The Left Wing

The most vital fact in the Socialist Party at this moment is the development of a left wing. It is not yet definite and organized; but the process is accelerating. There is a passionate activity in the party, a developing revolutionary consciousness, a desire to reconstruct the party in accord with the new concepts of proletarian purposes and action expressed by the proletarian revolutions in Russia and in Germany, which promises to bring real results.

It is, of course, impossible to estimate accurately the strength of these sentiments. Local Boston is completely left; Locals Seattle, Cleveland, Rochester, N. Y., Philadelphia, etc., are either completely left or turning to the left. In the Greater

New York locals, which are dominated either by the "right" or by the "center," a mass movement of the membership has produced the organization of a Left-Wing Section, the Manifesto and Program of which have already been adopted by a number of locals of the party. There is a real revolt against the bureaucracy of the party, against the reactionary N. E. C., against a policy that is not uncompromisingly revolutionary in the Bolshevik and Spartacan sense.

The forces which are producing this left movement are not of recent origin. There has always been a struggle in the party between the moderates and the revolutionists, between the right and the left. This struggle has been powerfully accelerated by the war and by the actual coming of the proletarian revolution. The great fact of the war and of the proletarian revolution in Russia and in Hungary has been the miserable, counter-revolutionary policy of petty bourgeois, moderate Socialism. *And this moderate Socialism has been officially dominant in the Socialist Party.*

But, the critic may ask, did not the Socialist Party, unlike moderate Socialism in Europe, oppose the war? It did; but, officially at least, it was an opposition based upon petty bourgeois pacifism and not upon revolutionary Socialism. Moderate Socialism comprises not only the extreme right—Ebert, Scheidemann, Thomas, etc.—but equally the center—the Independent Socialists and the tendency they represent. The Independents, captained by Hugo Haase and Karl Kautsky, opposed the war after they had previously accepted it, but it was an opposition of petty bourgeois pacifism; and the fact that the Independents are not united with the Spartacans, that they do not uncompromisingly accept the revolutionary policy, proves that they are not real revolutionary Socialists. Now the official policy of our party on the war—in spite of the activity of the membership—was petty bourgeois and pacifist. The officials and bureaucracy of the party baffled the will of the membership; they refused through the N. E. C. to accept the Bolshevik proposal for an armistice on all belligerent fronts; they were silent on the Bolsheviki until the upsurge of the revolutionary sentiments of the membership compelled them to speak, and then they spoke the language of evasion and bourgeois liberalism.

After the armistice, the most important need of the party was to hold an emergency national convention. But the N. E. C. refused to act. For three months, while great events were happening and the world was shaking under the attack

of the proletarian revolution, the N. E. C. was silent and inert, the party was unable to meet and formulate a policy. This was treason to the Russian and German proletariat, to revolutionary Socialism. And when the N. E. C. met in January, it refused to call a convention and issued nothing of a vital character on the international situation.

The N. E. C. avoided committing itself on the revolutionary events. But it did commit itself on the question of the International *by aligning the party officially with the Congress of the Great Betrayal at Berne,* with the gang of social-patriots, with the Eberts and Scheidemanns, the Hendersons and Longuets. The N. E. C. selected, illegally and in flagrant violation of the party constitution, three delegates to represent the party at Berne. This was again treason to international revolutionary Socialism, a shot in the back to the Bolsheviki and Spartacans fighting and dying then in the great struggle against Capitalism and Imperialism, against moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism.

And again the N. E. C. refused to call an emergency national convention, to the tune of "those who ask for a convention are Anarchists and party disrupters." . . . .

But the demand for a convention developed insistently, and in spite of the sabotage of the N. E. C. and National Secretary Germer, it is now before the membership in a referendum: but five, and more, precious months will have been wasted. The party membership vigorously repudiated participation in the Berne yellow congress, local after local of the party doing this officially. And now the N. E. C., through "International Delegate" James Oneal, explains that it was a mistake to believe that the N. E. C. meant participation in the Berne Congress, that Oneal is going over to secure "information"! This is subterfuge. We have enough information to know that the Berne Congress is counter-revolutionary, and that the Bolshevik-Spartacan International alone is worthy of the revolutionary Socialist.

