
The Fellowship and the Parties

by E.E. Carr

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The statement that the resolution of the 1st Christian Socialist Fellowship Conference [June 1906] at Louisville endorsing the Socialist Party was passed “only after a hard fight” is absolutely false. Every person present at the Conference at that time knows that there was not a single word of objection uttered against that resolution and not a single vote cast against it. IT WAS ADOPTED WITH COMPLETE UNANIMITY.

And, so far as I know, every member of the Fellowship who enjoys the ballot votes the Socialist Party ticket, *though this is not a test of membership in the Fellowship.*

A motion was made and seconded by those who had already expressed themselves as opposed to the name and objects of the Fellowship (see Constitution) and declared their unwillingness to become members (which should have prevented their taking part in the further business of the Conference) that the Constitution itself endorse the Socialist Party in such a manner as would have made adherence to the Socialist Party a test of membership in the Fellowship. This motion was fully debated — though so irregularly introduced — and was voted down by an overwhelming majority.

Among the reasons given against placing this requirement in the Constitution were the following:

1. The Fellowship is a propaganda society, not a political party. The place to join the Socialist Party is at the “branch,” or, if the party means

those who merely vote the ticket, at the election booth. A propaganda society, like the “Collectivist Society” and the “Commonwealth Club,” does not usually require party membership for admission.

2. While the Constitution demands Socialism and recognizes the class struggle, it was not deemed wise for the Fellowship to commit itself constitutionally to any particular party because there are two Socialist parties in the United States and two in Canada, all within our direct field of propaganda, and we wished to leave the Fellowship door open to every Socialist who believes in our objects as expressed in the Constitution. And it is expected that the Christian Socialist Fellowship will become international. *Therefore it stands for International Socialism*, which does not discriminate between Socialist parties but recognizes all.

3. The Constitution is hard to change. It is built to stay until a large majority demands its alteration. The Fellowship expects to endure and do its work in spite of all factions in the Socialist movement. Even ignoring the Christian Socialists in the SLP and in Canada and those who had not identified themselves with any party, *which we were unwilling to do*, we did not forget that the Socialist Party is quite young, that there are strong factions, and that some leading Socialists still doubt the permanency of our present party organization. Therefore the conference at Louisville thought it best to build the constitutional foundation of the Fellowship so deep and high that no

factional contests or party changes could destroy it.

The Christian Socialist Fellowship stands for SOCIALISM — first, last, and all the time. *It does not presume to know just what political organization will effect our emancipation.* Political parties change like the leaves of the trees. PRINCIPLES ABIDE FOREVER. We have grounded the Fellowship on principles that will outlast all parties.

In the United States the chief political exponent of our principles is the Socialist Party, therefore, as nearly all, if not all, our members affiliate with it, and as the Socialist Party bids fair to become permanent, we very naturally express our adherence to it by resolutions which express our present approval. But we are not so foolish nor so hypocritical as to pretend that we would adhere to it if it became too narrow, forsook the principles of Socialism, or adopted methods of failure.

The Christian Socialist Fellowship is rooting deep and growing fast and bids fair to help largely in arousing the people for the glorious revolution which shall realize the highest dreams of saints and sages for humanity, that shall bring real liberty and peace, real prosperity and Christianity to all men.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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