
Red Conventions in Chicago Rank: Simons Shows Up Their Unrepresentative Character in Very Graphic Style: Wild Groups Consisted of Persons with No Control of Labor or Industry: Whole Country Laughs at Their Call for a General Strike to Begin Oct. 8.

by A.M. Simons

Published in *The Minnesota Union Advocate* [St. Paul], v. 23, no. 39 (Sept. 26, 1919), pg. 2

They met in Chicago to plan a labor revolution that should install a working class democracy. Under the banner, "Workers of the World, Unite," they formed sometimes one and sometimes three conventions. All were sure that they represented labor. They called themselves Socialists, Communists, and Bolsheviks by turn, but always terrible revolutionary workers.

They dearly loved phrases. They had small relation to facts. The speakers' lips were ever haunted by the forms of dead and gone blessed words. As phrases and dreamers circled in mental and physical whirls, they suggested the ghost dancing and weird rites of savage medicine men, who chant the cries and perform the gyrations of their ancestors to invoke rain or good hunting.

No phrase came so readily to every lip as "revolutionary workers." Yet nothing is more certain than that if revolution should come from labor in America these ghost dancers would be of least influence in its coming. It would be hard to collect an equally large body of men and women so completely aloof from that working class power which alone can create a revolution or establish a

labor-ruled society — if these things are to come.

There were fewer union men and women of influence in these three conventions than in any Socialist convention ever held. The unionists who are Socialists refuse to take these ghostly gatherings seriously.

As far as there was agreement upon a program it was that a "soviet" system of industry should be established. But there was not one person in any of these wildly gyrating groups that has anything to do with the organization of labor or the direction of industry. They represented neither labor nor capital, nor any other form of industrial fish, flesh, fowl, or good red herring. They were professional politicians, writers, speakers, party officials, dependents of rich patrons, idle wealthy, almost anything but working men and women.

After much talk they agreed upon a general strike for Oct. 8 [1919]. The nation may sleep quietly. Shakespeare told the world long ago that "calling spirits from the vasty deep" did not always bring them. Calling general strikes is a harmless amusement, when the callers are like these. It

is hard to tell just what product would be decreased if all these stopped “working.” There were many phrase-makers there, but few machine makers. There were plenty of builders of platforms, but few of houses. There were countless producers of hot air, but few coal miners.

Meeting as a political party to speak for the most numerous class in society in the largest democracy in the world, they agreed in ridiculing democracy, sneering at the rule of the majority, and approving a “dictatorship of the proletariat.” This particular aberration was perhaps natural where a large percentage of the delegates were natives of autocracies who had never troubled themselves to learn the workings and the possibilities of American democracy.

Such topsy-turvy doctrines are revolutionary only as the whirlings of a top are revolutionary. They are dangerous only if reactionaries succeed in maintaining an industrial autocracy and blocking progress through democracy.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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