
Letter to N. Lenin from Arnold Petersen, January 15, 1921.

Copy in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 87, l. 1-26.

January 15th, 1921

To Nicolai Lenin,
Premier of Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia.

Dear Comrade:

The Socialist Labor Party of America extends its fraternal greeting to the Soviet Government and the Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia. Breathlessly we have followed your manly and heroic struggle against internal and external foes, arising ever from two camps that are really one, namely the imperialists and reactionaries of every nation, and their conscious or unconscious allies, the Social Patriots who are able to dupe and misguide masses of the Proletariat of all lands by their "Socialistic" pretences. Many a time it has appeared as though the forces against you were overwhelming, but again and again you have aroused the slumbering energy of the Proletariat to Herculean deeds, to the dismay of an astonished and ever more demoralized foe. We now firmly believe, and congratulate you upon the fact, that the Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia is firmly established among the nations of the world, a beacon lighting the way to a new era in human history. May your success in solving your tremendous internal problems be as complete as hitherto been your success in checking your enemies in arms.

Another Task.

Another task also has fallen, if not exactly on Soviet Russia, certainly on its leaders, on the "Bolshevik" Socialists, on the Communist Party of Russia. Historic events have thrown into your hands the present leadership of the Socialist forces of the world. More than a decade before the outbreak of the World War, a

steady degeneration was foreshadowed in the Socialist International. The Socialist Labor Party of America for more than a decade had earned the undying hatred of the foremost leaders of the Second International, because fearlessly and in an outspoken manner it pointed out this degeneration along with approaching foreshadowed disaster. Needless to say that it was nothing more occult than our sound Marxian position which enabled us thus accurately to prognosticate coming events. The Socialist Labor Party stands today exactly where it has stood all these years, with Marx for our guiding star, "no compromise" for its slogan, and the materialist conception of history and the Class Struggle for its foundation.

The World Socialist movement has entered a new era. To the Russia Communist is given the leadership in pulling the movement out of the mire of reform and reorganizing it on the sound basis of Marxism, i.e., on a revolutionary basis. But we know that you, at least, Comrade Lenin, recognize that Russia herself, before she can truly take her place in the foremost ranks of Socialist Reconstruction must first solve the tremendous economic problems which autocracy left unsolved and which capitalism has solved for nationals like England, and even more particularly for America. We know that you are absolutely free from illusions on this subject. We have a marvelously analytic speech of yours on "The Third International and Its Place in History" in which the following occurs:

"For the present — naturally only for a short period — the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat and the International has passed to the Russians, just as it was held during the nineteenth century now by the English, now by the French, and finally by the Germans.

It has often come to my mind to say: From the point of view of the developed countries it was easiest for the Russians to commence the great proletarian revolution, but it will be harder for them to bring it to a victorious conclusion, from the point of view of a Socialist society."

DeLeon always held, and the Socialist Labor Party held with him, that because of its high and untrammelled capitalist development and because of its strategic position, far removed from European entanglements and situated on the highway between the East and the West, the United States of America was destined for the leadership of the Socialist Revolution. Be that as it may, Comrade Lenin, we are firmly convinced of, and extremely desirous of impressing upon you, the importance of the United States of America in the events which are already casting their shadow before them. For the present of permanently — it matters little which — you are entrusted with the leadership of the movement; you hold the reins during the reorganization of the Socialist forces. You look across to the United States; you see the proletarian forces scattered and driven before the wind — economically and politically speaking — you see a pitifully small revolutionary movement, and, moreover, you perceive those who call themselves revolutionists divided into several camps bitterly fighting each other, accusing each other of treachery, stupidity, cowardice, and what not. Under such circumstances your conclusions may easily be that this country and this apparently pitiful movement may well be ignored for the present at least. Or you might easily — and quite excusably indeed — give ear without further weighing of the evidence to the loudest declaimers of revolutionary phrases and protestations. Keen as you, comrades of the Communist Party of Russia, appear to be on matters Russian and continental European, so entirely different is the situation and conditions which surround the revolutionary movement in this country that irreparable mistakes might easily, and in good faith, be made by anyone attempting to judge causes, effects, and manifestations from a distance.

The Socialist Labor party, convinced that it holds now, as it always has held, the position of outpost of the Revolutionary Movement of America, trusting to your perspicuity, has decided to lay before you a number of facts relating to conditions of the movement here, hoping thereby to make you realize, above all, the importance of extreme caution in dealing with the movement of this country.

