A Discussion of Party Problems

By Louis C. Fraina

An Answer to Algernon Lee in a Debate Symposium Between Algernon Lee and William M. Feigenbaum, Representing the Moderates, and Louis C. Fraina and Bert Wolfe, Representing the Left Wing. Comrade Lee Refuses to have his Speech Published. Held at Arlington Hall, New York City, April 11.

OMRADES: If a stranger, unacquainted with the controversy in the Socialist Party, were here this evening he might think, from the words of opponents, that there really wasn't very much to controversy. For all that this stranger might be re, there isn't any such thing in existence as the ifesto and Program of the Left Wing of the Amen Socialist Party. In this Manifesto and Program incorporated the purposes and demands of the Left ing; and yet our opponents have not considered it his discussion, have not tried to tear to pieces that nite statement of the principles of the Left Wing. it because they cannot do it.

f the policy of the moderate Socialist may be indict- n one phrase, it is that its character is petty bour- s. The petty bourgeois hesitates, compromises, ot plant himself upon facts and accept the uncom- ising struggle. The petty bourgeois, moreover, onifies struggles and social forces. Crushed under iron march of industrial concentration, the *petite geoisie*, the middle class, does not attribute its o the force of economics but to individual malev- ice—to Morgan, or Rockefeller, or some other in- idual. The controversy on principles and tactics w agitating the Socialist Party is a product, not of e whims of individuals, but of iron necessity, the upsurge of revolutionary sentiments now trans- rming the International, and which is a product of itself. But our moderate opponents cannot or will discuss this social basis of the controversy. They sonify the struggle, and attribute it to the malev- ce of individuals. They adopt the policy of petty geois inconsistency; and instead of discussion of lamentals, they offer vituperation of individuals. y speak of an inner circle within an inner circle. nalevolent people who want control or disruption the party. Comrade Lee speaks of inside rings, about men and women who are self-seekers. The ft Wing is a mass movement, and you cannot build mass movement upon the basis of petty individual otives. Our opponents call us romanticists, and n use much harsher terms. Lenin was character- much more harshly. Liebknecht, in the news- rs of the majority Socialists, was called a neurotic, should be in an insane asylum. Will the moder- never consider fundamentals?

is becoming quite the customary thing for our erates to praise the Bolsheviki. It wasn't more n one year and a half ago that certain individuals ne party, now praising the Bolsheviki, were call- Lenin and Trotzky "anarchists."

Man in the Audience: Who are they? *Fraina*: xander Trachtenberg, for one. Get him to face nd I'll prove the charge.)

mrade Lee says that "Lenin is a realist," but we are trying to burlesque the revolution in pe. The implication is that if Lenin were in party he would not affiliate with the Left Wing—of a Socialist who has *always* been in the Left of the International! Yet there is a document h answers Lee, an official document issued less three months ago by the Communist Party of ia, the Bolsheviki. It is the call for a Commun- ongress at which to organize a new International. is call are designated the parties and groups that Communist Party invites to this Congress, and fficial Socialist Party of the United States is *not* ded: but instead the Left Wing group of the are invited. Comrade Lee says that the whole tion is based upon whether the American Revolu will break within the next few weeks or months. being a petty bourgeois Socialist, I cannot iesy: but we can prepare, we can mobilize the tariat for the revolutionary struggle against Can- n, which, while not the revolution, is a necessary aration. The problem, however, is much larger.

