On several occasions it has sought release from its painful duties but the watchful father would not permit desertion.

Before the A.Y.C. was born, it was feared that it would be a "Fascist" monstrosity. The Y.P.S.L. and the Y.C.L. undertook to convert it into a model democratic institution. Its first birthday was celebrated recently at Detroit by the Second American Youth Congress. More than 1,200 delegates, representing all organizations that cared to come, were present at Cass Technical High School, Detroit, July 4, 5, 6, and 7. The mathematicians of the credentials committee reported that these delegates represented 1,350,000 young people! A common-sense examination will show that the figure is slightly exaggerated. The Daily Worker of July 8 states that "much of the representation is duplicated." And from the Socialist Call of July 13, we learn that of the 1,350,000 "half million . . . were represented by the New York State Youth Committee against Child Labor." Thus, half a million (even if we accept the number) should be deducted without further ado because such indirect and unauthorized representation is not permissible. To examine any more closely this claim of 1,350,000 would be too cruel in this heat.

WHO REPRESENTS AMERICAN YOUTH?

The overwhelming majority of the delegates were members or supporters of the Y.C.L. and the C.P. The next largest group consisted of the Y.P.S.L. and their sympathizers. There was a sprinkling of other groups and tendencies. Quite obviously, the Congress was not representative of the young American workers or students. It is about time that we learned that a conference with 1,000 delegates may often

be less representative than one with 100 delegates. Not how many delegates are present but who is represented is what counts!

But more alarming than the narrow representation are the blunders committed by the Y.C.L.-Y.P.S.L. leadership of the congress. These mistakes flow directly from the character of the A.Y.C., which is a monstrosity whether in the hands of Viola Ilma or of the Y.C.L. The leadership of the Y.C.L. sensed that there was something wrong with the A.Y.C. In the March 1935 number of International of Youth Gil Green, secretary of the Y.C.L. declares: "We must ask ourselves what is the guarantee that this movement which we are helping to create will not become a Frankenstein which will later fight us? What guarantee have we that this movement will continue to base itself on a class program and will continue to remain an anti-capitalist movement? We must see clearly that the danger is very great that this movement may be swung off its present proletarian rails into petty bourgeois swamps. This is due to the mixed class composition of the movement, the fact that it contains not only young workers, but also large masses of farming and especially middle class youth. Also the fact that while the program of the movement is proletarian as yet its leadership has come in the main from the middle classes."

THE YCL PROVES GREEN WAS RIGHT

Gil Green's fears have been more than justified. But the most shameful part of it is that the Y.C.L. itself was responsible for swinging this movement off "its present proletarian rails into petty bourgeois swamps." Even the program is no longer proletarian. The First American Youth Congress announced in its preamble: "We want a youth movement that shall consider its mission to be to wipe war from the face of the earth, to destroy Fascism, to work for concrete and immediate economic measures as set forth in our program and, with the goal of a cooperative world without oppression of man by man, to work for the building of a new social order, based upon production for use rather than for profit." The second American Youth Congress adopts a "Declaration of the Rights of Youth" and deliberately refuses to include a word about a new social order. The writer of this article proposed the inclusion of the following mild statement: "Therefore, we, the Young People of America, in Congress assembled, dedicate ourselves and our cause to the achievement of the most noble ideals of humanity. For these ideals the American Revolution was fought and inspired the Great French Revolution. In modern times it is continued by the Great Russian Revolution." The first half of the statement was in the draft of the declaration. But the whole amendment was defeated.

In place of the demand of a new so-

cial order, we get the demand for an idealized capitalism, for the perpetuation of wage slavery in a refined form: "We declare that our generation is rightfully entitled to a useful, creative and happy life, the guarantees of which are: full educational opportunities, steady employment at adequate wages, security in time of need, civil rights and peace." The entire document is written in a sloppy, sentimental spirit more fitting for a Fourth of July oration than for the address of a sober, responsible conference of forward-looking young workers and students. The Declaration has a lot to say about "peace," "freedom" and "happiness," but it does not feel called upon so much as to mention colonial oppression in the Philippines or in Latin America! What are such trifles compared with the daring reiteration of the "inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness!"

So far did the Y.C.L. go in its eagerness to drive the movement off "its proletarian rails into petty bourgeois swamps" that it actually refused to allow the passage of a resolution pledging opposition to American imperialism in any war it may undertake! This pledge, which has been taken by scores of thousands of students and other young people thruout the world, proved too much for the Y.C.L. Faced with the readiness of the Y.C.L. to split this point, the Y.P.S.L. steering committee spinelessly capitulated and the resolution was tabled. The result was that the only resolution about war adopted was the one condemning Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. This is nothing but cowardly chauvinism! Not a word about "your own" government's war plans in the Pacific, blank refusal to pledge opposition to war conducted by "your own" government, but ready enough to condemn imperialism elsewhere, the imperialism of Fascist Italy! Lenin had a word for such "opposition" to imperialism!

At any rate, an unprincipled compromise was finally reached by having those delegates who favored the "Oxford pledge" rise and take it on the floor of the congress! One need not seek far to guess what is behind this new attitude of the Y.C.L.? They have their eyes on France. Running away with themselves, they are already speculating about a possible "alliance" between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Thus our youthful opportunists are already turning chauvinists in advance! But what has the Y.P.S.L. to say about its own cowardly behavior on this fundamental question? In January, Gus Taylor, in the name of the Y.P.S.L., threatened to break if the congress endorsed the C.P.—controlled Unemployed Congress. In May, the Y.P.S.L. of New York refused to participate in the May 30 demonstration because of the presence of the dual unions. But in July, the Y.P.S.L. is ready to give up everything "for the sake of peace!"

(to be continued)

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