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## **The Left Wing**

*Rutgers, S.J.*  
1916

The following is a collection of seven articles the Dutch communist and comrade of Gorter and Pannekoek wrote for *International Socialist Review*, the journal of the revolutionary wing of the Socialist Party of America. The first part, "The Battle Cry of a New International," is not by title an installment of the "The Left Wing" series, but was regarded as such by the editors.

### **The Battle Cry of a New International (May 1916)**

There is a dawn of hope; there is new life among the ruins of Europe; there is the actual beginning of a new International! There is only a beginning and it is concealed by the hatred of the old party leaders, but it is living and it is growing. It stands for the new facts on the old fundamentals. Its revolutionary spirit takes its force from the solid ground of economic facts in the never-resting class struggle.

The first meeting of French, German, English and comrades from other belligerent and neutral nations during the war, at Zimmerwald in Switzerland, was a promise, was the beginning of a new understanding. But the resolution adopted by the majority of this Zimmerwalder Conference proved to be a compromise, was confusing by its statement that the right of self-determination of peoples must be the indestructible foundation of national relations. And what was still worse, the accepted resolution did not indicate a definite method of fighting, did not come to a clear understanding that our only hope is in a series of mass actions on the industrial as well as on the political field.

In compromising with those who did not even recognize that a split in the old parties is inevitable and necessary, that a reorganization of the old International with the old leaders, who surrendered to the enemy when their resistance was needed most, is impossible, the Zimmerwalder Conference lost its practical influence. It was a first symbol, a hopeful effort, a historical event, if you like, but not a BANNER around which to gather the defeated and scattered troops to inspire enthusiasm for a new fight.

The results soon proved its failure. The minority group from Germany, as represented at Zimmerwald by Ledebour and Hoffman, to whose influence much of the compromising was due, made a declaration in the German Parliament, which showed better than discussions could do, the failure of the Zimmerwalder compromise. Altho they voted against the war credits, as promised in Zimmerwald, they declared at the same time, that in this war, because there were no rebellious soldiers in Germany, the German military forces gained a most favorable position, etc. This, of course, means, that French and Russian Socialists should have to support their governments; it means Nationalism instead of International Solidarity.

This illustrates the inadequacy of the *majority* resolution of Zimmerwald and it teaches us, for the hundredth time, the lesson that compromise is a bad policy for Socialists.

### **The minority**

There, however, was a minority at Zimmerwald who made their own resolution, which was voted down by the majority because it meant a split in the old parties, a new International, and a new revolutionary fighting tactic.

This minority kept together also after the Conference, publishing International pamphlets (International Flugblatter (I.F.), address: Fritz Flaxten, 23 Rotachstr. Zurich, Switzerland), and its policy is embodied in the minority resolution as presented to the Zimmerwalder Conference and officially approved by groups in most of the European countries (see below). There soon will meet another Conference in which there will be no compromising and in which no doubt a fighting resolution will be adopted: the resolution of the left wing of the Zimmerwalder Conference.

In each country, and we may expect also in the United States, there will be a group supporting this policy, fighting for it Internationally. And our INTERNATIONAL REVIEW, which always took the part of uncompromising class struggle and of revolutionary mass action, will no doubt be in the front line, will no doubt become the rallying point for those, who, not satisfied with theoretical discussions only, will prepare for a practical fight against the new form of Imperialistic Capitalism, together with those of our European comrades who remained International Socialists in the storms of an intensified class struggle.

The minority resolution of the so-called Left Wing of the Zimmerwald Conference has already been accepted and signed by the following groups: A delegate from the revolutionary Socialists in Germany, representing the group of "International Socialists of Germany"; a delegate from the revolutionary Socialists in Switzerland; the Central Committee of the Socialist party in Russia; the Executive Committee of the Socialist democrats of Russian Poland and Lithuania; the Central Committee of the Social Democrats in Lettland; Ungdomsforbund der Schwedischen and Norwegian social-democrats.

The Social-Democratic minority party in Holland (S.D.P.) also accepted this program as a basis for co-operation at a second International Conference.

The Resolution reads as follows:

The world war, now ruining Europe, is an imperialistic war, waged for the political and economic exploitation of the world to get hold of markets, raw materials and spheres of investment, etc. It is a product of capitalist development, which, at the same time that the world management becomes international, leaves in existence the national capitalist states, with their conflicting interests.

