
Problems of the Party — II: A Discussion with Upton Sinclair About the United Front.

by John Pepper

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The Socialist Party is becoming more and more of a shilly-shally party. The honest workers within the Socialist Party are thoroughly aroused against the policy of Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger. But the honest leaders in the Socialist Party are also beginning to rebel against the official policy of this party.

Scott Nearing declared that the Socialist Party belongs to the past, and the future belongs to the Workers Party. Eugene Debs endorsed the amalgamation policies of the Trade Union Educational League, while the Socialist Party supports the policies of Gompers.

Nearing and Debs write articles for the Communist *Liberator*, and declare their solidarity with the persecuted Communists, while the *New York Call* and the *Forward* hurl the most shameless slanders at Foster, Ruthenberg, and all other Communists. The managing board of the *New York Call* reprints the vindictive articles of the *New York Herald* against Soviet Russia, and David Karsner resigns his editorship on the ground that he is for the United Front of all working class parties.

Norman Thomas openly condemns the Rand School, the policy of the Socialist Party toward the trial of the clericals in Russia.

The official Socialist Party, in the Cleveland Conference for Progressive Political Action, fights against admittance of the Workers Party to the Labor Party, and prevented the Workers Party delegates from being seated in the New York Labor Party Convention.

But Sinclair writes an article for *The Worker* in which he quite categorically declares, "I think that representatives of the Workers Party should be admitted

to the Labor Party, and that representatives of the Socialist Party should work for this."

The Socialist Party is today a party of confusion and vacillation.

We print in the present issue of *The Worker* an article by Upton Sinclair. We believe it will be very interesting for all our readers. Sinclair is not only a great writer, but undoubtedly the best propagandist in the country. His article is remarkably clear in style, but unfortunately, just as unclear in ideas.

What does Sinclair say? First, he is for the admittance of the Workers Party to the Labor Party, and believes that representatives of the Socialist Party should vote for this. Second, he believes in the United Front. Third, it seems to him that the amalgamation program of the Trade Union Educational League is a correct policy. Fourth, the amalgamation should also be carried out on the political field. Fifth, the Communists are bad boys, because they split the Socialist Party, instead of making this party more radical, by "boring from within." Sixth, the Workers Party wants the United Front merely to "show up" the Socialist Party.

First of all, we must point out, that Upton Sinclair is against the Socialist Party on three vital questions — on the Labor Party, on Amalgamation, and on the United Front.

We must state, however, that on the other questions, Sinclair not only stands in opposition to every Marxist analysis, but also contradicts the facts.

Distinction Between Political Parties and Trade Unions.

Sinclair says that we must have amalgamation,

not only on the industrial, but also on the political field, and he does not see the great distinction between trade unions and political parties. The unions are organizations of the masses, built up to defend the elementary interests of the workers. They seek higher salaries, shorter hours of labor, and better conditions of work. Every worker, whether reformist or revolutionary, Socialist or Communist, religious or atheist, can find a place in the same trade union, because all these political or ideological differences will not prevent them from fighting in common against the bosses for a 20 percent increase in wages or against the open shop.

But political party has entirely different aims. If it is really a revolutionary working class party, it has a program for all phases of social life. A program not only against the individual bosses and trusts, but against the state power. A program for the transformation of the whole economic system. A program on the question of family, marriage, religion, education. A political party is sound only when it has members who accept its entire political, economic, and social program; furthermore, not only members who are unified on the program, but also in the methods of carrying it out, in tactics.

Communists and Socialists.

How could the Socialists and Communists form a common party today?

The Communists believe that we live in the age of the decadence of Capitalism. The adherents of the 2nd and 2nd-and-a-Half Internationals believe that Capitalism can reconstruct itself.

The Communists believe that imperialism is a necessary phase in the development of Capitalism. The Socialists believe that imperialism is only an accident and a misunderstanding, and that the capitalists could, with a little insight, prevent the dangers of imperialistic wars.

The Communists believe that the present world-crisis of Capitalism must be taken advantage of, and that the proletariat must be led to victory, through the elimination of the capitalists and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Socialists believe that the working class is not ripe for rule, and that a coalition government must be formed with the

bourgeoisie.

The Communists believe that the ruling class has never in all history abdicated voluntarily, and that it is necessary to explain to the workers the role of force in history. The Socialists believe in pacifism, and in the almightiness of the ballot.

