
The Workers Party vs. The Socialist Labor Party

by Joseph Brandon

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There are many points on which the Socialist Labor Party takes a different stand from that taken by the Workers (Communist) Party. There are differences on principle and therefore, necessarily, differences on tactics. If an organization's principles are correct, and the individuals concerned are honest and clear, the tactics reflected must also be correct. If an organization's tactics are wrong, it is nearly certain that its principles can be nothing else but wrong. For this reason, if organizations differ on tactics, there is apt to be a like difference in the principles espoused by each.

Principles and Tactics.

Principles are fundamental and by showing herein that the principles of the Workers Party are wrong, we can proceed to demonstrate the incorrectness of its tactics. And at the same time, by contrast, it will be conclusively proven that the principles and therefore the tactics of the Socialist Labor Party are the only logical ones to be followed in this country or any other industrially developed nation.

The first difference and the primary one between the two organizations is hinged around the conception each has of its *goal*. The goal of the Workers Party is a Soviet form of government. The goal of the Socialist Labor Party is the Workers' Industrial Republic.

A Soviet form of government is semi-political, semi-economic. The Workers' Industrial Republic is wholly economic. The former originated in Russia and is peculiar to the conditions of that country.

The Workers Party claims that in order to achieve

Socialism, the workers must first go through a transition period. Therefore their aim now is for this transition period. The goal being such, the tactics adhered to must be in keeping with the same.

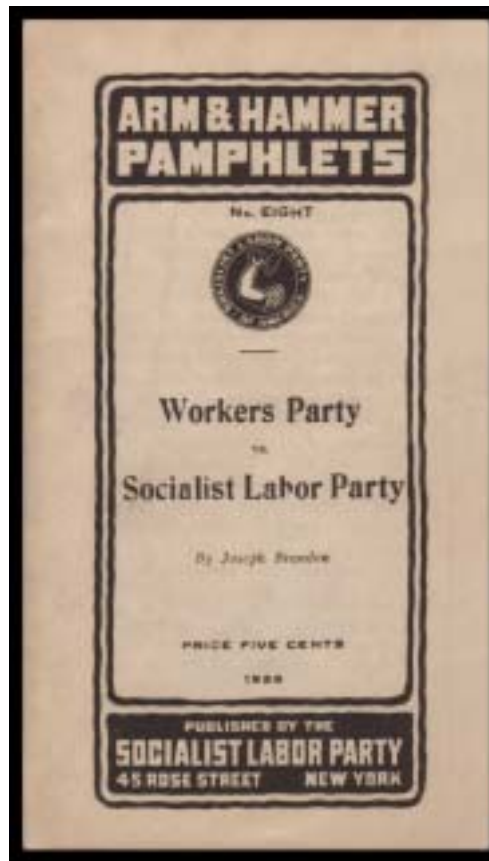
Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

The transition period, we are told, will last until the last vestiges of capitalism are destroyed and in order to safeguard the interests of the working class during this period, we must have a revolutionary dicta-

torship of the proletariat. The Socialist Labor Party in refutation says the following:

We must not be swept off our feet by phrases. We concede that the Soviet form of government was the best and ONLY government possible in Russia — but as Marxists we recognize certain facts. Marx says in his preface to *Capital*: "The country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed the image of its own future." He did not and could not

say that the lesser developed country showed a picture to the more highly developed country.



What Country Will Lead?

Principles It is not denied that America is much more developed industrially than Russia. It is obvious then that if an image of the future is to be shown, Russia cannot do the showing.

What we must show here is why a Soviet form of government is not necessary in America, but we will go further — we will show that it is impossible to establish such a government in this country.

Russia at the time of the 1917 revolution was a demoralized, decentralized community. With immature industries, a pathetic transportation system, and with medieval feudalism maintaining a strong grasp in its communities, it was impossible for the Russian revolutionists to establish a Socialist Republic. To establish a Socialist commonwealth presupposes a highly developed, efficient, and strongly centralized capitalism. This in turn presupposes that the large mass of people are proletarians, i.e. wage workers. But in Russia, due to its undeveloped circumstances, the majority of the people were not proletarians. Only about 15 percent at most were wage workers and the balance, who were not of the aristocracy, constituted the class of peasants.

