

"Now That the Referendum Is Over"

The Next Tasks for Revolutionary Socialists

by Jay Lovestone

At last the voting on the Detroit Declaration of Principles has finished. By a vote of 5,993 against 4,872 the program proposed by the "Militants" at the June convention was adopted.

We have always stressed that the significance of the whole controversy around the Declaration of Principles did not lie so much in the substance of the Declaration as in the forces accounting for the very appearance of even so inadequate and false a document from the point of view of Marxian theory, from the angle of revolutionary practice.

Objective Basis of Leftward Moods

Consequently, unlike the CP, we do not have to wash away or live down an asinine past, branding this Declaration as "social fascist." We, unlike the Daily Worker, in its mood of fervent repentance and Billy Sunday revivalism, do not have to slobber all over the "class comrades" in the SP, who voted for the Declaration of Principles. To us of the CPO the members of the SP, the workers in the ranks of the Party led by Thomas, Hoan, and Waldman were class comrades even before they voted affirmatively or negatively on this question. We can only repeat that the American Socialist Party ranks are reflecting the developments so marked in the ranks of the European Social Democratic movement. The membership of the SP is responding increasingly, tho often still confusedly, to the disasters which befell the German and Austrian proletariat, and to the victories, which have been and are being scored by the Russian proletariat. Nor has the deepening general crisis of capitalism failed to shake Social Democratic Parties to their foundation.

It is in these objective factors, it is in this subjective awakening, that the real roots of the developing leftward moods and moves in the SP are to be found. We underscore heavily the fact that no essential left turn, to be more accurate, revolutionary Marxist, doctrine, theory or practice is contained or even contemplated in the Declaration of Principles. If Marx were alive to-day, his comment on it would run something like this: "... And the different proposals may be adorned with a more or less revolutionary trimming, but the substance is always the same."*

Declaration Carried But Reformism Continues

Precisely on the questions over which the German, Austrian, and

other Social Democracies have broken their necks or paralyzed their ability to struggle and to lead the struggle to victory, does the Declaration of Principles fail to make any real advance towards revolutionary theory and practice. The basic fallacy of reformism, the dangerously false misconception of the role of the State, whether it be monarchical, democratic, or Fascist, remains untouched. It must be granted that the champions of the Declaration of Principles are not bogus democrats, but honest democrats. This means that they continue to believe that there is still a very good chance "that the walls of Jericho would fall at the sound of their martial music. Democrats always expect this miracle when they stand before the ramparts of despotism."*

In short, the Declaration of Principles becoming the basic doctrine of the SP of the U. S., does not mean in the least that the SP has broken with the reformist attitude towards the capitalist state, with the petty bourgeois worship of democracy in the abstract, with the Social Democratic opposition to proletarian dictatorship based on Soviet power, finally, with the abhorrence of armed insurrection by the working class against capitalist domination.

We would like to see it otherwise. We would like to see the move to the left in the SP reaching a much higher level at this time. However, the best of wishes are no substitute for even the hardest of reality. If one examines the appeal just issued by the SP to "unattached radicals" to join its ranks, he will find that we have not been too harsh in our evaluation. In this appeal the most forceful emphasis is placed on the following: "Goal—a peaceful revolution," and the most energetic plea is made in behalf of the revolution triumphing "in an orderly and peaceful manner." Pious wishes or piety plus wishes again, are no substitute for clear thinking, for frank facing of the facts, regardless how brutal and unpleasant these facts may be. Page Hitler! Page Dollfuss! Page Mussolini! and page our hundred per cent democratic policemen and the New Deal National Guardsmen, and the Roosevelt supported chemical gas manufacturers in the job as strike-breakers.

Fight For Revolutionary Policy Must Continue

* "Eighteenth Brumaire" by Karl Marx

So long as such illusions remain the fundamental position of the SP, so long will the SP be unable to serve as an organization working effectively "as loyal comrades in the great cause of achieving Socialism in our time." Furthermore, so long as the Declaration of Principles, or a document of its political content, is the fundamental program of the SP, that Party will not be a revolutionary party, but will continue to be essentially a reformist party—that is a party which no revolutionist can or should join. Not until the SP makes the completest conceivable break with the principles of Social Democracy and adopts in an equally complete fashion the principles of Marxism-Leninism, will the SP be worthy of the name of a genuine revolutionary party. Until such time, the Communists must do everything in their power, thru discussion and action, in truly comradely fashion and not a la Madison Square Garden to win the SP members for the only revolutionary proletarian principles—the principles of world Communism, the principles of the Communist International.