The Communists believe that when the workers are once in power, they must destroy the form of the capitalist state government, and must construct a new proletarian form of government — the Soviets.

The Communists believe that the trade unions should be militant organs, and should help the workers to live as human beings. The Socialists, and trade union leaders allied with them, avoid every fight and helplessly tolerate the open shop and Fascism.

The Communists believe that the labor movement can be healthy only when the impotent, senile, and corrupt leaders are cast aside. The Socialists ally themselves with Gompers and with all traitorous “\$25,000 a year labor leaders.”

The Communists propose the United Front for all labor organizations against capitalists. The Socialist Victor Berger allies himself in Wisconsin with middle-class politicians, just as Scheidemann was minister of the Kaiser, just as Branting was minister of the King of Sweden, Vandervelde minister of the King of Belgium, and the British labor leaders ministers to his British majesty.

Communists and Socialists — fire and water, revolution and reform, struggle and betrayal.

How can Upton Sinclair for a moment imagine that these two elements can live in the same organization?

Communist and Socialist workers can be together in one and the same trade union, because the task of the trade union is only a struggle for wages and hours of work. But Communists and Socialists can just as little be together in the same party organization as workers who are convinced that they should have higher wages and shorter hours of work can be together in the same trade unions with workers who think that it is useless for them to have higher wages and shorter hours of work.

United Front but Separate Organizations.

If that is all true, how can Communists and So-

cialists find a place in the same Labor Party? We believe it is possible to give a clear answer to this question. The Labor Party, as the classical example of England shows, is an organization which includes the trade unions and various political parties in such a way that every one of these parties retain their independence in ideology, propaganda, and organization. The Labor Party has a certain program of action. All members of this Labor Party are bound to fight for this program of action, but they have the right to agitate for their separate programs. They have the right to work on for the enlargement of their separate party organization. And that which is true for the Labor Party is true for the whole United Front idea. We want the United Front with the Socialist Party, and with all labor organizations, for quite concrete tasks. We have offered the United Front not for the whole revolutionary program of the Workers Party, but on the following concrete slogans: 1. Amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial unions; 2. Protection of foreign-born workers; 3. The struggle for an International labor movement; 4. Recognition of Soviet Russia; 5. The removal of governmental obstacles; 6. A Labor Party.

All these slogans are not in contradiction to the program of the Socialist Party, if the Socialist Party really wishes to fight in the interests of the workers. They are not specifically revolutionary points of the Communist and proletarian revolution. They are merely demands which can be accepted by all who wish to fight at least for the immediate interests of the workers.

The organization of the Workers Party and the Socialist Party that Upton Sinclair proposes, is impossible because the differences in program and tactics are too great. The formation of the Labor Party or the formation of the United Front is possible because there are such immediate practical demands as can unite all

workers in common actions. The amalgamation of the Workers Party with the Socialist Party will not increase the might of the militant forces, but on the contrary, will weaken them. In a united party, the hands of the Left Wing elements are tied. Hillquit's and Berger's Tammany Hall will prevent us Communists from agitating and carrying on propaganda, and thus it will be impossible for us to educate the workers the right way of carrying on the class struggle. Such a unified chop suey party will simply be incapable of action. The Right Wing will be in continuous fight with the Left Wing, and even if certain betrayals of the Right Wing could be prevented, the extension of the Left Wing would be entirely impossible.

Who Is Responsible for the Split?

The amalgamation of Communists and Socialists in the same party will just as inevitably lead to a split as it led to a split in 1919. The Left Wing attempted in 1919 the method of "boring from within" the Socialist Party, but without success. The Right Wing had simply excluded the Left Wing. We must quite emphatically reject the accusation of Sinclair that the Left Wing — the Communists — made the split in the Socialist Party. Exactly the contrary is true. It is remarkable that Upton Sinclair has so quickly forgotten the facts. The split in the Socialist Party began when the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, that is, the petty Tammany Hall of Berger and Hillquit, excluded the Michigan State Federation of the Socialist Party. The second step, which broadened the split to a national scale, was made once more by the present leadership of the Socialist Party.† They feared that the Left Wing would win the elections of the National Executive Committee, and that thereby the Socialist Party would become more radical.‡ They

