
Albany's Action is Black Spot in Nation's History

by P.A. Adler

Staff Writer for *The Star*

Published in the *Minnesota Daily Star* [Minneapolis], v. 1, no. 30 (Sept. 22, 1920), pp. 1-2.

One need not adhere to American history for a precedent to the political outrage committed by the New York legislature in expulsion of the Socialist members for the second time, because of their being Socialists.

In searching for similar cases in European countries historians refer to the 17th and 18th Centuries. Even the first expulsion of the 5 Socialist representatives from the New York Assembly last March was not quite so cynical, not so criminal from a purely legal point of view, as the act committed by the New York politicians of both old parties yesterday.

For Political Views Only.

The 5 members of the New York Assembly were expelled, not because of any crime that they committed or had in mind to commit against the American nation, but simply because of the fact that their political views were not in accordance with the views of the Republican and Democrat assemblymen of New York. The allegation advanced last spring that the Socialist assemblymen had been elected on a platform that is absolutely inimical to the state of New York and of the United States could not be advanced this time because of the changes which the Socialist platform has undergone since then. Unreasonable as the arguments advanced by the Assembly last spring may have been, even this bit of legal logic could not be

advanced now, as was pointed out by the leaders of the minority Republicans and Democrats who, though conservative, nevertheless have not lost their sense of decency and their faith in representative government.

No Legal Ground.

Thus Assemblyman Amos M. Martin, Republican, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, pointed out that since there is nothing in the revised constitution of the Socialist Party that is not in accordance with the constitution of the United States, there is no legal ground for expelling the Socialists; furthermore, he said, there was no personal guilt attached to any of the Socialist assemblymen. Minority Leader Donohue pointed out similarly that changes in the constitution of the Socialist Party rendered it legally impossible to expel the Socialists.

"They have complied with all the provisions of the constitution and I am going to take the opinion of the counsel who acted for the Judiciary Committee. If you don't seat these men you violate the principles upon which the American government has progressed," said Donohue.

The Way They Voted.

It is needless to say that the opinion of the Judiciary Committee and the argument of con-

stitutionality were unheeded by politicians of the Republican and Democratic parties. Of the 149 assemblymen, 90 voted for the expulsion of the 3 Socialists, and 45 for seating them.† The 5 Socialists and 9 absent members did not vote.

Of the 90 votes for the suppression of Socialism in the United States by political force, 73 were Republicans and 17 Democrats. Only 28 Republicans and 17 Democrats were in favor of seating the 3 Socialist delegates acted on first.

Attempt at Revolution.

Viewed from a broad political standpoint this vicious act of the New York politicians is nothing less than an attempt at a revolution in the political life of the United States and may bring significant political changes in the life of America. The principle of expelling political opponents from the government by a majority vote, if accepted, must bring death to representative form of government. As Senator Borah pointed out:

“The Republicans could exclude every Democrat, and the Democrats could exclude every Republican at every opening of Congress on any such proposition, if the Vice President should call before him a man who had been elected and say to him, ‘Your views are inimical to what I consider the best interests of the United States and the state from which you come.’ The Vice President would have just as much right to say to that senator presenting himself to take an oath as the speaker of the legislature of New York had the right to say it to those Socialists. If you deny men the right to effectuate their purposes and their plans through the ballot box, you invite them to violence and lawlessness.”

†- Owing to their purported greater culpability exposed during the Judiciary Committee's trial of the 5 Socialists earlier in the session, the admission of Louis Waldman, August Claessens, and Charles Solomon was considered and voted upon first by the new York Assembly on September 21, 1920. The trio were denied seats on a 90-45 vote. The seating of Samuel DeWitt and Benjamin Orr was then considered, and the pair were approved by a vote of 87-48. DeWitt and Orr refused to take their seats in solidarity with their banned comrades, however.

Where Act Leads.

Similar complications that may result from application of this principle to American political life have been pointed out by Rev. John A. Ryan of the Catholic University at Washington, editor of the *Catholic Charities Review*. Condemning the act of the New York Assembly as the “most brazen and insidious political outrage,” Father Ryan pointed out that if the Socialists could be excluded from the New York Assembly merely because of their political faith, Catholics could be excluded from legislatures in southern states where “equally bigoted majorities” are hostile.

Consequences, even more grave than these suppositions are likely to come as a result of this revolutionary step by the Republican and Democratic politicians; consequences closely connected with the history of Socialism and with recent developments in the international Socialist camp.

Basis of Socialism.

It must be remembered that socialism started originally as a communistic doctrine advocating confiscation of property; it was only after some time that the modern theory of political socialism, based upon participation in the current political life of the nation with a continuous striving at a program of social and political evolution and a series of reforms was advanced by the Marxian Socialists.

This tendency, the “minimum program,” as it is called by strict German Marxians, has proved to be one of the most beneficial factors in the political development of Europe in the last 50 years. It may be said without the least exaggeration that

nearly every reform movement passed during this period effecting the labor class and the majority of people in Europe, had been advocated by Socialist theorists at least 20 years before it had become a law.

Effects of Socialism.

Workmen's compensation, the 8-hour day, even the principle of self-determination of nationalities and the League of Nations had all, at one time or other, been the dreams of Socialistic idealists. Socialism has thus formed an important factor in the course of peaceful reform of the world. No wonder that at the time of the outbreak of the world war Socialists formed the majority parties not only in the lower houses but also even in the cabinets of many a country in Europe.

Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviki think that the parliamentary practice of the Socialists has been a failure. The Third International advocates an open social revolution as opposed to the old practice of political evolution. Parliamentarism is a political joke, claims Lenin. It tends to demoralize the workingmen; when it comes to a real

social issue nothing can be gained through mere participation in parliamentary discussion. The situation invariably resolves itself to so-called revolution.

Throughout World.

Labor movements throughout the world are now undergoing a process of inner division on the problem of parliamentarism. In France, Mexico, Italy, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and many other countries, the workmen have adopted Lenin's view, rejected Socialism and have become Communists. Up to the present American Socialists have not lost their hopes in parliamentary government. They have stood for reform instead of revolution.

The step taken by the New York politicians in unseating the Socialists may force them to change their views and adopt a more radical course. The old truth that the stupidity and intolerance of conservative politicians is the most influential factor in spreading Bolshevik propaganda may soon find another proof in the act of the New York Assembly.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing Corvallis, OR, 2009. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.