Bolshevik Call to an International Communist gress says:

> As a basis for the new International we consider ecessary the recognition of the following principles, hich we shall consider our platform, and which have een worked out on the basis of the program of the partacus group in Germany and the Communist party Bolsheviki) in Russia.
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> 1. The present is the period of the dissolution and ie collapse of the whole capitalist world system, hich will mean the complete collapse of European ulture, if Capitalism, with its unsolvable contradic- ons, is not destroyed.
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> 2. The problem of the proletariat consists in im- ediately seizing the power of the state. This seizure the power of state means the destruction of the state pparatus of the bourgeoisie and the organization of new proletarian apparatus of power.
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> 3. This new proletarian state must embody the ctatorship of the proletariat, and in certain places o the small peasants and farm hands, this dictator- ip constituting the instrument for the systematic erthrow of the exploiting classes and the means of eir expropriation.
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> Not the fraudulent bourgeois democracy—this hypo- itical form of rule of the finance oligarchy—with s purely formal equality, but the proletarian demo- cracy and the possibility of the realization of free- dom for the working masses; not parliamentarism, but self-government of these masses through their elected organizations; not capitalist bureaucracy, but organs of administration which have been created by the masses themselves, with the real participation of these masses in the government of the countries and in the activity of the Socialist structure—this should be the type of the proletarian state. The power of the Work- ers' Councils and similar organizations is its concrete form.
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> 4. The dictatorship of the proletariat is to com- plete the immediate expropriation of Capitalism and the suppression of private property in means of pro- duction, which includes, under Socialism, the sup- pressionof private property and its transfer to a pro- letarian state, under the Socialist administration of the working class, the abolition of capitalist agricul- tural production, the nationalization of the great busi- ness firms and financial trusts.

The New International, accordingly, with which the Left Wing affiliates, is an International which must recognize the fact that Socialism and the proletariat have definitely emerged into a revolutionary epoch, that Socialism must adapt its program and tactics accordingly, that we must prepare to organize the proletariat for the conquest of the power of the state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. To consider this problem upon the basis of whether we can guarantee the coming of a revolutionary crisis and the Revolution in a definite time is sheer dodging of the issue, a refusal to consider all actual problems of the Revolution, which is not a single act but a process of revolutionary development.

Consider a little Socialist history. After the first Balkan war broke out, an emergency International Congress was held at Basle, Switzerland. This Congress in its Manifesto, stigmatized the coming general European War as an imperialistic war, not justifiable on any ground of national interests; the war, it declared, would precipitate an economic and political crisis which Socialism should use to develop the revolutionary struggle against the war and Capitalism. But when the general European War broke out in 1914, the majority of the Socialists of Europe abandoned the policy of the Basel Manifesto. The very men who had adopted the Manifesto repudiated it. When Lenin taunted the Scheidemanns, the Plekhanovs, the Guesdes and the Kautskys with abandoning the Basel Manifesto, they replied that since the immediate revolution expected by the Manifesto upon the declaration of war had not materialized, it was not in accord with the situation. But the Basel Manifesto did not assert that revolution would come immediately upon the declaration of war. What the Manifesto did say was that a political and economic crisis would come, an objective revolutionary situation, and that it would be the task of Socialism to develop this objective revolutionary crisis into conscious revolutionary action for the conquest of power. When the revolution came in Russia, the Eberts and the Scheidemanns said: "It is out of the question that we in Germany should follow the Russian example. They are revolutionary enthusiasts." And when the proletarian revolution developed in Germany, the Eberts and Scheidemanns opposed the revolution, in this way, by the use of murderous force, proving they were right in maintaining that proletarian revolution was premature.

This question of the imminence of the revolution is not the question at all. It is the function of revolutionary Socialists to prepare for the revolution. The Bolsheviki did not spring up in Russia in 1917. The Spartacans did not spring up in Germany on November 7, 1918. You always had this Left Wing Socialism in Europe; you have had it in our own party in immature form. And the problem which confronts the American Socialist Party is: Shall our party line up with the Scheidemanns, the Longuets, the Hendersons and the Kautskys—the Yellow International—or shall we line up with the International of the Bolsheviki, the Spartacans, and the Left Wing groups of Europe?