When the bourgeoisie and the governments try to mask this character of the world war, by presenting it as a war, forced upon the nations for national independence, the [sic] means deceiving the proletariat, because this war is waged for the very purpose of subjugating foreign people and foreign countries.

As fraudulent is the legend about a defense of democracy in this war, for Imperialism means the unscrupulous supremacy of Big Capital and political reaction.

The overcoming of Imperialism is only possible by doing away with the antithesis, from which it originated, which means Socialist Organization of the Capitalist Society, for which objective conditions are ripe.

At the beginning of the war the majority of the labor leaders failed to apply this only possible tactic against imperialism. Overwhelmed by nationalism, carried away by opportunism, *they surrendered the workers to imperialism the very moment of the outbreak of the war and abandoned the fundamentals of Socialism, thereby giving up the real fight for proletarian interests.*

Social patriotism and social imperialism, as accepted in Germany, not only by the openly patriotic majority of the former Socialist leaders, but also by the center of the party around Kautsky, in France by the majority, in England and Russia by a part of the leaders (Hyndman, the Fabians, the trade-unionists, Plekhanov, Rubanowics, the group Nasche Djelo), form a greater danger to the working class than the bourgeois apostles of Imperialism, because they mislead the class-conscious workers by abusing the Socialist flag. *The uncompromising fight against Social Imperialism is fundamental to a revolutionary mobilization of the proletariat and the re-birth of the International.*

It is the problem before the Socialist parties, as well as the Socialist minorities in the now Social imperialistic parties, to awake and to lead the mass of the workers in a *revolutionary struggle* against the capitalist governments, to conquer political power for the Socialist organization of society.

Without giving up the fight for every inch of ground under present Capitalism, for every reform that will strengthen the working class, without denouncing any means of organizing and propaganda, the social-democrats, on the contrary, will have to use all of the reforms in our minimum program *to intensify* the present *war crisis*, as well as every other social or political crisis of capitalism, to an attack on its foundations. When this struggle is fought *with Socialism as its issue*, the workers will become unaccessible for a policy of subjugating one people by another, as the result of continuing the domination of one nation by another, and the cry for new annexations will not tempt because of any national solidarity, which has now led the workers to the battle-field.

The beginning of this struggle forms *the fight against the world-war, to end the general murder as soon as possible.* This fight requires *the voting against war credits, the giving up of any participation in capitalist governments*, the criticism of the capitalist, anti-socialist character of the war in Parliament and in the legal, and if necessary, illegal press, the uncompromising fight against social-patriotism and the use of *every action among the people, resulting from the war (misery, losses in the war, etc.) to organize street demonstrations* opposed to the government. It requires the propaganda of *International Solidarity in the trenches*, the support of *economic strikes* and the endeavor to enlarge these, whenever conditions are favorable, into political, strikes. *Civil war, not civil peace*, is the issue.

Contrary to all illusions, as to the possibility of getting a permanent peace or a beginning of disarmament by whatever decree of diplomacy and governments, the revolutionary Social democrats must show the workers over and over again, that the *social revolution* alone can bring permanent

peace as well as the liberation of the human race.

American Comrades! This resolution breathes the fighting spirit of a new generation.

It means a fight against Imperialism and Patriotism, against the defense of capitalist Fatherlands; it means a fight against "socialistic" imperialism and "socialistic" patriotism as well. It means intensifying our economic action to a series of mass actions, street demonstrations and industrial strikes, as a means of disorganizing the capitalist state and strengthening the power of labor. It means the social revolution as a practical issue of the class struggle; civil war till the final victory.

This always has been the spirit of our INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW. Maybe some of our comrades have temporarily lost somewhat of their self-confidence and fighting spirit. Those have been mistaken. There will be new life, new and bigger fighting, new methods in future. Don't stay behind; be in the first ranks and others will follow. Conditions are ripe, where are the hands to reap the harvest?

### **The Left Wing: Imperialism (June 1916)**

NOTE: Dr. S.J. Rutgers, who has been for years associated with the best known socialists of Holland and Germany, as a member of the uncompromising Social Democratic Party of Holland, and who is in close touch with the European comrades who are planning for a new Socialist Conference, to be wholly International in its aims, has consented to write a short series of articles for the REVIEW, of which this is the second. His general subject is the attitude toward Imperialism and toward Internationalism of the LEFT WING, or revolutionary group, in each of the Socialist parties in Europe today. These groups seem to us to contain within themselves the only hope of a real working class International. We want every reader of the REVIEW to read these articles carefully, and discuss them with comrades who have become discouraged and left the Socialist Party. We believe that an overwhelming majority of American Socialists will welcome the plan of action suggested in these articles, and will desire to swing the Socialist Party of America into line with the new International that is even now taking definite form. We believe these articles will prove to be the most valuable series we have ever published in the REVIEW. They will put the American comrades, who want a revolutionary organization, in touch with the comrades across the ocean who have like aims and a more definite program. - EDITORS.

