
Our Party — Three Tendencies.

by C.E. Ruthenberg

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The discussions in the Workers Party before the last convention [Third: Dec. 30, 1923-Jan. 2, 1924] and the alignments in the convention itself have brought out the fact clearly that there are at the present time three tendencies developing within the party. It is important that the members of the party understand what these tendencies are.

It is only through frank discussion of these tendencies and repudiation of false policies that the party can be kept on the road which during the past year enabled it to make the great progress which was so signally recognized in the greetings of the Communist International to the Third Convention.

The First Tendency.

The majority of the members of our party came into the Communist Movement from the Socialist Party. It is not at all surprising that some of these members carried with them into the Workers Party some of the ideas which dominated their thinking while in the Socialist Party.

It was from the Left Wing of the Socialist Party that we inherited our membership and this Left Wing sprang up in part from the former “impossibilist” group of the Socialist Party. This group was, quite correctly, opposed to the “immediate demands” of the Socialist Party. It argued that it was impossible to achieve anything for the workers under the capitalist system and therefore the role of the party should be to carry on propaganda and education for the revolution. It offered no program of revolutionary struggles in opposition to the reformist campaign of the dominant faction of the Socialist Party. Its viewpoint was well characterized as “impossibilist,” for in effect its attitude was: Nothing can be achieved before the revolution,

so our task is merely the educational work of preparing as many workers as possible for the revolution through educational work along the line of Marxian science.

Actually this group was afraid of struggle in any form. Even the reformist struggles of the Socialist Party were an indication of life. The “impossibilists” preferred to attend branch meetings and discuss the fine points of the theory of surplus value or the materialist conception of history than to mix into the actually fighting. In the worst form this “impossibilist” viewpoint manifested itself in the “spittoon philosophers” who infested most Socialist headquarters, discussing the coming revolution but never turning their hand to help build up the force which would bring that revolution.

It is this same tendency which manifests itself today in our party in the group which argues that we are in the period of educational and propaganda work and that our most important task is to build up our party, not through participating in the actual class struggles in this country, but by winning workers for our party through the method of propaganda and education.

This group was or is opposed to the United Front policy. It was, or is, opposed to the Labor Party policy of the party. It made up the opposition to the Third Party policy proposed by the CEC. It is afraid of policies which mean actual participation in the rough and tumble fighting of the class struggle. It is so much nicer to have a party with educational forums and lectures, with stupid papers discussing the fine points of Marxian science and branch meetings which are taken up with similar discussions.

This group is afraid of venturing out into the stormy sea of reality. On that sea there are great waves

dashing here and there. One is apt to get knocked about a bit if one cannot steer a straight course, if one is not entirely certain of the way one is going and does not have a firm hand on the rudder. Why venture upon that stormy sea when one can have a nice self-admiration society in the form of a party of propaganda and education! It calls policies which take the party out into the stormy seas of the class struggle “adventurism.”

This is the tendency of the Lore group on the right of our party. This tendency also has its expression in that pseudo-leftism which wanted to stay underground. These “leftists” were for the underground for the same reason that the “right” is for a party of education and propaganda. They are afraid of actual fighting of the class struggle and the underground was the best hiding place from such fighting. It is therefore not at all surprising that Wagenknecht and Lindgren are the allies of Lore in this new group in the party.

Salutsky, outside of the party, represents the same tendency. Salutsky was expelled from the party for his betrayal in refusing to fight for the party in the Cleveland Conference for Progressive Political Action. We are in the period when our party must be a party of propaganda and education, he argued in his defense. Therefore we had no business to be knocking at the door of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, and why should I fight for the party when it is where it has no business to be?

The Second Tendency.

The members of the party who represent the second tendency have quite different antecedents. They come into the party from industrial organizations, from the trade unions and from the IWW. They have been in the actual fighting of the class struggle on the industrial field and they do not shrink from that fighting.

Because of their origin and their past experiences, the members of this group are, however, apt to over-stress the industrial side of the party work and to judge of the correctness of party policies from that standpoint exclusively, or if not exclusively to at least give the greatest weight to effect of these policies [improving] the standing of the party in the trade unions.