The result was that conditions dictated that in order to move in a forward direction, a dictatorship of the proletariat must be inaugurated as the working class is the only progressive class in society today. When conditions dictate, social scientists follow in acquiescence, and so the clear-thinking Socialists in Russia seized power despite the protests of the unthinking and muddleheaded radicals who were unable to analyze the situation correctly. From the dictatorship of the proletariat followed the Soviet form of government, the only kind of government possible under the circumstances.

But does it follow, as the Workers Party claims, that the procedure gone through in Russia will have its counterpart in America? Does it follow that America cannot go right through from capitalism to Socialism and therefore must have a transition period, during which we will have a dictatorship of the proletariat and a Soviet government? An emphatic NO is the answer.

Lenin recognized the fact that the Soviet form of government was only transitory. In his interview

with Arno Dosch-Fleurot he stated, after praising Daniel DeLeon, the late leader of the Socialist Labor Party: "Industrial Unionism is the basic thing. That is what we are building." And again, when talking to Arthur Ransome about DeLeon's wonderful contribution to Socialism, he said, "His [DeLeon's] theory that representation should be by industries, not by areas, was already the germ of the Soviet system."

A Difference in Organisms.

But it is only the germ and cannot be more until Russia has made further progress industrially.

America and Russia can be compared, for analogous purposes, to be a highly developed complex mammal, a man for example, and a marsupial creature, a kangaroo or an opossum. When a kangaroo or an opossum gives birth to its young, it deposits the newly born in a pouch where the youngster remains for about a month, attached to the parent, until it is able to function for itself. This period is a transition period. When a mammal gives birth, however, does the same thing happen? No. The mammal is a more highly developed creature and it gives birth to its young and is immediately divorced from it, without the young suffering any inconvenience.

Russia, the marsupial, needed a transition period. America, the highly developed mammal, cannot even find place for it.

In America, capitalism has developed further than in any other country. A peasant class is practically nonexistent, and the line of demarcation between capital and labor is clear and precise. The working class redominates and makes up the vast majority of the population.

Russia's Problem and Ours.

In Russia the problem was not to take the industries but to create them. In America the problem is the reverse. We do not have to create the industries, what we must do is to take them. The easiest task the Russians had, the seizing of power, is the hardest nut we have to crack, and the thing that is no task for us at all is what is puzzling the Russians night and day, all these years.

When the working class seizes power in America

it controls all that is necessary to run production on socialized lines. A dictatorship of the proletariat is unnecessary, the workers being in a majority. There will not even be a rule of the proletariat because the act of socializing the industries automatically abolishes all classes and therefore the proletariat as a class ceases to be.

Tactics Must Fit Conditions.

If the Socialist Labor Party's analysis is correct, then it follows that the tactics reflected by this analysis are also correct. And by showing that the Workers Party's goal is wrong, that automatically disposes of the tactics that organization advocates. But to complete the picture we will proceed to show point by point that the position of the SLP is 100 percent perfect, all along the line, while the position of the Workers Party is ridiculous.

Bearing in mind that Socialism is an industrial form of society, wherein the industries are managed and operated by and for the useful members of society, it follows that:

In order to run the industries for themselves the workers must first secure complete power over and ownership of them. In order to accomplish this they must organize so that it can be done in a thorough manner to avoid anarchy and chaos.

Organization Must Proceed Revolution.

Obviously the workers cannot wait until the Social Revolution has stepped upon the scene and then organize. Tactics therefore dictate the organization of the working class today, under capitalism, into an organization whose primary purpose is to seize the industries and act as the framework of the new social order. Just as the chick develops in the shell before the world as a distinct creature, so the future society must be built up under capitalism. And just as the fully developed chick breaks the shell of its egg, so the shell of capitalism will never be broken until the organization of future society is developed to the point where it is able to function. Does it not follow logically that the working class must organize today, under capitalism, in order to achieve its emancipation? It does, and the very logic of this summation of facts goes to bring out

more glaringly the faultiness of the Workers Party's tactics and the soundness of the SLP program.

