
As to the “Marxian Trunk” of the Party

by William Z. Foster

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If there is one thing in this discussion more than another that gives me a gentle pain it is the high and lofty air of intellectual superiority assumed by the leading comrades of the minority. This is a hangover from the reign of Comrade Pepper. At that time it was quite the mode for the “intellectuals” of the minority to ridicule with disdain the efforts of the merely proletarian members of the CEC, as expressed by the various theses, statements, etc., which they submitted. This practice, which was ill-fated for those following it, we thought had passed. But the party discussion shows that it is still the fashion with the minority leaders.

In how many articles do we find this anti-Communist attitude permeating their arguments. With what assurance they brag of being the only bonafide Communists in the party, that they are the Marxian trunk of the organization. That is the burden of their whole song. Now, nauseating though such an attitude may be, it has at least one advantage for the comrades of the minority to praise themselves so highly as Marxists. If they did not tell us of this Marxism, it could not be known otherwise. Certainly no one would discover much Marxism in their advocacy of a “class” farmer-labor party to “fight the battles of the working class.” The fact is not a single one of the minority leaders, despite their ceaseless bragging, has ever written anything which would from a Marxian point of view attract a moment’s notice outside of our party. This is true also of the most outstanding

“Marxist” among them, comrade Wicks, who but a few weeks ago was urging the Left Wing printers to vote for the Gomperite, James Lynch.

Now what is there to this endless claim of the minority, who never cease blowing of their Marxism, that they are the only element fit to direct the policies of the Workers Party? Fortunately we have a little something to go on in this respect. This question, too, has been passed upon by the Comintern. It was when the last delegation was in Moscow to get a decision upon the moot question of the “third party alliance.” It came about this way: Comrade Pepper, on behalf of the minority, carried on a vicious campaign of misrepresentation to discredit the present CEC as a lot of syndicalists and opportunists. In this campaign he was militantly, if not very effectively, assisted by other members of the minority, who sent to Moscow the most bitter series of letters it has ever been my unhappy lot to encounter in a revolutionary organization. The writers not only gave the most glowing accounts of their own revolutionary activities, but they assailed the majority from every point in the compass, and from many that the compass never heard of.

After this big barrage, which was hoped would smash the majority’s poor defenses to the ground, Comrade Pepper drew up his army in full array and made a frontal attack upon the present CEC by demanding that the Comintern remove it from power. Although so badly discredited by the convention, he demanded that the party be

turned over to the tender mercies of the minority. He asked that the minority be given 4 additional members on the CEC, full control of *The Daily Worker*, and other measures calculated to place the minority fully in control of the party. Incidentally, as a sort of good measure, he demanded that our unemployment and other policies be reversed.

Now here was the issue squarely placed. The question of the fitness of the two groups was fairly in question. And the Communist International was to judge. On the one side, as our minority comrades would have it, there was the splendid "Marxian trunk" of the party (which was incidentally the author of the August thesis, the third party alliance, and every other opportunistic move for the past 3 years) and on the other side, the present CEC of "syndicalists" and "opportunists" and "non-Marxists." The fate of the party was at stake. If the party were turned over to the minority, all would be roses and progress; but if it were turned over to the majority, everything would be lost.

And what was the Comintern's decision? How did it choose between the two groups? We all know that the CI is a real international and that it does not hesitate to reorganize a Central Executive Committee in any country if such action is necessary in order to put the party involved back into Bolshevik control. Now if the claims of the minority were true the duty of the Comintern would have been clear, and we know it would have performed that duty relentlessly by removing the present CEC from power. But the Comintern refused to do this. Somehow it failed to get the point that the minority were the only Communist, Marxian branch in our party. Possibly it may have

though there were just as good Communists and Marxists among the majority. But at any rate, and this is the big thing, the Comintern rejected the demands of Pepper — giving the minority a sharp censure, incidentally. It not only maintained the CEC in power, but it expressed confidence in the present majority. This expression of confidence was later reiterated by Comrade Zinoviev at the 5th Congress [June 17-July 8, 1924]. Let the decision of the Comintern on their demand for control of the CEC be the answer to the eternal bragging of the minority of their Communist superiority.

No, the Comintern did not reject all of the minority's demands. There was one that it granted, and in this we joined; viz., that the Pepper-Ruthenberg and Cannon-Foster groups be amalgamated. In making this demand the minority showed the hypocrisy of their whole case. If the majority were such non-Communists and syndicalists as the minority said they were, why did the latter want to amalgamate with them and thus possibly poison their own purity? Maybe, in the goodness of their hearts, they were willing to adopt us poor orphans. But if this was their benevolent intention the Comintern gave no encouragement to their gentle aspirations. It seemed to think the majority quite capable of sitting up and taking nourishment. The minority have learned this also during the past year. They have learned that the proletarians of the majority can at the very least hold their own with the "intellectuals" of the minority, and can puncture their opportunism quite effectively.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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