The party as a whole has helped to strengthen

this tendency because of the emphasis placed upon the work in the trade unions by the party during the last year or two. It required heroic efforts to induce the members of the party who were infected by dual union ideas and almost completely divorced from the trade unions to go to work in the trade unions. In pounding away so steadily and emphasizing the need of every member becoming a member of a trade union and carrying on party work there, we have pounded into the heads of some of our members the equally wrong idea that the work in the trade unions is the only thing of importance for a Communist party.

Through our emphasis upon the industrial work we have actually made some of our members believe that the slogan of “Amalgamation” and the formation of industrial unions is an end in itself!

As a result of these factors we have the industrial tendency in the party.

It was the party members of this tendency who were strongly opposed to the policy of the CEC after the July 3rd Convention [which established the Federated Farmer-Labor Party], in setting down as the party policy that we must aid in the work of the organizing the Federated Farmer-Labor Party as an actual party. The opposition engendered through the organization of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party made itself felt most strongly on the industrial field. The political struggle for the Federated interfered with the progress of purely industrial policies, and for those who overemphasized the industrial policies this was a condemnation of the policy of aiding in the organization of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

This tendency was expressed by Comrade Foster in his speech to the New York District Convention, in which he said that the main reason he was for the Third Party policy of the CEC was not because the formation of a petty bourgeois Third Party would weaken the centralized capitalist power, but because a LaFollette split from the old parties and the formation of a Third Party would split the bureaucracy of the American Federation of Labor and help to smash the power of Gompers.

This tendency is also apt to look askance upon campaigns to win the support of the exploited farmers and to neglect the great mass of unorganized workers.

The danger of this tendency, unless it has its counterpoise in the party, is that the party will be-

come the instrument for achieving certain transformations in the trade union movement, in place of the trade union movement becoming, through the work of the party there, its instrument in achieving the political ends which a Communist party exists to achieve — that is the conquering of political power for the workers and farmers.

The Third Tendency.

It is the third tendency which dominated the policies of the party during the past year, and which, with the help and cooperation of the second group, achieved the progress which our party made during that year.

This group is for the trade union work of the party. It helped to initiate this work and has given the struggle to force our members into the unions and into the work there its complete support. It is wholeheartedly for the party policies in this field and has never wavered in developing the industrial work of the party farther and farther.

The trade union work means to the third group the means of strengthening the influence and building up the party. It is free from the tendency of thinking of our program in the unions as a goal in itself.

While thus, and for the purpose state, supporting the industrial work, it lays at least equal stress upon the political campaigns of the party. It sees in political campaigns the means of gaining influence for and building up the party as well as in the industrial policies of the party. It seeks to throw the party into actions which will win for it the support of the wide masses of unorganized as well as the organized workers. It has pressed those policies which would win for the party influence among the masses of exploited farmers.

This group is for throwing the party into every political or industrial struggle which effects the lives of the workers and farmers of this country. It has no

fear of the stormy seas of actual struggles. It has confidence that its fundamental communist principles will enable it to hold the rudder firmly and steer our party ship through the stormiest seas. It may make minor errors of judgment, but not major errors of policy.

To the group which desires to make of our party an organization of education and propaganda and not a party fighting the actual class struggle, this group says: You will never build up a party through your methods. Your party of propaganda and education will be a lifeless, spineless sectarian self-admiration society, but not a living force in the lives of the workers of this country. To the industrial group this third tendency says: You must subordinate your industrial program to the political struggles of the party. The political policies of the party must dominate over the industrial work.

The third tendency, of which I count myself in the matter of policies, which Comrade Pepper has strongly expressed in his work in the party, represents those policies which if put into effect will continue the upbuilding and strengthening of the party which we have achieved during the past year and will make it a revolutionary power in this country.

The Convention Result.

The abnormal result of the last convention is the fact that the alliance between the second and third group, the industrial group and the political, was broken and a majority formed in the convention by an alliance of the first, sectarian group and the industrial group. Such an alliance does not make for the health and progress of the party. It is an alliance an cooperation between the second and third tendencies which brought the progress of the last year. The renewal of that alliance and cooperation will assure the future progress of the party.

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