A.F. of L. Hindrance.

Sensing the necessity of working class organization upon the industrial field, but not comprehending the full significance of the necessity, the Workers Party claims, as did the Socialist Party of old, that the present unions are capable of performing the necessary revolutionary tasks and shies at any attempt to destroy the present trade unions. The SLP, on the other hand, knowing full well that the American Federation of Labor and kindred unions are what the *Wall Street Journal* correctly termed "the bulwark of capitalism," declares that before being able to smash capitalism, the working class will have to remove this bulwark.

The Workers Party counters and argues also, as the Socialist Party did, that to change the unions we should bore from within until we gain sufficient adherents to our program to be able to capture the unions. This would be good tactics if it were possible but when viewed in the light of facts and logic and seen to be impossible then it is certain that the tactics are not good but anti-working class and reactionary.

Why? For the good and sufficient reason that it is impossible to capture the unions by boring from within alone. The SLP tried this method thirty years ago and found out that it would not work, but the Workers Party, like the SP and the Bourbons of yore, learns nothing and forgets nothing, and therefore clings to antiquated methods that were long ago put into the discard by the class-conscious Socialists of America.

The "Dual Union" Nonsense.

It would not be so bad if the Workers Party would only advocate boring from within and let it go at that. But it goes further and decries all efforts at forming new unions. It characterizes them as dual or opposition unions that split up the working class and make them more easy prey to the machinations of the master class. We will admit for the sake of argument that dual unionism does this very thing. What of it? A strike entails misery to the workers — does that mean that strikes are to be tabooed? No. Strikes are necessary at times and the good they may bring outweighs the evils

concurrent with them, and so we close our eyes to the bad features. So with dual unionism. Industrial Unionism is necessary, and if we cannot change the present craft unions into Industrial Unions, then dual unions become necessary and we must not hold back because of the evils that may spring up under “dual” unionism. We have too often proven that the AF of L is not a labor union in the true sense.

Craft Unions Capitalistic.

Why is it impossible to change the old craft unions into industrial unions? This requires some explanation. The craft unions are founded upon capitalistic lines. They are organized upon the basis that capitalism always was and always will be and that all the workers can hope for is to get a little better living conditions now or some time in the future. The industrial union, however, has a totally different conception of society. It denies that capitalism is a finality. It knows full well that capitalism is transitory and must go as all preceding systems had to go, and it organizes accordingly.

Sad Tale of Boring from Within.

What happens when the borers from within begin to function in a trade union? One of two things. Either they are corrupted by the condition of affairs existent and turn out to be labor fakers as bad as the rest, or else if they remain staunch and true to their principles, they are expelled from the union as soon as they become obnoxious to the labor leader. What can or should the workers do who are expelled from the craft unions because of their revolutionary activity? There is no alternative for them but to try to hold their adherent together and this can only be done by forming a new progressive union.

The Workers Party naively states that where its members are expelled from the unions they must strive to get back into the fold. For what purpose? To get kicked out again? Or to refrain from giving the watchdogs of the capitalist class another chance to duplicate their actions? Such a course is spineless and spells ruination to the revolutionary character of the workers.

How to “Bore” and How to Build.

The SLP says, “Bore from within but bore to a purpose.” The purpose of working inside the trade unions is to destroy the bulwark of capitalism and establish bulwarks of Socialism, the industrial union. The craft union can never be captured or changed. Expulsion is inevitable — therefore dual unionism is inevitable. This dictates that boring from, within alone is useless unless side by side with it we have a hitting from without process, on the outside the principles of Industrial Unionism and the organization in due time of those who are thrown outside by the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class. This method does not degenerate the spirit of the workers who are boring from within. The fear of being thrown out of a union and losing the chance of earning a livelihood is banished. Industrial Unionism gives courage and makes for character. The Workers Party by opposing a new union is in the first place toadying to the labor faker, trying to placate him, and secondly is making it impossible for the working class to rear a genuine organization of labor on the industrial field.