The Socialism which developed as an organized movement after the collapse of the First International was moderate Socialism. It was a Socialism which adapted itself, which abandoned the desire to revolutionize the world. It was a national, parliamentary Socialism, representing the small bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of labor, imbued with the national spirit, part of the national liberal reform movement, depending upon social reformism and not the revolutionary struggle in order to realize Socialism—and its "Socialism" was in reality nothing but State Capitalism. This parliamentary, petty bourgeois Socialism dominated the Second International; and it broke down miserably under the test of the war and proletarian revolution.

But social conditions changed, and the character of the social struggle. About the end of the 19th century, Imperialism developed as the dominant form of Capitalism. The concentration of industry, the rivalry of the nations for new markets to which to export their surplus capital, presented new economic problems. The economic base of Capitalism narrowed; parasitism developed, and Capitalism to continue had to exploit colonial peoples. Capitalism had emerged into an epoch requiring new and more aggressive proletarian tactics. Tactical differences in the Socialist movement developed almost simultaneously with Imperialism. The concentration of industry, the collapse of parliaments, developed the concept of industrial unionism in our country and the concept of mass action in Europe. But the representatives of moderate Socialism refused to broaden their tactics, refused to adapt themselves to the new conditions. They continued with their petty bourgeois parliamentary policy, with their policy of government owenership, government control of industry, social reformism,—their policy of State Capitalism and realizing Socialism on the basis of the bourgeois state. The consequence was a miserable collapse under the test of war and proletarian revolution.

The moderate Socialist maintains that the International did not collapse; that the International did try to prevent war, but did not have the power. But the point is not that the International did not prevent the war, but that its majority parties *accepted* and *justified* the war. Is it not a collapse of the International to divide on national lines, to aid the imperialistic governments, to act against the coming of the proletarian revolution; and then, when it comes, to unite with the bourgeoisie to crush the Revolution? That is the policy of moderate Socialism, and it is against that policy that the Left Wing organizes.

But, comrades may ask, what has all this got to do with the American Socialist Party? The American Socialist Party was against the war, it favors the Bolsheviki, it is revolutionary. But if it is all that, why not accept the Left Wing Manifesto and Program? The truth is that the American Socialist Party is a party of petty bourgeois Socialism, moderate to the core, shackled with chains of iron to parliamentarism. Its opposition to the war, among the representatives of the party, was either sabotaged or transformed into a policy of petty bourgeois pacifism. It is very easy to say, "We favor the Bolsheviki;" but the important thing is to draw the implication of Bolshevism for the reconstruction of our own party.

Comrade Lee is against throwing out the immediate demands. The Left Wing has its immediate demands in the struggle, but they are demands in accord with the development of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat,—not the immediate demands comprised in cheaper milk and democratizing the bourgeois state. Social reformism is the vital issue—the moderates claim: we shall reform Capitalism out of existence! That is the policy of the Congressional Program of the party, that is the policy of our official representatives, that is the policy of Comrade Lee.

(*Man in the Audience*: Lee introduced those bills because his constituents wanted them. *Fraina*: That is how you educate your constituents. It is time to teach them something about Socialism.)

Social reformism is futile, and counter-revolutionary. It is the negation of Socialism, that policy out of which develops nationalism, social-patriotism, and the betrayal of Socialism. It is a policy that avoids all actual problems of the Revolution.

When the Russian Revolution broke, where was Algernon Lee? He was introducing social reform measures in the New York Board of Aldermen.

When the German Revolution broke, where was Algernon Lee? He was introducing social reform measures in the Board of Aldermen, and voting for a Victory Arch on which is inscribed Murmansk as a glory of the American troops.

When the American Revolution comes, where will Algernon Lee be? He will still be introducing social reform measures in the Board of Aldermen.

The old policy of our party must end, or it will become a party for the betrayal of Socialism. We must revolutionize the party. We must squarely and uncompromisingly align the party with the new Communist International, of the final struggle and victory. The party must adopt new and more aggressive tactics,—industrial unionism, mass action, proletarian dictatorship. The task of the Left Wing is to cleanse the party of moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism, to align the party with the proletarian revolution in Europe, to prepare our party for the world revolution that is coming.