The Socialist Labor Party and the Third International.

The Socialist Labor Party upon repeated occasions has officially expressed unqualified satisfaction and endorsement of the launching of the Third International by our Russian comrades — the only ones who in the chaotic condition of the world could have done so — at the moment when they did. We recognize it as a highly strategic move, which for all times deprived the Social Patriotic gang, masquerading at Berne, of the pretence of speaking for the Socialist movement or the World Proletariat. It has been an extreme satisfaction to us that at first historic meeting the Socialist Labor Party of America could be and was fraternally represented by Comrade Boris Reinstein. However, as Comrade Reinstein remained in Russia, identified with your movement and necessarily cut off from ours, and moreover as all communication between us was entirely cut off, this representation could naturally be only fraternal and for that first meeting only. The question of organic affiliation with the Third International has never faced the Socialist Labor Party — in our opinion could and should not have faced us. There has been no vote taken upon the matter, pro and con. We wish to emphasize this fact in view of stupid and baseless rumors set afloat about our “withdrawal” from the Third International. At our last Convention, May 1920, we had before us a report that the IWW had been particularly invited to membership which, for reasons you may not fully appreciate, was decidedly nauseating to us. We knew further that the various divisions of so-called “communists” in this country were claiming special relationship with the Third International and were, probably, being looked upon in Russia as the only real and true brand of United States revolutionists. We surmised that the bourgeois SP was going to apply for membership, because we know only too well that the SP needed the Third International as a fig-leaf with which to cover its bourgeois nakedness, yes, not only its nakedness, but the foul running sores of compromise with capitalism and betrayal of the proletariat with which its whole foul body was infected. In its present stage of dissolution we know this to be its only hope. Evidently there was to be an American race to touch the magic wand of the Third International, and whoever touched first

would presumably be healed of all its putrid sores and be pronounced the real revolutionists. The Socialist Labor Party had no reason for entering that race. There was no immediate needs for it to touch the magic wand. Moreover, we know that for the present, and we do not know how far in the future, our “endorsement” could be a paper endorsement only, that could have little or no effect on the progress of events in Russia, but which, considering the home relationships we might thereby enter into, might well have lasting and serious effects on the movement in this country. In this relation we cannot afford for a moment to compromise our position, so certain are we that great consequences might follow therefrom. Furthermore, we are convinced that our first and all important duty at this moment is to the movement in this country; that if we succeed, as we certainly hope to do in the near future, in launching a powerful movement on sound SLP principles, we shall have done the greatest service we could possibly do to the Russian Revolution, as well as to ourselves and the world movement. Let us emphasize, however, the desire expressed in our Convention Resolution on the Third International, to appear before that body as applicant for admission in the near future, making clear our revolutionary position and activity. Indeed there is no doubt that every member of the party hopes that the SLP may be able to have a delegation at a very early meeting of the Third International.

General Position of the Socialist Labor Party.

Since the time we heard personally through John Reed that your attention had been called to, and your interest aroused by, the work of the SLP, particularly the works of Daniel DeLeon, we have tried repeatedly to send you copies of these works and other literature. Whether any of this has reached you we have absolutely no means of knowing. Be this as it may, we are sure that you know something, perhaps much, of the general position of the SLP — at least the SLP of pre-war times. To besmirch and belie the SLP has always been the favorite stock-in-trade of every vulture that preys upon the revolutionary movement. The present time is no exception. Lies and innuendoes are being circulated far and wide, in Europe as well as in this country, and most certainly in Russia, particularly is it

said that the SLP has struck a posture of compromise. Some day we hope to face our calumniators internationally as we have more than once faced them at home and forced them to the wall in every encounter. For the moment, however — returning to a definition of our position later in this statement — let it suffice to assure you that the Socialist Labor Party stands where it always stood, an uncompromising, Marxian, Socialist Party, demanding, propagating, and organizing for the unconditional surrender of capitalism. No reform measures disfigure our program; no immediate demands or palliatives disgrace or weaken our platform. On the principles of Marxian Socialism, on the policies which condemn Social Patriotism, trading with the enemy, logrolling, and parliamentarizing with capitalism, the SLP of America is entirely in harmony with the Third International.

The Socialist Party.