A typical example of the Workers Party’s miseducation of the working class is their advocacy of what they term “amalgamating” the present craft unions. “Amalgamation” in the sense that the word is used by the Workers Party is not a substitute for nor a step toward Industrial Unionism. On the contrary, such “amalgamation,” even if possible of success, would merely increase the craft union’s effectiveness as a tool of capitalism. Industrial Unionism is the only hope of the working class.

Ignorance Extends to Politics.

But the dilatory and anti-revolutionary tactics of the Workers Party do not cease at the economic side of the question. Bearing in mind what was said in the beginning about tactics being a reflection of principle, the incorrectness of the Workers Party’s principles spells disaster to all its tactical moves. Take a glance at the position of the Workers Party on the political field, and what do we see? Here also the ignorance of goal gives rise to the same spineless attitude that we showed existed on the industrial field.

The Workers Party wants a dictatorship of the

proletariat. But it argues that the large mass of workers will never become Socialist and will have to be led by an intelligent minority. So it is willing to unite with any movement of workers, no matter how wrong this may be, in order that they will have some masses to lead. This is called a united front.

Whether it is a Socialist Party, which has been correctly characterized as nothing but a machine for lying about Socialism, or whether it is a purely bourgeois movement like the LaFollette movement, the Workers Party is willing to barter away all its principles for the sake of being taken into the ranks. In other words, numbers are more important than principles. Just suppose that the Russian revolutionists had adopted the same policy and been willing to sacrifice principles for the sake of going with the masses; would the workers ever have seized power in Russia? To ask the question is to answer it.

Lenin said, "The smallness of an organization never frightens me. What I do fear is the heaping together of heterogeneous bodies and calling that thing a 'party.'"

How They Talk Nonsense.

But the Workers Party calls anything a party so long as it has numbers heaped together. Testimony of this is to be found in a pamphlet, *The Bankruptcy of the Labor Movement*, by W.Z. Foster, published by the Trade Union Educational League and sold and endorsed by the Workers Party. In this puerile, if not knavish, piece of work, Foster has this to say:

Compare this situation [in America] with that prevailing in Europe, for instance, where the workers have understood to build themselves class political organizations. There Organized Labor is a great political power, and one which must be reckoned with on all vital issues. In Germany the workers' parties control 42 percent of the members of the Reichstag, in Austria 38 percent, Czecho-Slovakia 36 percent, Belgium 35 percent, Denmark 34 percent, Italy and Bulgaria 25 percent, Norway, Holland, and Switzerland 22 percent, in their respective national parliaments. In Great Britain many experts look for the Labour Party to be the dominant one after the next general elections. Politically the workers of Europe are a real power.

Is there any difference between this statement and the eulogies of the Socialist Party of America on

the reform "socialist" movements of Europe? But as the Workers Party consistently condemns the SP as non-revolutionary, the odium falls all the greater on the Workers Party, which professes a revolutionary character. What a spectacle! The misleaders of the working class growing in power and would-be revolutionists jubilantly shouting that "politically the workers of Europe are a real power." Does it not denote what our pseudo-revolutionists of the Workers Party are aiming at?

The United Front Nonsense.

But there is something else behind the boosting of such organizations as the British Labour Party. The secret is that in England there is a "united front," therefore Mr. Foster and the Workers Party wax warm for the Labour Party. But is the united front beneficial to the workers of Europe, or is it only beneficial to the "leaders"? Is the policy of "No Compromise" outworn, and is compromise a good thing today? It is just such things as happen in England that make the slogan of the united front ridiculous and prove that "No Compromise" is still in order. Many instances have occurred where the Communists of Great Britain helped, under the guise of a united front, to elect anti-labor representatives to the British Parliament.

For example, one T. Kennedy, after his election as an MP on a united front ticket, came out openly and attacked the Soviet Government as the enemy of the working class. Still another MP, also elected by the united fronters, came out in support of a boys' military movement, a la the Boy Scouts, and when taken to task, openly urged the support of such movements.

In America we have not seen so much of the united front because the Workers Party is a mere joke on the political field. But we saw the endorsement of such an out and out spokesman of capitalism as Magnus Johnson and we also saw the desperate flirtation carried on with all kinds of "heterogeneous bodies" that the Workers Party sought to attach itself to.

