
Enemy Outside, Not Inside:

A Letter to the Editor of the *New York Call*, April 7, 1919.

by William M. Feigenbaum †

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Editor of *The Call*:

I have hitherto taken no part in the controversy in *The Call* on the so-called “Left Wing,” waiting rather to see what it is all about.

At the beginning, I told one of the “insurgents” that never in all the many years of my party activity had I seen a controversy so causeless and baseless. The development of the discussion only confirms me in the judgment that I formed early in the fight.

The word “Left” has been historically used in our movement to designate that tendency (not faction) that is more revolutionary than another. America had its “Right” at one time. There was the Spargo-Simons-Benson element that could have been so designated.‡ But the Socialist “Right” is very largely out of the party (and a good riddance) and the main part of the party is thoroughly “Left.”

How do I know it? I know it because I know my comrades, and I know what they are thinking.

How do valiant “Left Wingers” know it isn’t so? Possibly by an inspiration from On High. Most of them are such veterans in the movement, with such a record of fully six months each (one of them who talks of the movement “we” have built up has been with us 18 months) that they must of necessity know all about us. They know that we are hidebound, reactionary,

bourgeois, and no good generally. How do they know it? From our actions? Our thoughts? Our records?

No. There is a better test. We are old-fashioned enough to care for the party that has meant so much to us. That is inexcusable to them. We have the illusive fetish of “unity” and they (or many of them) in their superior way, will have us understand that there is something better than unity. And that is, jamming down an artificial “program” at all costs — even at the cost of wrecking the movement, if they can accomplish it in no other way.

Now, this is the crux of the whole matter. What is this program? Who drew it up? Under what auspices? Is it the result of the democratic functioning of our membership, or is it not?

I personally take the “loftiest” possible stand. I not only take it in safe party meetings, but outside, where the danger lies. I may accept, for myself, many of the planks of the “Left Wing” program. But we old-time party members want to discuss things as they come. We resent the imposition upon us of a well-plotted and well-laid-out program for consideration by an outside group, many of them not members of the party, most of them too recent to understand the temper, the traditions, and the spirit of our members.

When the St. Louis convention was assembling, I met Comrade Lore on the street on his way to the

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‡- That is, a group of evolutionary social democrats with a nationalist and pro-war orientation. This group, a numerically small segment of the Socialist Party, either quit or were expelled in the first months after American entry into the European war in 1917.

train. I wished him good luck and good counsel. "No civil peace," I said, "at all costs." And he answered me, "I will work to avoid a split, if possible, but not at the cost of accepting a civil peace. We will stand for internationalism at all costs!"

And today, I feel that we must take the same stand. We must avoid wrecking the party at all costs, except at the cost of compromising the things we stand for.

If there were danger that the party might compromise, I would take a stand with my principles rather than with a party that had ceased to express those principles.

But has that time arrived?

I know my party, and I know its temper. I say that it has not.

The "Left Wing," most of whose members do not know the party and its temper, say yes.

Is this difference of opinion a sufficient basis for the wild accusations and countercharges that we are treated with today?

I think not. And the vast majority of the comrades think not.

The enemy is outside. Not inside.

Fraternally,

William M. Feigenbaum

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