The editors have asked me to give more information about the principles and action advocated by the European Socialists of the Left Wing, who signed the resolution printed on page 648 of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW for May. In so doing, it is of foremost importance to make clear what these groups understand by *Imperialism*.

This is not so simple as it may seem, and the dictionary will not help. For Imperialism is a living conception, that has already an evolution of its own, and that will broaden its meaning until it has taken definite form in the heads and hearts of the workers.

Originally the word Imperialism was used in the more restricted meaning of foreign colonial expansion in its modern form, resulting in monopolistic tendencies, and in the investment for export of fixed capital such as steel and machinery, instead of textiles and other commodities for direct consumption. This form of Imperialism attracted general attention in Europe, where it originated, and it soon became clear that foreign aggression was not simply a colonial problem, but that Imperialism includes a number of tendencies in modern capitalism that materially affect the relations of social classes. Imperialism means not merely an aggressive *foreign policy*,

*but an aggressive home policy as well.*

In Europe it had already been noticed that for some ten years preceding the present world war there had been an absolute stagnation in political reforms. After a period in which some political results, some so-called social laws, were secured, there followed a period of reaction. Not only did the bourgeoisie refuse to make any further concession to the working class, but some of the advantages already granted were actually withdrawn. The greatly admired social laws in Germany, for example, enacted some forty years ago, have recently been mutilated; by taking away from the working class the greater part of its influence over the management of the funds.

It has become evident that the significance of European parliaments is on the decline, while the importance of the executive and the senate is generally increasing; that there is a growing tendency among the judges to exercise political influence, and that the police grows more powerful and more brutal. Wherever there was a clash between military and civil government, the latter has had to back down, and attacks on free speech and a free press are more frequent. There was a general reaction all along the line, and back of these reactionary measures were the same interests that cause foreign aggression – namely, big capital and monopoly.

It was gradually realized by close observers of these tendencies among the European Socialists, that foreign aggression and home aggression were two faces of the same monster. They came to see that Capitalism, under the absolute rule of highly concentrated and monopolistic financial interests, means a new phase of development with new forms of the class struggle; it means the broadening of the class struggle into an international world struggle. It is this new policy of the capitalist class, under control of financial, monopolistic capital, that European Socialists now mean when they speak of Imperialism. In this sense Imperialism is *the* present day form of the class struggle.

Among the characteristics of this new class-policy in Europe are: Aggressive, brutal home policy; no results from parliamentary action; declining influence of congress with increasing power of the executive; brutal police; reactionary judges; growing influence of militarism; attack on free speech and a free press.

*But that is exactly what you have in the United States!! – in a form and an intensity that puts Europe in the shadow!!*

All the symptoms of your own case lead to this one diagnosis: *Highly advanced Imperialism of a special American variety, with retarded development of foreign aggression.*

No one can fail to see this, and to me it was a kind of revelation, because it solved at once a problem that has been haunting many of us over in Europe.

Most of the European Socialists who were interested in American conditions reasoned as follows: In Europe we have succeeded in getting some social reforms, and we expect gradually to get more, together with a development of democratic influence on the government. In the United States, conditions being economically more advanced, and democratic forms better developed, the result should be: more political reforms; yet we observe that the results are, on the whole, negative. Then we shrugged our shoulders and murmured something about the difficulties of so many different languages, corruption, etc., but we knew that these were by no means a satisfactory explanation.

Now as soon as we realize that present-day capitalism has *not* a growing tendency for social reforms and democracy, but that, on the contrary, the old middle class democracy is on the decline, and social reforms, as a means to keep labor quiet and

content, have lost much of their attraction to capitalists, the American situation loses much of its mystery.

European Left Wing Socialists had already emphasized, over and over again, that in fighting the power of Big Capital, the labor politicians as such were powerless, and that labor can gain only by putting its organized mass-power against the capitalist power as organized in trustified industries and in the State. These smaller groups of European Socialists had, however, a hard job in fighting their own official party leaders. This all-day fighting did not leave much time to study American conditions, and moreover the outbreak of the war meant a temporary disorganization of the Left Wings.

