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# The Parting of the Ways.

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Published in *The Proletarian* [Detroit], v. 2, no. 3 (July 1919), pp. 3-4.

At a certain period in the development of the Socialist movement in all countries a split is bound to occur. In some countries it happens before the revolution and in others it comes during the course of the revolution. But come it must. When in the course of development the understanding minority becomes the majority, and is in a position to take control of the organization, a split is imminent; for the petty bourgeois-minded conservatives within the ranks of the Socialist movement can not, and will not, accept a real Socialist position. Rather than do so they would wreck the organization.

In Russia this was so. When the crisis arrive and it was necessary to take up a real Socialist position the "broad-minded and constructive Socialists" were found lacking. Driven to joining the Socialist movement because of their anti-tsarism, when the test came, it was found that Kerensky and his element did not want Socialism. They were enamored with bourgeois democracy and had no conception of the historic mission of the proletariat and knew nothing of the dictatorial powers that it must assume in order that it might perform its historic task. It was impossible for them to put into effect the Socialist program for they did not accept it. They could not give the peasants the land nor the working class the factories, and therefore their support disappeared like the snow before the spring sun. The workers under the leadership of the Bolsheviks had to conquer the "yellow" Socialists over the barricades of the streets.

In Germany much the same course has been followed, with the exception of the fact that as yet the working class has not been successful in gaining control. For years the German Social Democratic Party was the model for Socialist parties throughout the world. It was dominated by elements who had a bour-

geois outlook upon society and it was therefore a bourgeois party. Year after year the delegates of the German Social Democratic Party opposed any decisive action in the International on the question of war. The reason for this action was seen in 1914 when the German "Socialists" went scrambling over the top in behalf of German Imperialism. It was a party built on a bourgeois basis and its action in supporting the German Imperialists was no surprise to those who understood Socialism. It was plainly apparent that the German party was of no use to the proletariat of Germany as a revolutionary weapon. Scheidemann, Ebert, et al., were quite willing to sacrifice the blood of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg rather than institute a complete working class control of the country.

The Hungarian Socialists succeeded in straightening out their internal troubles before the revolution, and for that reason are having a much different time of it than the German Socialists. In Italy the Socialist Party has remained comparatively clear because of the wholesale expulsions that have taken place.

The different elements within the Socialist movement of Europe have fought and are fighting out their differences; all have their counterpart in the United States. We, too, have our Kerenskys, Schiedemanns, and Eberts. It has needed a crisis like the present to show them up in their true colors.

The United States has never possessed a real Socialist Party. True, there has been a militant minority struggling to place the party on a firm basis, but never until now have they seriously menaced the control of the muddleheads and sinister politicians in the National Office. Socialism in America has failed to perform the functions of a Socialist movement; namely, the training and organizing the working class for the conquest of political power.

The cause of this failure to perform the functions that it should is easily traceable to the lack of understanding of Socialism on the part of those who have been in control of the Socialist Party of America. Their whole policy has been based upon a bourgeois conception of things. They have not understood the material basis of Socialism, or, if they did, have refused to work in conformity with it.

Because of this bourgeois conception of things our platforms have been filled with all kinds of nonsensical reforms, old age pensions, government ownership, penal reforms, etc., etc., ad nauseum. Failing to understand the functions of the state, they do not know that as long as the capitalist class are in control of it they must put into effect all legislation, and we can be certain that they are not going to legislate to benefit the working class. Their reforms have attracted to the Socialist Party many people that were not Socialists and had no conception of Socialism. Members of this character have been a weakness and a menace to the party. Any reform that might possibly secure some votes for the Socialist Party from people that were not Socialists was placed in the platform.

The class character of the movement was consciously obscured in order not to lose any votes. Flirting with the Non-Partisan League has been a favorite pastime of some of our officers. [Seymour] Stedman has openly stated that he was going to do all in his power to bring about an affiliation between the Socialist Party and the Non-Partisan League. This thing alone is proof of their reactionary character. The idea that the Socialist Party, which is supposed to be a revolutionary organization, could cooperate with a movement that is organized to protect the interest of the farmers (a property class) against the encroachments of "big business" is absolutely preposterous. This has been carried on in violation of the spirit and in some cases the letter of the party pledge, for the Non-Partisan League is a political organization. The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party has raised the cry of violation of the constitution in the recent expulsions [of the Left Wing], but we are reminded here of the old saying that it makes some difference "whose ox is gored." They raise no objection when one of their own number traffics with the Non-Partisan League in violation of the party pledge. The infamous Walter Thomas Mills, one of the present mem-

bers of the Executive Committee, is in the pay of the Non-Partisan League as a lecturer and organizer. But then, what is the constitution among friends? It is only to best used when someone threatens to keep one from getting his feet in the trough.