Unnecessary as it may appear we are going to spend a few sentences here upon the history and present position of the Socialist Party of the United States. The assertions we make have been amply proven in the WEEKLY PEOPLE, our official organ, in a series of articles, intended for the purpose of satisfying Mr. Morris Hillquit’s demands for proofs of the Third International’s assertion that he is a “traitor” and an “agent of the bourgeoisie.”

The Socialist Party of the United States came into being (first as the Social Democracy) in 1900 out of the combined elements of the seceders from the SLP (seceders who insisted upon traducing Marxian economics and defending the fakirdom of the American Federation of Labor), the Debs colonization group, and the Wisconsin Social Democracy. The Social Democracy, like its successor the Socialist Party, threw itself instantaneously and with vigor into “practical politics.” The immediate reform demands of its platforms, local and national, grew ever more varied and numerous, until at the present time these platforms consist of nothing else. So far from Socialism are these demands that repeatedly clever capitalist politicians (notably the Roosevelt Progressives) have walked off with whole armfuls of the Socialist Party’s strongest planks — throwing the poor SP into consternation and lamentations. Fakers and freaks, which were con-

stantly repelled by the SLP, infested the “movement” through the open door of the SP making, indeed, of Socialism a hissing and a byword among all clear thinking workers. As local political “victories” commenced to crown the SP efforts, petty local politicians — necessarily the meanest and the hungriest, the rest having fields of clover in the old parties — flocked to the SP standard in hope of pelf and booty, which was often forthcoming, too. All manners of “intellectuals” came “home to roost” in the SP — “natural born editors,” preachers without a pulpit, lawyers without clients, lecturers, writers, etc., etc. Naturally this party grew apace for a while. The capitalist press boomed it — some no doubt merely in search of new sensations, but, we never doubted the fact, that many of the shrewder journals recognized the SP easily as a caricature of Socialism and found it advantageous to boom it. The worst about the SP was that being in the public eye, it was looked upon as THE Socialist movement, and hence continually attracted a young, active element sincerely desirous of Socialism and it instantaneously proceeded to and generally succeeded — as DeLeon so graphically put it — in gouging out the brains of these young people. The fact is — in the words of Robert Minor, himself one of the “unfortunates” — the SP “built up a gigantic machine for lying about Socialism.” The “Socialism” of the SP has been fitly designated as the “57 varieties.”

That such heterogeneous elements could form anything like a solid organization was, of course, impossible. Corrosion was continually going on; large bodies would break away whose places were sometimes replaced, sometimes not. Thus, matters kept worrying along, until the bombshell of the World War ripped the SP from stem to stern.

At this time it becomes necessary to mention the name of Eugene V. Debs. You have no illusions concerning Messrs. Berger, Hillquit, Spargo, etc., but Debs somehow is considered “different.” Nobody appears willing to dispute Debs’ “honesty” and “saintliness” of character. Let his honesty and saintliness go for what they are worth, certain it is that Debs is the weakest of men, and weakness in a revolutionist may be charitably considered only a little less culpable than conscious treason. Debs has proclaimed himself an industrial unionist against the policy of the SP and been thoroughly repudiated, even punished for it (in

1916 by being deprived of the presidential nomination); Debs has upon occasion after occasion taken the field against the avowed and declared policy of his party. But though he knew, as he himself put it in his last acceptance address, that the party was getting to be “more and more a party of politicians instead of workers,” he suck to this dishonored and dishonorable party, lending such prestige as went with the name of Debs, to build up this foe of the American working class. Why? Did he hope to reform the party from within? Scarcely, being fully aware that it was getting worse year by year! But in the SP he had “intellectual” friends, admirers, flatterers, and always awaiting him, a fifty dollar a night lecture platform. Comrade, if this be revolutionary honesty, then we are willing to give Debs the benefit of the doubt, but let it be emphatically understood that it is not “honesty” according to SLP standards.

In Atlanta Penitentiary on Mary 29th, 1920, in his acceptance address Debs expressed his dissatisfaction with the SP platform and sundry of the declarations of the late convention; he declared he was fully aware that the SP is “developing into a party of politicians instead of a party of workers” and added that he himself “would not do or say anything to catch a vote for the sake of that vote,” and yet on October 3rd under the pressure of the SP campaign committee (“the politicians”) that visited him in prison, Debs gave out the following statement:

“We are going to emerge from the biggest thing, politically in America. Then we are going to organize. Then we are going to have center of the stage. I am so confident of a great vote that I would like to be out next fall solely to go on an organizing tour for the Socialist Party.