And the reason therefor is that the Workers Party IS frightened by the smallness of its organization. It is not of the stuff that revolutionary organizations are made of and so it perforce must seek large numbers or collapse. It is the antics of the Socialist Party all over again and the result is inevitable. The Workers Party

must go the same way as the Socialist Party. When truth compromises with error, it is no longer truth, just as a virgin who makes a misstep and has a child as a result of it, is no longer a virgin, no matter how small the baby may be.

The Workers Must Act.

The SLP knows that no leaders are going to pull the workers into Socialism. As Marx stated, "The emancipation of the working class must be the class-conscious act of the working class itself." An ignorant muddleheaded working class will never be able to act correctly or move in the proper direction no matter how brainy the leaders may be. "The day is past," says Engels, "for revolutions carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses."

Workers Party Lying About Socialism.

But the illogical position of the Workers Party drives it to still further extremes. In order to get the masses, it caters to the ignorance of the masses and so we find its platforms filled with all kinds of petty bourgeois reforms — the same that the Socialist Party platforms used, to attempt to garner a large vote.

Thus we find in the West the program of the Workers Party advocates reforms to the farmers such as state banks, hail insurance, state aid a la the late Non-Partisan League and the Populist Party of thirty years ago. And in the industrial sections like New York and Chicago, an appeal is made to the workers on the basis of lower rents, cheaper carfare, and unemployment insurance. To the Workers Party, Marx lived and wrote in vain. His teaching that the workers are robbed at the point of production and not at the point of consumption is not even grasped by them.

The Revolutionary Organization.

The SLP correctly holds that the political party must be a party of no compromise. Its mission is to point the way to the goal and it refuses to leave the main road to follow the small bypaths that lead into the swamp of reformism. Its skirts are clean. The banner of Socialism is held high, uncorrupted, and not dragged down into the mire of petty bourgeois reform.

Capitalism cannot be reformed. It must be overthrown.

The Reformer as Anarchist.

Many years ago DeLeon said that if you scratched a reformer you found an anarchist and vice versa. And the Workers Party bears out DeLeon's statement.

From being the mildest of reform organizations, we find the Workers Party jumping to the other extreme and advocating physical force and violence as necessary to overthrow capitalism. The workers, we are told, must arm themselves for the revolution. Mass action and armed insurrection are the means by which our emancipation is to be accomplished. The Workers Party is almost a century behind the times when it resorts to such methods.

The Physical Force Idiocy.

If there is anything the capitalist class likes and which it tries to bring about, it is to have the workers resort to these methods. Engels' preface to *The Civil War in France*, which is published separately by the SLP under the title of *The Revolutionary Act*, gives the death-blow to the advocates of physical force.

After pointing out that the development of capitalism had rendered barricade fights and armed insurrection obsolete from the revolutionist's standpoint; after characterizing the revolutionist who would select the working class districts as the starting point for a violent upheaval as a lunatic; Engels goes on to say:

Does the reader now understand why the ruling class, by hook or by crook, would get us where the rifle pops and the sabre slashes? Why, today, do they charge us with cowardice because we will not, without further ado, get down into the street where we are SURE OF OUR DEFEAT IN ADVANCE? Why are we so persistently importuned to play the role of cannon fodder?

The SLP is opposed to violence or the advocacy of violence in the labor movement because it knows that such tactics are playing right into the hands of the capitalist class. It is not cowardice that dictates the SLP position but common sense and it is not heroism or bravery that dictates the advocacy of violence by the Workers Party. It is not heroism that makes a fool rock a boat in deep water, it is idiocy. We can go a step further than Engels and say that he who advocates vio-

lence today is either a lunatic or a police spy. The short history of the Workers Party is replete with the instances of the police spy and his work. Upon the Workers Party rests the blame for the deportation of thousands of innocent workingmen who were misled by this policy into placing their necks within the noose of the capitalist class and finding out that they could not be withdrawn.

The Real Power of Labor.

Here in America we have a right to come out openly and agitate for the overthrow of the government and the establishment of a workers' republic. If we did not have this opportunity then no alternative would be open for us but to advocate a violent overthrow of capitalism. But the Workers Party, not understanding the proper goal of the workers thinks that the aim must be to capture the political government. The SLP, however, understanding Marx, knows that no class ever captured political power until it had first built up its economic power, as political power in the final analysis is only a reflex of economic power.