Since then there has been a readjustment, and the war, which was the practical, tho horrible proof, that the official parties were wrong and the principles of the Left Wing were right, has clarified the problem, and has already produced a new literature and a start towards the consolidation of future tactics in the class struggle.

At the same time the interest of European Socialists in the problems of the United States, now that it prepares to enter the field of world politics, has increased; and we can now understand, that *because* the United States is ahead of Europe in industrial development, your home policy must be brutal, and social reforms are lacking. Far from expecting more political reforms and more influence of the workers upon the government than is found in Europe, and far from expecting a less brutal suppression of the workers in this so-called "democratic" country, it proves logical to expect a more complete failure of middle class democracy under the iron heel of financial capital. Even without much aggression in the direction of foreign colonies, Imperialism, being the latest form of the capitalist class struggle, must put its mark on all of *your* social institutions as well.

The American comrades will realize that, in the more fundamental sense of the word, Imperialism has already developed in your country, even farther than it has in Europe, and that the stagnation of your political party is due to this development. In recognizing this will be found the only hope for getting out of the dead-lock.

Nevertheless the United States shows signs of a new life. Mass action, which in Europe, up to now, has been advocated without much result, has grown up in the United States out of the practical facts – not as a theory, but as a necessity of working class conditions. Spontaneous mass actions on the economic field, and a general recognition that the future belongs to a higher form of organization along industrial instead of craft lines, may be considered as the more positive and hopeful results of Imperialistic development in the United States.

That American comrades have not hitherto recognized Imperialism as the basic cause of the difficulties in carrying on the proletarian organization along the old lines, is due to the fact that Imperialism in America has not shown its most familiar face of foreign aggression. This, however, has only been a temporary phase, caused by the big possibilities in developing your own "new world." Now that your masters have decided to embark upon world politics, the last excuse for not recognizing actual conditions has disappeared, and even those who still imagine they have some political "democracy," must admit that the coming wave of militarism will sweep away all that may be left of the old methods and old ideals.

That foreign aggression and militarism are on their way in the United States, no one can deny. Preparedness overshadows all other problems, and there is not the least doubt about the meaning of this "preparedness." Your government has already tightened its grip on Haiti and on some of the "independent" republics in Central

America; it has already practically decided upon intervention in Mexico. The fact that your president dreads the consequences of his "punitive expedition," knowing that real intervention at the present moment might mean the defeat and annihilation of the present army of the United States, may give some delay, but will not alter the final results. It is typical of the unscrupulous methods of Big Capital, that they would not hesitate one moment to sacrifice the nation's army, and even some of their own temporary interests in Mexico, in order to stimulate the necessary national feeling and militaristic spirit at home, and to secure their future interests, not only in Mexico, but in the world at large.

If you wish to know what will be your future politics, you have simply to watch the activities of your bankers. The fifty million dollars invested in the "American International Corporation," organized by the National City Bank, affiliated with the Rockefeller interests, is of more importance than all the acts of Congress in a whole session. The increasing number of branches of United States banking houses in foreign countries, are the forerunners of Imperialistic capitalism, and pave the way for this aggressive form of capitalism, as missionaries did for the old style of colonial exploitation. The fact that each university is requested to send two graduates to be trained at the National City Bank for well-paid jobs in South America and elsewhere, illustrates the interests of the middle class in Imperialistic policy. There can be no greater mistake than to think that behind preparedness are *only* the interests of armament manufacturers. Those interests may be powerful; they could not dominate the whole nation, if it were not for Imperialism, binding together the different groups of capitalists with a new strong *ideology of world power*.

It is disappointing to see the lack of understanding among the workers, just at the time when the forces of aggression are organizing efficiently. Take for example the "International Trade Conference," where hundreds of bigger and smaller manufacturers came together with the big banking interests to discuss ways and means for the better exploitation of the world, and especially of South America. It was certainly touching to hear these big bankers explain that their patriotic aim was to stimulate American industry, that they wanted to give good service for small profits, etc. Of course these passages in the speeches were for the public and the press, none of the interested parties being fooled by them. And altho not on the official program, there arose at this meeting a gentleman who had general attention and sympathy, showing a picture, on which were indicated in brilliant colors the big part of the total product that went to labor, and relatively small parts left to the different forms of profit. And he proved that in Europe the conditions were not quite so hard for capital, and that there was not much in foreign trade and foreign markets unless this big share of labor in the United States could be reduced considerably. General applause followed, altho the chairman explained that this gentleman was out of order, meaning that such a truth should not be spoken out loud. This incident gives an excellent illustration of the fact that a reduction of the share of labor in its product, which means *home* aggression, is another face of that same Imperialism that prepares for *foreign* aggression: both faces together showing the new and brutal form of the class struggle.