“I am assuming that we will pull a very considerable vote. WE MUST EXPLOIT EVERYTHING THAT CAN GET US THE BIG VOTE.” (Caps ours).

And with all this and much more, for some inexplicable reason, Debs is perceived as with a saint’s halo about his head at home and abroad. It is safe to say that had it not been for this Debsian halo, and that piece of inexplicable capitalist politician stupidity of the Albany expulsion of the SP Assemblymen (which created another “martyr’s wreath” around the SP brow), the SP would have sunk nearly into oblivion at the last election. The road to Hell, so it is said, is paved with good intentions. Admitting Debs’ “good

intentions,” they certainly are productive of nothing more constructive than paving stones to the hell of defeat of a true Socialist movement in the United States.

But, even with such splendid SP campaign material as Debs’ martyrdom and the Albany sensation, the SP vote-catching bubble may practically be said to have burst. Confidently they expected 3,000,000 votes. They received barely 900,000, i.e., only 17,858 more than the Debs vote of 1912, and that in spite of a greatly increased electorate due to the enfranchisement of women. This is, indeed, a disaster of disasters for a party whose only stock-in-trade is vote-catching. Add to this that possibly much over 50 percent of the presidential vote is purely a protest against the unjust imprisonment of Debs, a fact which is plainly perceptible by a comparison everywhere with state and local votes, except for the Assemblymen in New York, and even here they fell flat of reelecting more than two of those expelled. Plainly the SP is “burst.” It is sick and it looks it. Confidently we may say that our hardest battle with this particular species of fraud is over. We shall have others, no doubt, and many of them. But as we hope to show that the SLP is far better equipped for the struggle than it was in 1900.

Our “Burlesque Bolsheviki.”

We have now come to a chapter infinitely harder to approach, as we feel that in what we say we will scarcely meet sympathy and perhaps not even understanding from you. We shall speak plainly, however, without the slightest circumlocution, leaving it to the future to prove whether we are mere fanatics or impossibilists or whether we know the ground upon which we stand and have a clear perception of things whereof we speak. This chapter concerns the so-called Communist groups or “parties” of this country.

The great wonder-workers, the World War and the consequent Russian Revolution, were responsible for finally ripping the SP from center to circumference. A “left wing” arose, unable any longer to bear with SP reformism and opportunism. This left wing included at the time every foreign federation — except the Finnish, which remained in the SP until within the last couple of weeks and was the mainstay of the SP financially during the last campaign. At first there

were many rumors of this “left wing” approaching the SLP, it being openly admitted that there was no middle way and no room for another party. If such desire actually existed it was beyond a doubt skilfully maneuvered against by Mr. Louis C. Fraina and his supporters, Fraina knowing only too well that he stood no more chance in the SLP than the proverbial snowball in Hell. The gentleman is too well known. To start with Mr. Fraina maneuvered — we say deliberately maneuvered — to split the unfortunate “wing” into two parts, by remaining in the SP “until next convention,” when the biggest part of the wing had already flow away from the bird. The further splitting into four or five parts we shall not attempt to explain — indeed, we do not understand the operation ourselves. Suffice it to say that the organization of two “communist” “parties” resulted, the “Communist Party” and the “Communist Labor Party,” neither of them a party in the true sense of the word, and both practically non-political in character. Since then, after the raids and persecutions, and after the two “antagonistic” leaders, Messrs. Reed and Fraina had flown the coop, we understand they have united secretly and underground in a so-called United Communist Party. So much for its history, now for the thing itself.

These “communists,” when they once broke loose and started on a “free and independent” course of action proved themselves the grandest imitators outside the patent medicine game. Nothing would do that did not smack of Russia, for was not Russia the only r-r-real r-r-revolutionary country in the world! Phrases were adopted from the Russian; Russian acts and activities had to be strictly adhered to whether they fitted into time and place or not. So utterly funny and out of place was this continuous and solemn imitation of Russia that the WEEKLY PEOPLE fittingly dubbed them “The Burlesque Bolsheviki,” a designation which appears to have come to stay. The Russian revolutionists at a certain psychological moment had resorted to “mass action.” Enough, our Burlesque Bolsheviki had to resolve them and there to “mass act”; without a “mass” anywhere in sight to “act” with. Russia had established the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, so here they had to resolute for a dictatorship without a thought to the fact that the only “organized proletariat” is that bulwark of capitalism, the AF of L, and without considering that the first and foremost prob-

lem that confronts the revolutionary forces of America is the education and organization of the American working class, under the conditions which confront us in this country. Any number of things could be quoted as to this childish imitation, and predilection for repeating meaningless and undefined phrases because of their "revolutionary" sound. It is you, Comrade Lenin, who has given us several excellent expressions which fit our "Burlesque Bolsheviki." These people when they are honest are "enamored with the revolutionary phrase"; they are "ill with revolutionary itch"; so ill that they "organize armies by phrases and exclamations" and were ready to start "a revolutionary war on phrases" which, indeed, in this country has proven "water to the mill of the bourgeoisie."

