

AN APPEAL FOR A UNITED SOCIALIST EFFORT.

AN OPEN LETTER TO SOCIALISTS.

By J. T. MURPHY.

COMRADES,—It is true that during the last six months strenuous efforts have been made, sometimes locally, sometimes nationally to obtain Socialist unity, and it is true that most of these efforts have failed to arrive at their objective.

It would be untrue, however, to say that nothing of value has been derived from the efforts, or to say that the position to-day is not more serious than ever before.

The Second International collapsed at the outbreak of war. The attempt to resurrect it has proved a dismal failure from the standpoint of International Socialism.

The Third International has been born amidst storm and stress. International capitalism has mobilised its capital, its corruption, its military power to smother it, as it attempts to translate Socialist ideas into Socialist deeds.

Repeatedly have the members of this Third International, who are struggling heroically against tremendous odds, appealed to us to unite our forces and render all possible aid.

Several Socialist conferences have agreed that further efforts should be made in response to that call. Since these conferences little appears to have been done and still the S.O.S. of the Third International calls to us all.

Not only have we this call to respond to the principles of International Socialism, but all the social forces in this country are steadily changing the psychology of the workers.

The true character of the Paris "Peace" Conference is being revealed to even those who are not students. The Parliament of this country is mocked at and laughed to scorn by thousands. Forces are awakening within the working class, demanding expression. Forces hitherto regarded as hopeless.

Strikes are occurring and developing situations of an unprecedented character. Strikes are threatened of a magnitude which alarm the governing class who have become panicky in their threats.

All the forces of the State are to be used against the workers and the forces of the State show signs of disintegration. And still the Socialist movement flounders about and allows the petty things to obscure first principles; the parochial factors to obscure the demands of the international situation. It theorises, it shouts, it denounces,

but the real constructive work of preparation for the harnessing of the mighty movements history is generating, is left alone to a deplorable degree.

It is because of these things I write this open letter to you, in the hope that some effort will immediately follow to remedy this state of affairs.

A review of the position of the various parties will reveal the fact, that whatever the factors which prevent a fusion of forces, there is a great percentage of the members of every party which agrees that the Soviet or the Communist structure is the only alternative to Parliament. Whether we turn to the B.S.P., the W.S.F., the Communist League or the S.L.P. upon the kind of organic structure necessary for the administration of affairs in a Socialist society there is a general agreement. A good percentage of the I.L.P. is in a similar position.

The points of difference arise, when the tactics to be adapted to achieve the common objective are considered.

The main squabble turns on parliamentarism. The W.S.F. and the C.L. repudiate even the participation in elections. The S.L.P. believe in the use of elections for the creation of a revolutionary spirit, and even in getting members to the House of Commons for the purposes of revolutionary parliamentary activity.

The B.S.P. and the I.L.P. subscribe to parliamentarism of the reformist brand to legislate us by ameliorative legislation into socialism.

Whatever the virtues of any of these tactics may be, the fact remains that so far as the objective is concerned, so far as the positive structural changes bound up with that objective are concerned, there is a large measure of agreement.

It may not be possible to get a complete fusion of all these forces into one party, but I do suggest in view of the immense amount of propaganda that has to be done relating to the points on which there is agreement, in view of the overwhelming importance of the building of the organisation which alone can effect and maintain a social revolution, that there can be a fusion to the degree in which we are in agreement, and a retention of the identity and independent action on those matters where there is disagreement.

The situation demands a degree of toleration on the part of Socialists on the points of disagreement, for the sake of the mightier things on which they do agree.

Is it too much to ask in times like these?

I think not. I would suggest, therefore, to meet the situation that each of the parties I have mentioned send representatives to a conference which any one of them can convene for the purpose of bringing together all the points of agreement and disagreement.

Once that has been accomplished, to form a Socialist Communist Confederation which shall embody in its constitution all the points upon which all are agreed.

This body with its own Executive officers local and national will then be responsible for the conduct of all propaganda, &c., (dealing with the principles, structure, and tactics agreed upon).

Anything outside of those activities could be dealt with by the particular parties concerned.

I will not hamper the consideration of the suggestion by putting forward at this juncture elaborate details as to the raising of finance, &c., and different party literature.

What I am immediately concerned about is the finding of a way whereby we can organise our forces on definitely agreed upon principles in order that more concentrated and more powerful efforts can be made to grapple with the demands of the hour. It may be that such a concentration would lead to the neglect of the points of disagreement, and it may be that the circumstances of the future will change many opinions on a variety of matters as different crises arise.

At any rate the suggestion does seem to me to indicate the possibility of united action without the entanglements of party property, &c.

Internationally, every party in this country is insignificant, without a voice. But a united movement definitely committed to the support of the Third International would bring us into line as a body of Socialists determined to face our responsibilities to International Socialism.

Every hour which comes along seems pregnant with tremendous possibilities. Every principle we have held dear, every vision of a new social order, every scrap of news which comes from Europe, the intense struggle everywhere calls with no uncertain sound for us to gravitate towards the great principles of the movement and let the uncertainties slide.

I appeal, therefore, to every Socialist who has not let pessimism steal away the vision, and inertia sap vitality from their life, to respond to the call of the hour and make one further effort to create a society in this country worthy of Revolutionary International Socialism.