In fact, if we examine the voting on the Declaration of Principles, we will find additional evidence substantiating our evaluation. The same can be expected from an evaluation of the Declaration of Principles by its outstanding proponents and opponents. Let's look into these two factors a bit more. Wisconsin polled 1,032 votes for the Declaration and only 169 against. Obviously Wisconsin was a dominant factor in putting over this Declaration. But who in his normal, let alone best senses; in the SP, would tell us that Wisconsin, led by Hoan, is any further to the left than New York led by James O'Neal or for that matter, even by the crudest and crassest of reformers in the SP, Louis Waldman. From the published information (New Leader October 27) as to divisions in the NEC of the SP, we learn that Hoan gave lusty support to O'Neal's proposal that "negotiations with Communist organizations should not be un-

dertaken by the NEC." And still worse, even Norman Thomas, the outstanding leader and champion of the Declaration of Principles, was prepared to postpone the publication of the referendum results until after the elections. This is going a little too far, and not to the left. Don't the supporters of the Declaration of Principles really believe that it would be a great help to the SP? If they do, then why aren't they utilizing what appears to them so effective a weapon for winning over the workers to the cause of Socialism during so important a time as an election campaign: What are they ashamed of? What do they have to hide? Surely they must be at least as much for the Declaration of Principles outside the SP as they are inside, otherwise, the Declaration will remain a still-born thing about and unburied. Not exactly an inviting situation for a party that invites "unattached radicals" to join its growing ranks! What surprised us most, and not very pleasantly at that, is that on this question Comrades Daniel and Hapgood abstained.

On this basis, it becomes clear why Louis T. Goldberg, Socialist candidate in Brooklyn for the Supreme Court and law partner of Charles Solomon, notorious right winger and candidate for governor in New York, could see "no reason why we shouldn't interpret it (Declaration of Principles) as the people who supported it did, and their interpretation was not dangerous." On this basis, it becomes equally clear how Comrade Thomas could say: "There is room within the SP for considerable divergence of view on certain points, if only we will work for Socialism."

One is tempted to ask Comrade Thomas: "perhaps isn't it possible that adhering to certain points of view it becomes impossible to work for Socialism?" Would Thomas say that it is possible to work for Socialism having the views on certain points that Waldman has? However, perhaps it is unnecessary to ask this question, for Thomas goes on to tell us: "But neither the adoption or the rejection of the Declaration will of itself win America for Socialism, and that is our job." With this

we are in hearty and comradely accord.

The move towards the left in the SP has only begun. The beginning, as was to be expected, is weak, hesitant, confused. Had it not been for the Revolutionary Policy Committee being able to muster enough votes in States like Michigan, New Jersey, and Missouri, the Declaration probably wouldn't even have carried. We are convinced that very doubtful thanks are due to the RPC for this. At any rate, now that the talk and passivity occasioned by the referendum are over with, it is high time to push the struggle to the left in the Socialist Party more vigorously than ever. This can be done only thru a clear-cut fight over questions of principle, which can not be blurred or postponed for organizational reasons, petty or big. We are convinced that in this sense the fundamental task in the SP today is not the fight over posts or positions, but rather the job of educating the party membership in revolutionary Marxism.

United Front Action—Possible and Necessary

We of the Communist Party Opposition can pledge to the members of the SP our readiness to help in this work. When we say "help" we do not say it in any condescending fashion; we mean it in the best working-class and comradely sense of the word. What is more, it is not new for us to stress that we consider unity of action between the SP and Communist organizations, along with other working-class organizations like trade unions, in the immediate struggle against capitalist exploitation and oppression a most effective educator in living Marxism, which is the only revolutionary Marxism. We of the CPO, without giving up the right to criticize in a fraternal fashion without resorting to non-aggression pacts as the CP does today in its panicky flight from the infected swamps of "social fascism," without in the least giving up our independence and distinctness of organization, are prepared for such practical united action with the SP, especially in the struggle for better conditions, for better and more militant unions, and in the fight against imperialist war and fascism.

Steel Barons - True to Form