†- The term "present leadership of the Socialist Party" is used so loosely as to be factually inaccurate here. There was an almost total turnover of the national leadership of the SPA from the year of the split to 1923. In 1919, Executive Secretary was Adolph Germer, and the 15 member NEC consisted of: Berger, Clark, Goebel, E. Herman, Hillquit, Hogan, Holt, Katterfeld, Krafft, Niells, Oneal, Shiplacoff, Stedman, Wagenknecht, and Work. In 1923, SP Executive Secretary was Otto Branstetter, and the NEC consisted of Berger, Henry, Hillquit, Mauer, Melms, Roewer, Vladeck and Wilson — continuity of exactly two members, Victor Berger and Morris Hillquit, neither of whom played a particularly decisive role in the 1919 split. Key leaders of the 1919 Regular faction were Germer, Oneal, Krafft, and New York leader Julius Gerber. Hillquit was ill and didn't even attend the 1919 Convention, Victor Berger's role seems to have been decidedly secondary, with his eyes as ever focused on the Wisconsin Party. This leading SPA group would be changed yet again at the May 1923 National Convention, with the new NEC consisting of: Debs, Brandt, Harkins, Hillquit, Melms, Snow, and Wilson — that is, only Hillquit continuing from the 1919 leadership.

‡- The 1919 vote for SP NEC was already in and the Left Wing had clearly in a landslide. The outgoing 1919 NEC suspended the vote counting, voided the election, and launched a preventative coup.

therefore simply excluded almost all the Foreign Language Federations of the Socialist Party, comprising not less than 40,000 members. The excluded Michigan state organization and these Foreign Language Federations together formed the Communist Party. But part of the Left Wing persistently remained in the Socialist Party and attempted heroically through “bor-ing from within” to make the party more radical. But Hillquit and Berger’s petty Tammany Hall took a third step to split the Socialist Party. As the rest of the Left wing, composed mostly of American elements, went to the September convention, the found Germer, Secretary of the Socialist Party, at the entrance to the hall, and with him a policeman as archangel with the flaming sword. Though they were elected as delegates, they were nevertheless driven out from the convention hall.†

That is the true history of the split of the Left Wing. The Socialist Party leaders bear the guilt for the split.

The split in the United States was made by the same Hillquits and Victor Bergers who today sabotage amalgamation and the Labor Party, and the motives in 1919 were the same as today.‡ These Right Wing leaders do not want to take part in the struggle, and they hate all those who wish to force them into the struggle. The Workers Party wants to fight for the workers, and therefore it proposes the United Front. Upton Sinclair is mistaken when he thinks that we desire the United Front only in order to “show up” the

Socialist Party leaders.

We want the United Front for the defense of the working class. The capitalists and capitalist government are beginning a new offensive against the working class. A new open shop drive! Increase of the cost of living! Strengthening of militarism! Fascist organizations! New trustification! Exception laws against foreign-born workers! Against all these dangers, we want to organize the entire working class.

We are convinced that the daily betrayal of the Socialist Party is more effective for “showing up” these leaders than any articles in *The Worker*. We do not need to strip the fair maidens naked. They themselves are throwing off their clothing of principles, and the working class can see how ugly they are in reality, and how cankered by internal diseases. Upton Sinclair has written three remarkable books against bourgeois hypocrisy: *The Brass Check*, against the capitalist press; *The Profits of Religion*, against the churches; *The Goose-Step*, against capitalist education. If we had time and space here, we could have proven that the campaign of lies of the kept press, of the ilk of the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald*, finds its replica in the *New York Call* and the *Forward*. For Hillquit’s and Berger’s Tammany Hall Socialism is today just as much a pretension as religion is for the churches and the clergy, and the education which they dole out to the workers is just as untrue and hypocritical as the miseducation of Harvard and Yale.

†- A melodramatic and simplistic rendition of events by Pepper. The actual mechanism of control on the part of the SP Regulars involved packing of the convention via the expulsion of entire state organizations (Massachusetts, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio) or major parts of others (New York), followed by the hurried reorganization of tiny rump groups of loyalists. These new “state organizations” were then allotted the same proportional representation to which the massive Left Wing-dominated organizations recently dismissed had been entitled. Once the Credentials Committee was controlled at the Convention and the recognition of these rump delegations of Regular loyalists assured, the end result was inevitable. Use of the Chicago police by Germer to expel delegates under challenge from the convention floor and thus avert a potential sit-in was a mere sideshow.

‡- Hillquit was a consistent supporter of the establishment of a Labor Party. He was neutral on the issue of amalgamation, holding the traditional Socialist Party perspective that such matters were within the purview of the unions themselves.

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