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# Discussing Hillquit's Article: Letter to the Editor of the *New York Call*, May 26, 1919.

by John J. Kallen

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Editor of *The Call*:

Permit me to express my appreciation of Comrade Hillquit's thorough, yet succinct, statement of the issues involved in our party tangle. Had others emulated his fundamental, non-personal analysis, things might be better with the party.

With the conclusion that there had better be a divided socialist house instead of one squabbling movement, I, as one with Left Wing sentiments, thoroughly agree. If cooperation is impossible, the manful alternative is an honest split, after which each side should try, as Comrade Hillquit says, to contribute its mite to socialism. That was Marx's position when Bakunin, the anarchist, tried to dominate the First International, which Marx was instrumental in wrecking when it no longer served the mission he thought it should subserve.

But, if Comrade Hillquit truly expresses the opinions of the vast majority of "non-Lefts," I see no necessity for such a split.

First let me state that I, as a Left Winger, together with many others, do not advocate the "abolition of all social reform planks" from platform and legislative programs. In so far forth Comrade Hillquit is in agreement with many Left Wingers.

And even those of the Left Wing who advocate "abolition of all social reform planks" do so

for the reason, as Comrade Hillquit states, that petty reform measures are to be condemned as sole appeals to the working class. He utters a genuine Left Wing statement, if I may call it such, without ascribing such sentiments exclusively to it, when he says:

"The petty political reform measures of the pre-war Socialists correspond to the craft organization in the economic field, and the striving of the organized workers to preserve their economic position within the industrial system of their country, and to protect it against the menace of enemy capitalists is the basis of the war patriotism of their parliamentary representatives."

Before Comrade Hillquit conceived his idea of the "Socialist Task and Outlook" he cannot deny that the Left Wing formulated the ideas he now espouses. And I make the statement cognizant and cheerful to admit that many "non-Lefts" as well took identical positions. Not craft, AF of L unions, but industrial unionism, should be the position of the Socialist Party. And many Left Wingers intend and the general aim of their "program" is exactly to expand from the mere industrial union unit, so that there is a "one working class union," as Comrade Hillquit wants.

Have we not here a basis for discussion and reconciliation? Had the "leaders" been willing to permit honest discussion in the first place, no "reconciliation" would now be necessary — if that is worth anything in the opinion of the "non-Lefts."

As to the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet in America “at this time”: True enough, when Comrade Hillquit composed his article the extremist Left-Winger didn't expect either to hit our shores.

If Comrade Hillquit will examine the 13 paragraphs of his article, he will see that he himself thinks that “this time” is quite near, “probably in the immediate future.” Nay, he tells us that the failure of the war “at this time” has wrought a significant change in the American workman's psychology; it is “bound to cause a reaction and revolt, and a period of unemployment and intensified exploitation will arouse the American workers from the narcotics of their own leaders' empty phrases.”

If on Comrade Hillquit's own testimony, the American “revolt” is near, why not be consistent and prepare for it with the thing he scorns as utopian and anti-socialistic? Why not, if “revolt” and awakening from hypnosis is near, prepare for the one method of steering it on the highways of socialism: namely, the “dictatorship of the Ameri-

can proletariat,” the institution of the “Soviet”?

Were the “revolt” very distant, no revision of party tactics would be necessary. But Comrade Hillquit thinks differently, but fails to see the necessity of preparedness. Or has he some other scheme than the “dictatorship of the American proletariat” when the “revolt” engulfs us? If so, we can abandon as “anti-socialistic” the former “fantasy.”

Comrade Hillquit states the position of the Left Wing exactly, and claims it should be the position of the post-bellum Socialist Party: “Propaganda in international socialism; propaganda of new class-line unionism; systematic propaganda through all methods available.” While this position is not and was not the monopoly of the Lefts, their somewhat exaggerated insistence on it was by no means an unalloyed evil.

Yours for International Socialism,

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