But if the performances of this gentry had been pure burlesque we might have considered that a kind providence sent them to us as a recompense for other troubles, thinking we needed a laugh, but the case is not so simple.

The "Communists" with their crazy and rattle-brained phraseology — how much of it was made in the Department of Justice we shall probably never know — was a godsend to the Bolsheviki hunters and revolution suppressors of the Government and the hysterical part of the "general public," egged on by the reptile press, of course. The old fashioned anarchist scare had died an ignoble death long ago. The IWW bogeyman was nearly played out; there was absolutely not a smell left of it east of Chicago; besides it was not "Bolshevik" enough to appeal to the most up-to-the-minute imagination. The "communists" filled the bill to a nicety. The charge has been made, and never satisfactorily refuted, that the phrases in the communist platform which served as the basis for raids, indictments, and persecutions of thousands of innocent workers, were written by an agent of the Department of Justice. You know, comrade, how utterly impossible it generally is to prove matters of that kind which nevertheless are firmly believed, not to say clearly understood. All we can say today is: If those phrases were not dictated by a Palmer agent they could not have served their purpose better if they had been — hence must have been dictated by a fool, and so big a fool that, that his foolishness is criminal indeed in a revolutionary sense. Let the suffering of thousands of workers and the injury done the movement cry out against

such folly and crime! That the Communist parties were honeycombed with police spies is certain. The trial in Boston brought out among other facts that mass meetings were staged by government agents on one and the same night in dozens of cities in order to make the raid sudden, sure, and sensational.

The capitalists and the police having used it for its purpose successfully, it seldom or never finds its way into the press anymore. What petty remnant is left of it has crawled underground entirely — for was not the Russian Revolution organized underground? No other reason can possibly exist — at the present moment — for a secret revolutionary organization in this country. The fundamental laws of this country recognize the right to revolution and the right to propagate revolution, and until the capitalists have entirely smashed those laws, which they neither dare nor can smash without smashing themselves, the thing to fight for is our RIGHTS to educate, agitate, propagate, and organize in the open. The task before us is tremendous enough even when we have a chance to reach the million mass in the open, at halls, at street corners, in shops, mines, mills and factories, without making it an impossible one by pretending that the message must be whispered from man to man, and handed about in the shadow of the dark. The humor of the situation — if humor it be — consists in the fact that the police with their agents are fully aware of every move made. The only class of folks which they succeed in hiding from is the workers, which, to tell you the truth, is possibly the best thing this "noble" "communist" "party" has ever done.

The Industrial Workers of the World.

Here is another organization that has run its course and run to seed by confounding "revolution" with "riot." Starting out brilliantly and promisingly in 1905, it soon became the target for attack by every reactionary, and after three years of unequal struggle it was captured by an anti-political, virtually anarchist element, when the pro-political and sounder portion withdrew and formed what is now known as the Workers International Industrial Union. Since 1908 the IWW has had a checkered career, feeding ever on sensation and hysteria. Its leaders would move from town to town, sing "hobo hymns" and if possible pull off

strikes or start “free speech” fights, the latter with the disastrous result that in nearly every western town where meetings never were prohibited before, they are now forbidden by ironclad ordinances, and the bona fide labor movement is obliged to work its way against prejudices and mistrust among every stratum of the working class. The organization, from the time it became anti-political, has been infested with police spies, and undoubtedly it was encouraged in order to make the revolutionary labor movement utterly ridiculous, and, as far as in its power stood, it has certainly succeeded. The instant the IWW dropped the political clause, DeLeon and with him every SLP speaker, warned them that as a revolutionary organization they had outlawed themselves, and further that they would someday be used as a club with which to smite the labor movement. This proved only too true during the war, when the IWW scarecrow was used as a pretext for the passage of the espionage and similar laws and to stir up mobs to riots against every form of revolutionary propaganda. The organization today is in a state of decay, not only numerically but even its “revolutionary” plumage is dropping off. Having outlawed itself as a revolutionary organization, it is dropping much of its bluster in order to be able to breathe at all. In the far West it is said to be virtually underground, passing round its literature in secret.

