
Party Tactics:

A Letter to the Editor of *The New York Call*, March 31, 1919.

by Morris Zucker

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Editor of *The Call*:

Within the past week the discussion in the columns of *The Call* concerning the revision of party principles and tactics has taken a very fortunate turn, and that is due to two reasons. First, it is now frankly admitted, even by the “solid” and “substantial” elements in the party, that our program is out of date. Secondly, the issue is now being confined to the problem of how best to bring the party into step with the onward march of the international proletariat.

It is also very encouraging to see the almost unanimous acclaim with which the rank and file of the party have accepted the manifesto of the Left Wing. That is indeed an historic document and the comrades who have been instrumental in bringing that to the attention of the party membership have rendered an inestimable service to the socialist movement.

There is, however, the so-called Centrist element, who, while adhering to the program of the Left Wing, are opposed to the tactics of the Left Wing within the party as likely to cause a split in the organization. Naturally, they receive the support of a large portion of the party membership, who pride themselves on their loyalty to the party; a very laudable sentiment in itself.

But these comrades make a very fundamental mistake. Loyalty to principle must take precedence over loyalty to party. If these Centrist com-

rades do in all truth accept the principles of the Left Wing, they should logically desire to have the Socialist Party as an organization accept those principles. And if, after making every honest and honorable effort, the Socialist Party does not, in substance, accept the program of the Left Wing, then it becomes the solemn duty of the Left Wing to organize a new party upon the basis of its principles and program. The party is merely an instrument for the accomplishment of a certain end, and not an end in itself.

Now, while the Left Wing movement contains the germ of a separate organization, such a probability can certainly be obviated if those who control the party would let the party membership decide. Certainly that would be the only fair and proper thing to do. But what really has been the attitude of the party officials? The “regular” Socialist press at first attempted to kill the Left Wing by silence, arguing that it is engineered by a few self-seeking individuals, and its columns were opened finally by tremendous pressure from underneath, from the rank and file. The New York Central Committee refuses, by a vote of 51 to 71, to send the Left Wing manifesto to its branches for discussion and action by the party membership, while the Kings County Central Committee refuses, by a vote of 34 to 30, to admit into membership of the party 110 men and women who subscribe to the program of the Left Wing, a two-thirds vote being necessary to admit them as

a separate branch. The entire tone and spirit of the party officialdom is to prevent the rank and file from expressing itself on the momentous question now before it, and they followed the same old Bourbon tactics of first suppressing the issue and then hounding its supporters.

Those angelic comrades who subscribe to the Left Wing program, but are opposed to the Left Wing tactics on the ground that it will result in a split, had better see to it that the splitting is not forced upon us. We believe that the overwhelming majority of the rank and file will endorse the Left Wing program, if only given an opportunity to do so, and nothing would please the Left Wing-ers more than to have the Left Wing wiped out of existence by having the Socialist Party adopt its program. That is the underlying object of the tactics of the Left Wing.

Either the Socialist Party becomes the Left Wing or the Left Wing will become the Socialist Party.

And here is the challenge to all those who fling into our faces the charge that we are attempting to disrupt the party, the charge of the reactionary Right Wing and irresolute Center: We challenge you to call a general party membership meeting of the various locals of Greater New York, meeting either separately or jointly, to act on the following motion — “Resolved: That the Socialist Party shall endorse and adopt the manifesto of the Left Wing as an expression of its principles and policies.”

We dare you to accept the challenge.

Fraternally yours,

Morris Zucker

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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