Therefore the SLP advocates the building of Socialist Industrial Unions as the economic power, the might behind the political arm of labor. The capitalists can steal elections, miscount votes, and resort to a thousand and one political tricks, but such is akin to monkeying with a thermometer — it cannot change the temperature. And the temperature here is the organized power of the working class in its industrial unions.

The Economic Foundation.

Let a crisis break out and unless the workers are organized as the SLP points out, all the armed insurrection and physical force will bring us nowhere except to the shambles to be slaughtered in cold blood and make a Roman holiday for the capitalist class. Only with the working class industrially organized can an invulnerable united front be offered to the master class. The control over industry, over the means of life, gives the workers the key to the whole situation.

Organized economic power is superior to military power. The army, navy, and police force depend upon the workers for their daily bread, and as he who

controls the means whereby I live also controls me, the armed forces of the state must be subsidiary to the industrial forces.

Many years ago, Engels (speaking of Marx) said:

Surely at such a moment, the voice ought to be heard of a man whose whole theory is the result of a lifelong study of the economic history and condition of England, and whom that study led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means.

The SLP says that this applies with even greater force to America. The success of the revolution depends upon the clearheadedness of the working class. Capitalism cannot be overthrown until the workers are fully cognizant of their position on the historic stage. The Workers Party cannot organize the working class because it resorts to methods that cause it to be outlawed just as the IWW was.

The labor movement must not descend into a conspiracy, whispered of in rat-holes, in cellars, and behind closed doors. It must be able to stand the light of day. As Engels says: "We, the 'revolutionists,' the 'upsetters,' we thrive much better with legal than with illegal means in forcing an overthrow."

To Sum Up.

The Workers Party goal of a Soviet form of government is impossible in America. The SLP goal of industrial government is the only one possible.

The Workers Party advocacy of a transition period is nonsense, as is its clamoring for a dictatorship of the proletariat. Industrial Unionism is the means necessary for making the change from capitalism to Socialism.

The Workers Party policy of boring from within and capturing the craft unions is futile. The SLP program of building new unions is the only possible way out.

The Workers Party policy of a united front breeds reform and enervates the revolutionary spirit of the workers. The SLP policy of "No Compromise" makes for staunchness and sterling revolutionary character.

The Workers Party advocacy of violence brings naught to the workers but blood baths, imprisonment, and deportation. The SLP insistence on civilized meth-

ods keeps out the disruptive police spy and makes possible the organization of the revolutionary forces openly and above board.

The SLP alone of all the organizations on the political field has a concrete program, clear, concise, and logical, and it is the only one possible of inaugurating.

The time is ripe for action, not phrases. Slogans will get us nowhere,, what is needed is a class-conscious organization of the working class on the political and industrial fields. Both arms of labor are necessary in the struggle and it behooves every class-conscious worker to line up on the side of that organization that has the clearness of vision, the vigor of conviction, and the principles and tactics necessary to the emancipation of the working class. The SLP alone points the way to freedom. All other organizations, including the Workers Party, are the agents of reaction.

The only argument ever made against the SLP is that it is small, but if the smallness of an organization did not bother Lenin, neither should it bother any other class-conscious worker. When the time is

ripe for the social revolution, it will be the organization, no matter what its size, that has the correct principles and tactics that will be the rallying point of the working class.

Said Daniel DeLeon:

“The SLP never compromises truth to make a friend, never withholds a blow at error lest it make an enemy.

“In firm assurance of final victory, it pursues its course unswerved by weak desire for temporary advantage. It is ever outspoken and straightforward, believing that, in fearless independence, the integrity of purpose by which it is inspired will, in the long run, win the respect and confidence of those whom it aims to weld into a class-conscious, aggressive body.

“Its propaganda is not alone to educate, it is to organize the working class for the conquest of power, for the complete overthrow of capitalism. Until that mission is accomplished, it will stand like a rock, alert and watchful, yielding nothing.”

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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