In the history of the communists and even more so in that of the IWW, the tactics and policies of the Socialist Labor Party certainly stand vindicated and triumphant.

The American Federation of Labor.

The following chapter we should have considered superfluous a few months ago, knowing that you have absolutely no illusions as to any possible working class characteristics of the AF of L or such leaders as Mr. Gompers. It is later reports coming in from Russia that have convinced us of the necessity of taking the matter up in this connection.

One Benjamin Schlesinger, President of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, in a series of articles in the *New York Globe* (a capitalist newspaper), about his late visit to Russia, has among other things the following to say anent an interview with you, Comrade Lenin:

“Is your organization affiliated with the American Federation of Labor?”

“Yes,” I said. “Ours is one of the oldest and strongest organizations in the American Federation of Labor.”

“Unions should and must belong to their national organizations. You probably are aware of my point of view with regard to this from my pamphlet *The Infantile Disease of Leftism*, which was translated into English.”

“Then your opinion is quite contrary to that of Daniel DeLeon, who was organizing opposition Socialist unions in America?”

“Of course, of course,” he replied.

After that Mr. Schlesinger added:

We did not enter deeply into this question. I have said already that his answer was rather diplomatic, and this evasiveness had a good reason, too: in the pamphlet to which he referred me he states, indeed, that unions must belong to their national organizations, but he lays down there instructions for guidance which are even more “Bolshevistic” than staying out of national organizations. He advises, in fact, not “boring from within,” but smashing from within.

In an address by yourself on the subject of the German communists and their relation to the old line trade unions, this same idea of the necessity of working with the trade organizations is still further emphasized. However true your statements may be in relation to Germany, let us say, and emphatically say that they do not and can not apply to America. That the Russian leaders are convinced that they do we may further conclude from the remarks of Comrade Zinoviev, in the following extract from the stenographic report of the proceedings of the Third International, August 1920:

Comrade Zinoviev, taking the floor, remarked right at the start that no compromise with the American comrades will be tolerated on the question. He said, “They consider the fight within the unions to be impossible, arguing that the leaders and the laws of these states are reactionary. But what of the bourgeois state, which they intend to conquer? Its constitution and laws are still more reactionary. Generally speaking the American and English comrades imagine that the trade union bureaucracy is a very large and ferocious beast, the reason for this attitude is that they themselves are very small and weak. Our cry must be, always with the masses, always leading the masses, always showing them the road — but never isolating ourselves from them. You say that the masses belonging to the trade unions are conservative and against you; but while these millions, these working masses are against you, with whom do you expect to make the revolution? If you follow the advice of the Anglo-American delegation and leave the trade unions you will only play into the hands of and please the Legiens, Gompers, and other traitors. We do not wish to repeat the experience

of the Paris Commune which succeeded only in perishing heroically. We want to be victorious, and this is only possible by leading the organized masses of the proletariat.”

We are not going to attempt, at this time, to answer either argument, we are simply going to continue to lay certain facts before you.

The American Federation of Labor, it is a well-known fact, was launched as a protege of the late mark Hanna, shrewdest of capitalists and political leaders, with the sinister purpose in view of smashing the radical and progressive Knights of Labor. In its lifetime of about forty years it has earned from the foremost financial paper, the *Wall Street Journal*, the fond appellation of “Bulwark of Capitalist Society” — against Socialism. That its leaders are “labor fakers” — and no exception made for Mr. Benjamin Schlesinger — we should not need to emphasize. For years these leaders have worked hand in glove with the National Civic Federation, an organization consisting of leading capitalists, leading “public” men, and leading labor lieutenants of the capitalist class. At the Civic Federation — fittingly termed, by DeLeon, “Camillus’ Temple to the Goddess of Concord” — the labor problem and labor’s grievances are “settled,” while the fakers are being dined and wined. One day’s attendance at an AF of L Convention can not fail to convince even the dullest observer that this “labor” organization, officered by agents of the bourgeoisie as surely as was the “labor army” of Imperialistic Prussia, is in fact a perfect machine into the control of which no opponent can ever hope to come, operating always excellently for the suppression of anything that savors of “labor” or labor’s true cause.