In their striving to capture "great men" from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie and foisting them upon the movement as leaders, they, the National Office clique, have in another way demonstrated their unfitness to be a part of a revolutionary movement. Anyone with a notorious name that they could capture and put over on the membership they have played to. It made no difference if they knew anything about Socialism or not as long as they were "great men." Forsooth, great men would make the party great. Experience has proven, however, that these great men will fail the movement when the crisis arrives. The Bensons, Wallings, Russells, and Stokes are not to be trusted. Yet the party bureaucracy has learned nothing from these experiences.

In the calling of the Amnesty Convention the Executive Committee again demonstrated its lack of understanding that the Socialist Party is a working class organization. It was convenient, of course, for it furnished them with the means of taking care of their fellow politician, J. Mahlon Barnes. It is strictly in his line to draw up communications to "All organizations, political, economic, or otherwise" and not so wise. All this helps to convince the workers that the Socialist Party is not "narrow." This, however, is only in line with their previous activities with "The People's Council." Sounds so much like "Workers', Soldiers', and Sailors' Council," you know — and isn't. The lining up of our party leaders with "The People's Council" was a betrayal of the Socialist position just the same as are all actions that obscure the class character of our movement.

We, the impossibilists, have always been charged by them with not being constructive. They were the "practical" Socialists. What have they done that is constructive? These Socialists who were always crying "constructive work" have performed no constructive work themselves. They can point to nothing that they have done that has been of any material benefit to the Socialist movement in America, except to receive dues and give nothing in return. As for performing any educational work or developing the members of the move-

ment, they have done nothing. They have even been unable to develop a press fit to read. A good and sound press is one of the most essential things that a Socialist Party should have, but they have never developed it because they were incapable of doing so, not understanding Socialism. Of course, they argue that the government killed their paper [*The American Socialist*]. It was “dead” long before the government killed it. *The American Socialist* and its successor, “The Eye-Closer” [*The Eye-Opener*], was never worth the trouble of reading except that one might keep track of the repulsively reactionary and muddleheaded activities of the hierarchy. A real Socialist Party should and will build up a press that will be worth the time spent by the membership in reading. Educational work will be carried on by consistent lecture work and study classes. Literature should be gotten out that deals with current issues in a sound way. This, of course, the present control could not do. They have demonstrated their incapacity to interpret world events by their flirting with the Yellow International at Berne.

Recent world events have educated the rank and file in spite of the National Office and they have become aware of the shortcomings enumerated above. The result is that the reactionaries in office were repudiated in the last National Executive Committee election.

This menace to their position brought out their true colors — a genuine black streaked with yellow.

They proceeded to expel those districts from which the adverse vote came so that they would not have to count themselves out of office. They sealed up (?) the vote and will count it at their leisure. Certainly, they will make sure that they do not count themselves out. It is well that they don't have any firing squad at their command or the whole Michigan movement would be shot. The foreign federations that have been suspended might get off with imprisonment. Expulsion will likely follow. They are mostly foreigners and “what we want is an American organization.” Some idea, for men occupying the prominent positions that Stedman and Germer do, to hold. It is a tribute to their Internationalism which will not be forgotten. We congratulate them upon their maintaining control at the expense of wrecking the organization. They have expelled or suspended nearly 40,000 members and will expel that many more in order to remain in the saddle of power. Already they have gained the admiration and praise of editors of the capitalist papers by their act of getting rid of the Bolsheviki in the Socialist Party of America.

We are convinced by this act of the agent provocateurs and handmaidens of capitalism within our ranks that we have reached the parting of the ways. The split in America has come. The time has arrived for the organization of a SOCIALIST Party. The middle course is intolerable and untenable. The hour has come, line up! On which side are you?

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.*