All these events are a challenge to the militant Socialist. In an epoch in which Capitalism is verging on collapse, in which the proletarian revolution has conquered in Russia, is preparing to conquer in Germany, is developing its action everywhere for the conquest of power, our party is without a definite revolutionary policy, our party bureaucracy is sabotaging revolutionary Socialism. There must be a clear division, an uncompromising policy. To realize this is the task of the developing left wing in the Socialist Party.

The revolutionary Socialist who would promote its policy must align himself with the left wing, must carry on the war against moderate Socialism in the party. To dodge on this issue is to play the "center," and to betray revolutionary Socialism. The time for hesitation and evasion has passed; the time for definite action has come, to conquer the party for the party, for revolutionary Socialism.

The left wing has not, as yet, formulated a definite declaration of principles acceptable to the whole "left" of the party. There is still division of opinion, disagreement on certain points. We are still, largely, at the stage of discussion, although the tendency is clear; but out of this must come a common policy and program, a policy and program absolutely necessary if the left wing is to conquer.

In this organization and formulation of the left wing one thing should be emphasized: it must be an *extreme "left,"* and not a "center" movement. It is not sufficient to wage war upon the "right," we must wage equally uncompromising war upon the "center," upon the masters of words and the poltroons in action. There must be no swamp in our "left" movement, but a clear formulation and acceptance of the theory and practice of revolutionary Sosialism. The division must be clear: revolutionary Socialism against all others. We shall not accomplish our purposes if we compromise with the "center"; there are comrades who think they are "left," but who are actually "center." These comrades must be taught to discriminate; and if they don't, they must be excluded from the movement of the left wing. The mass of the "center" must be split away from its leaders by a merciless criticism of these leaders, by an emphasis of the policy and practice of the extreme "left." We don't want an "Independent Socialist" movement in our party. The policy adopted by the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviki) of inviting only the groups of the extreme "left" to their proposed International Communist Congress must be our policy.

The party is developing a revolutionary consciousness; but it needs clarification and organization. This work is being accomplished rapidly; it must be accelerated. Shortly, within six months, we shall have two Internationals claiming to represent Socialism—the red International and the yellow—the Berne and the Bolshevik. The Socialist Party must accept the red International. But that, again, implies the revolutionary reconstruction of the party's program and policy. To shirk this task is to betray the cause of Socialism. To hesitate is to compromise; to compromise is to betray revolutionary Socialism. On with the war against moderate Socialism in our party! Turn to the "left"!

F.

Eugene V. Debs, a Revolutionist

On more than one occasion, the socialist movement of this country has paid dearly for its readiness to raise upon a pedestal men and women who possessed the gift and the ability to become its leaders. This has been particularly true where these newcomers in the socialist movement had established for themselves enviable reputations as radicals and reformers in bourgeois circles. Their coming was hailed as a great achievement, their opinions were received with a degree of attention and accorded a degree of importance entirely out of keeping with their experience in the working-class movement or their deserts. Men like Benson, Russell and others became leaders in the socialist movement, not on account of their services in the interests of the working class, but for the notoriety that attached itself to their names and to the prestige that their membership gave to the party in certain circles. And so it happened, that when the great crisis came, when the Socialist Party was forced to undergo an acid bath that separated the true metal from the alloy, that these elements in our movement failed. They were tried—and found wanting.

But our movement has leaders too that were made of sterner stuff—leaders that can take their place beside the best the international socialist movement has produced. And foremost among them all stands Eugene V. Debs. No matter how great the crisis —and the socialist movement has gone through more than one critical period—Debs always rang true. He came into the movement at a time when to be a socialist meant to be a social outcast. He came to us, not as a Messiah sent from above, to liberate the toiling masses from economic and political slavery, but as a workingman who had learned, in the bitter school of a capitalist jail, that the only hope of the workingman in the unequal fight against the organized capitalist class lies in the merging of his identity with that of the class-conscious proletariat. He became one of us to learn, not to teach, to serve, not to lead, to give the best that was within him, without stint and without hope of gratitude. For more than two decades he has served the Party, whenever it called him, in whatever position the movement saw fit to place him, always ready to carry his share of the burden, heavy and