

The Socialist Platform —Compounded Confusion

This is the third article on the Socialist Party convention by Jay Lovestone who covered the convention as special correspondent for the Workers Age.—Editor.

By JAY LOVESTONE*

With the intentions and spirit of the platform's criticism of the New Deal one can find little fault. Here is a sharp change and welcome relief from the first favorable estimate of the New Deal made by the S.P. three years ago. On the plus side we must also register the fact that for the first time in years a Socialist Party platform speaks of social instead of public ownership. To some this may appear to be a little thing. However, we have learned to be thankful even for the smallest moves—in the direction of progress towards Marxism, towards revolutionary socialism.

But from here we travel to the kingdom of thoroughgoing unsoundness and confusion worse confounded. The platform angrily proclaims: "Our capitalist system is also sowing the seeds of dictatorship." Only now sowing the seeds, eh? What does this mean but continued, blind faith in capitalist democracy as an instrument by which socialism can be achieved.

If anyone has any doubt as to the validity of our criticism, then, let him read on to find the platform elaborate: "The Socialist Party calls upon the workers, farmers and all advocates of social justice to join with it in its struggle to widen the channels thru which may be made peaceful, orderly and democratic progress." Well, well, what is this but the People's Front strategy, the adherence to which, on the part of the Communist Party, is now being given as a reason by the Socialist Party for not joining in a united front with it in the elections? Here we must emphatically indicate one important difference: The Communist Party, tho wrong in the notion that thru bourgeois democracy fascism can be beaten, does not believe that socialism can be achieved thru bourgeois democracy. This platform formulation leads one to the conclusion that the Socialist Party is doubly wrong—in principle as well as tactics—in regard to the historical role of capitalist democracy.

What does this mean but adherence to the Right Wing position that bourgeois democracy is not a capitalist dictatorship? Capitalism in democratic America and republican France is maintained by a dictatorship, tho the form of the latter state is different from the Fascist state prevailing in Germany, Italy and Austria. Likewise, there is no good, even plenty of harm in the platform's talk of "ending the usurped power of the Supreme Court" without frankly attacking also the power vested in the Supreme Court by our forefathers. Why doesn't the Socialist Party demand outright the abolition of this institution—the Supreme Court—dedicated to the monarchical principle in American government? Surely the Socialist Party is not animated by Roosevelt's vote-getting considerations in side-stepping the basic constitutional issue! Or, is it a matter of being more practical? Certainly, the Socialist Party leadership has no illusions about the American ruling class attitude to the Workers' Rights amendment. Then, why?

And why does the S.P. devote itself to the fantastic proposal "that farm prices be stabilized at the cost of production to the working farmer"? Why doesn't the platform demand that the govern-

ment guarantee a minimum annual income to the working farmers? Very few today deny that all price-fixing schemes are artificial and impossible under capitalism—especially of agricultural commodities. To dabble in such preposterous panaceas gives an impression of vote-catching.

"Real" Neutrality

Thus, too much is pledged and too many promises are made by the platform. For instance, isn't the demand for "the strengthening of the neutrality laws, to the end that we may ward off immediate wars while fighting for the attainment of a social order which will eliminate the chief causes of war," a meaningless proposition at best and in a most charitable sense? Does the Socialist Party have the slightest faith in the present U.S. neutrality laws as an instrument of peace? Then why does it ask merely for "the strengthening" of them? Has the Socialist Party forgotten how under the present Hull neutrality laws Uncle Sam supplied Mussolini's army with oil and barred arms shipments to Abyssinia? Really, Comrade Dr. Laidler, author of the platform, does know that the failure of the U. S. to declare an oil embargo, made it practically impossible for the European countries to declare an effective oil embargo against Mussolini's Italy. And all of this on the basis of the neutrality laws!

Again, there is no such thing as "neutrality" in a vacuum. Suppose Japan or Germany or both of them should declare war on the Soviet Union. Would Comrade Thomas, if he were president, invoke absolute neutrality towards all participants in the war? Would he propose that no food should be shipped, no ammunition should be sold, no credit should be extended the Soviet Union as well as to Germany and Japan? Is war an abstraction? Would Pres. Thomas propose to treat all three belligerents alike? Would Chief Executive Thomas have us believe that the aims and aspirations of the Soviet Union waging a revolutionary defensive war are identical with the aims and aspirations of Nazi Germany or Imperialist Japan? Of course, Comrade Thomas would never say such a thing. If not, why does he have in his platform such planks as are nailed to such untenable and impermissible conclusions, from the point of view of international working class solidarity?

"Technocracy In Our Times"

The convention, dazed with the prospect of advancing the prospect of "socialism in our times" by means of a feverish election campaign based on an all-inclusive, if not all-attractive, election platform, even went so far as to adopt in substance the hitherto frowned-upon Commonwealth Plan and to make a bow to the corpse of technocracy. It is in this spirit that the convention adopted the following from the Commonwealth Plan:

"1. An approximate doubling of the present annual production of wealth in the United States, and its distribution broadly enough to permit the American people to buy what they would produce. Assuming

no important change in the present price level, the proper use of the natural, mechanical and human resources of the United States, with the products fairly distributed, would allow each family a minimum income of \$2,500 a year, rising to more than \$4,000 a year as the plan would be put into full operation."

The above is in line with Hoan's cry at Cleveland to "try socialism on the depression." It seeks and promises "an abundance of goods and services for THE WHOLE AMERICAN PEOPLE, by means of a reorganization of the producing and distributive system along such lines as will permit their capacity operation." (Our emphasis). Here we have a specie of a regenerated, more efficient, more productive capitalism offered as a solution by a party which proudly proclaims itself as being to the left of the Communist Party! Since when are defects in productive capacity responsible for hunger and misery in present-day capitalism? Why refuse to recognize the fatal contradiction inherent in capitalism—the growing gap between productive capacity and the present possibility for consumption in our present class (not people as a whole) society? Only the most vulgar of bourgeois economists are that blind today.

And, if it is necessary to secure "an approximate doubling of the present annual production of wealth in the U. S." before we would be able to "allow each family a minimum income of \$2,500 a year," etc., then why kick so much against capitalist iniquities today? With production not yet doubled, the average annual working family income is today approximately half the \$2500. Better still, if capitalism can be so improved and reorganized on a Commonwealth Plan as to "allow each family a minimum income of \$2,500 a year rising to more than \$4,000 a year," etc. (assuming prices don't advance at all), then, why work so hard hoping and praying for its replacement by a socialist society?

Or, are we to be told that the Commonwealth Plan is synonymous with and a shortcut to socialism because, for one thing, it seeks Stuart Chase's "economy of abundance" "by means of reorganization of the producing and distributive system (our emphasis on the separation and the plural—J.L.) along such lines as will permit their capacity operations"? If the comrades of the Socialist Party will permit us, we will spare no frankness and tell them straight from the shoulder in true comradely fashion: This is shallow and shoddy reformism. It is unworthy of comrades many of whom honestly believe themselves to be militants. Such a platform is neither an inspiration nor a guide to militant working class action. It does not merit the confidence or support of class-conscious workers who want to work and fight for socialism today or even the day after tomorrow.

In this light it is entirely clear why the Convention keynoters, makers of acceptance speeches, nominators of candidates, did not say a word about Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. when they talked to the convention—with incessant repetition—about "socialism in our day," "Socialism in our times." Obviously, even in presidential campaign speeches there are no accidents of commission or omission.

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