“Boring from within” is no new invention. It was done vigorously and systematically by the SLP in the early days of the movement. But the SLP, ever alert to causes and effects, soon realized that upon the “borers” themselves it had two inevitable results. Either the active “Socialist” was drawn into the control of the machine by a reward of some kind or another and then not only his “boring” became utterly ineffective but he usually became inactive and useless in the Socialist movement itself; or else, if he bored effectively, he soon bored himself out of the union, or certainly out of office and delegateship. The SLP gradually developed its present policy of “hammering (or smashing) from without and from within;” from within, of course, by

the thousands of our members and adherents who are still compelled, on account of their livelihood, to remain in the unions. But the agitation, whether within or without, has for its object the smashing of the faker-lead bulwark of capitalism and the reorganization of Labor into a true Socialist Industrial Union.

The 1899 split in the SLP was precipitated by this new policy. The SP ever stood committed to “boring from within” only, and the sickly spectacle of a Victor Berger and a Max Hayes toadying to Gompers and moving to increase his salary while pretending to “bore” Socialism into the AF of L has indeed been a sorry sight. In the late Conventions it has been Mr. Schlesinger and his fellow garment workers delegates, the “Socialistic” machinist delegation, and Mr. Duncan of Seattle, and a few others, who have been playing “Socialist” clowns for the amusement of the fakers and the representatives of the press — for were it not for the diversion of annually “wiping the floor” with “Socialism” in the persons of the “borers,” the AF of L conventions would perhaps have died of dry rot long ago.

Boring from within as a policy is today thoroughly discredited not only with the SLP but among large layers of the union men themselves. The workers are getting to recognize that the AF of L MUST be smashed. Rebellion is the order of the day. Witness the tremendous secession movement, scarcely “socialistic” even, indicated by The United Automobile, Aircraft and Vehicle Workers, The United Shoe Workers of America, The Amalgamated Clothing Workers, The Amalgamated Textile Workers, The Amalgamated Metal Workers, The Amalgamated Tobacco Workers, The Shoe Workers’ Protective Union of Haverhill, The United Carpenters, The Foodstuff Workers Federation of New York and Vicinity, The One Big Union in Canada, and now last, the United Association of Railway Employees in America, born out of the switchmen’s strike; all have come out of the AF of L.

The Socialist Labor Party in its agitation and education, and its aid in promoting the organization of the Workers International Industrial Union, is doing nothing more than marching at the head of this column, pointing the way of the workers of America toward a sound, efficient, and Socialist Industrial Union policy.

In conclusion of this chapter, let us emphasize

this point, Comrade Lenin, that there is not the slightest reason to believe that any outside influence, however powerful, is going to make the SLP throw away the fruits of its toil of a quarter of a century, and least of all at the moment when there is every indication of the mass of the workers turning in our direction. The SLP is indeed following the “DeLeon policy” of organizing opposition unions, i.e., organizing opposition to capitalist reaction.

The Socialist Labor Party.

Before entering specifically upon the work of the SLP we have a few words to say concerning conditions in this country in general, conditions which differ markedly from those of Europe in general and perhaps Russia in particular. There is no need of expatiating upon our high economic and industrial development, for these are perfectly understood by you. But concerning our political conditions and relations it may be necessary to speak.

There is a tremendous amount of discussion in certain Socialist and would be Socialist circles just now about the efficiency or inefficiency of Socialists or Communists entering into politics. Newly baked or half-baked “communists” are much inclined to be, if not anti-political, at least non-political, or so to say “neutral.” The Socialist Labor Party is POLITICAL. It not only partakes in political agitation and political elections, it BELIEVES in both and is sincere in what it practices. The United States is a “political democracy.” By that we do not only mean that the ruling class by its economic power, its ownership of the press and control of educational institutions, etc., is able to flim-flam the workers and rule by the consent of the workers’ vote. We mean far more. We mean that the vote, undoubtedly a source of mischief in the hands of ignorant men, becomes instantaneously a WEAPON in the hands of a class-conscious proletariat. What we are doing is educating the workers to use it, not as a razor with which to cut their own throat, but as a weapon of defence and offense for their own emancipation. Not everything that has arisen during capitalism is a sham and a delusion. The organization of gigantic industry is a very solid benefit, indeed. So is the ballot, for it furnishes humanity with a civilized, peaceful method of settling disputes. It is not because it is a

“capitalist ballot” but because it is even more a proletarian ballot that we have faith in it. The belief of the American — and don’t forget that the majority American is the workingman and woman — in the ballot is genuine, so genuine that in 1860, he took up arms to enforce the fiat of the ballot, lone before the economic and social issues back of it had become either clear or convincing to him. Moreover, the noblest characters in the struggles for American democracy — Lincoln, Lowell, Garrison, Phillips, and hundreds of others — have ever recognized, more or less clearly, that back of the struggle for “national liberty” there lurked the class struggle of the proletariat against capital. The best traditions of America are therefore not only progressive but *revolutionary*, while its worse side has ever been reactionary, “witch-burning,” and suppression of progressive action and thought. Hence, particularly when the reaction sets up the howl “foreigner,” there is every good reason to use Americanism to fight “Americanism.” The right to Revolution and to propagate Revolution is traditionally and “legally” ours. We mean to use these RIGHTS to the fullest, and we mean to fight for these rights when there is the slightest sign that they will be abridged, as we did during the war and are still doing. The capitalists have already been forced by “public opinion” to recede far from their arrogance of three years ago. If we had a working class even partially class-conscious or organized, indignation would go much further and deeper, though we are not simple enough to believe that the capitalists would lie down on account of it. Far otherwise and to the contrary. The struggle will be ever more bitter as the end approaches; that is why we need every weapon at our command. We are organizing the revolution legally; we will try to accomplish it peacefully, though we know only too well that the capitalists are not going to give up without the attempt of a “pro-slavery rebellion.” Hence we are organizing the economic power of the workers, the only real power, in order to be able to check the rebels.

Why is it that the Socialist Labor Party has remained numerically small all these years? To a Bolshevik leader whose party was scattered, and himself in exile, on the day of the Revolution, this question should be easily answered.

1. The general conditions of the country were not productive of a revolutionary psychology among

the workers. "Opportunity" was the country's gospel, and it is only very recently that the workers have started to realize that the opportunity to become millionaires has fled. That the only hope lies in a fundamental change, in revolution, is only very slowly dawning upon them.

2. The vicious AF of L doctrine of Brotherhood of Capital and Labor has struck deep roots and can not be pulled up in a day.

3. Socialist Party reform "Socialism" has had the public eye.

4. Ultra-revolutionists, "IWWs," and "communists" led by police agents or "private" capitalist "operatives" have made the movement ridiculous, by the aid of the capitalist press, and has run it effectively into the ground.

These are not excuses, they are facts. Against all this the SLP has unflinchingly held its ground. DeLeon was cordially hated, slandered, lied about, belittled in every shape and form while he fought and toiled, in the face of the fire from every camp, shaping the policy and tactics of the SLP. We had to be satisfied to hold our own and bide our time. This we did, ever strengthening our internal position, however, and preparing in every manner, equipping ourselves for the moment when the workers at large should be ready to listen to our message as we know that they inevitably should be in the very near future.

The last few years have worked several revolutions. The SLP is facing new conditions, which we feel sure are going to redound to the benefit of sound Socialist propaganda and organization in this country. The workers are eager for our message as never before. The notion of "isolation" from the workers because of our opposition to the old trade unionists, does not apply to the SLP. Our agitators go among the workers everywhere, organized and unorganized — and

the unorganized are the vast majority — in shop and factories, on highways and byways. Moreover we are carrying on planful and systematic agitation in great organized crafts, smashing simultaneously from without through our agitators and from within through our adherents who belong to these crafts. Notably is this the case with the miners and railroaders. This agitation is outlined in an enclosed pamphlet, *The Mines to the Miners*, which has been widely distributed. Request for such literature and for speakers are increasing apace. Our tactics are, indeed, proving a success, our position is being vindicated, our message heard.

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In conclusion we wish to reaffirm our faith in the Russian Soviet Republic. It is the beacon light for the proletariat of the world. When stout hearts fail, and otherwise clear minds falter, inspiration is gathered from Soviet Russia for a renewal of the struggle. And we also understand that as the proletariat of the world needs a Soviet Russia, so does Soviet Russia need the proletariat of the world — particularly of the Western World. The Socialist Labor Party pledges itself to do its utmost toward organizing the workers of America into Socialist industrial unions, the accomplishment of which task will, in our opinion, mean the end of capitalism everywhere else.

With fraternal greetings, we remain

Yours for the emancipation of the working class,

National Executive Committee

Arnold Petersen, National Secretary

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2005. • Free reproduction permitted.