There has been a lack of understanding and an almost criminal lack of interest among the workers of the United States as to Imperialism, probably because it was supposed to be a special European problem. Many Socialists did realize that the problem would come to America some time, but it was not thought very actual. As soon, however, as you see Imperialism in its broader sense, and in the light of your own American conditions, it becomes the most important problem in actual tactics; it means moreover for you a chance for the rebirth of your own Socialist movement.

This is so all-important, that in our next article it will be necessary to prove more completely, that the broader conception of Imperialism, as understood in Europe by the Left Wing, is no mere clever piece of construction, but that it is based upon and grows out of solid economic facts.

NOTE: The address of the Left Wing of the Zimmerwalder Conferenz was misprinted in the May issue of the REVIEW and should read Fritz Platen, Rotachstr., 28, Zurich, Switzerland. There is another typographical error at the top of page 648 in the declaration of Ledebour and Hoffman who voted against the war credits because there were no *foreign* soldiers in Germany, which is a nationalistic argument and accepts the principle of defending capitalist fatherlands.

### **The Left Wing: Economic Causes of Imperialism (July 1916)**

In analyzing Imperialism in its broader sense, as the term is understood by the Left Wing of the European Socialists, we found that this kind of Imperialism is quite familiar to American workers in their every-day class struggle, also that Imperialism is at the bottom of the failure of parliamentary action, and of the temporary set-back in the class struggle of the wage-workers of the United States.

This important issue (Imperialism) makes it necessary for us to consider closely the economic facts, which go to show, that the aggressive foreign policy, to protect the investments of capital for the exploitation of undeveloped foreign countries, and the aggressive, brutal, home policy take their origin from the same special economic causes.

Given the elementary economic fact, that the share of labor in its product is determined by the cost of its reproduction, that is, the cost of living, according to historical standards, influenced within certain limits by the fighting power of the workers; given also the all important tendency under capitalism of an ever-growing productivity of labor; the result is, an increasing tendency for expansion of the markets. That the products should be disposed of by increasing the purchasing power of labor is not likely to happen, unless labor should get into power, which means the end of the Capitalist system. For the capitalist class to consume the growing product in unlimited luxury is against the most essential characteristic of capitalism, which demands that the surplus value be invested in new and bigger industries, more highly developed machinery, etc., bringing certain ruin to those capitalists that fall behind in the race. To invest the surplus value in more productive machinery means increasing the difficulty of finding a market, unless there is expansion at the same time.

To a certain extent the means of production may create their own market, which strengthens the present characteristic of the supremacy of iron and steel and basic industries, as compared with textiles and other similar commodities in an earlier period of capitalism, but the rapid growth of modern machinery at the same time tends to stimulate the output on all fields of capitalistic production. So we can easily understand that expansion is one of the most fundamental characteristics of capitalism.

Now since all this is a normal feature of capitalism, it does not, even tho it is at the bottom of imperialism, account in itself for the advent of what we have called a new phase of capitalism. We might say, that this new development into Imperialism is an example of a dialectic development, in which a quantitative change turns at a certain point into a qualitative one – but such a statement will appeal only to a few of the more philosophic socialists.

Keeping, however, to every-day facts, it will be easy to understand how this fundamental change came about.

The ever-growing concentration and the technical development did not affect all branches of production to the same degree. On the contrary, this concentration and trustification did affect first of all some of the basic industries: steel, coal, copper, oil, etc. In most of these basic industries, there developed a tendency toward monopoly, while at the same time other industries were far behind in their development, and continued along the old lines of capitalistic production.

Now we all know, that “free competition” is one of the fundamentals of capitalist economics; that in the early days of capitalism this free competition was the all-important slogan from which developed the ideology of “freedom,” which played so important a part in the French Revolution, as well as in the policy of the bourgeois at a time when they still believed in bringing in a better world.

Free competition forms a most important element in the capitalist economy. Although it does not affect directly the problems of surplus value and exploitation of the wage workers, it constitutes the regulating factor in the division of the surplus value among the different groups of capitalists, assuring each an equal return upon an equal sum of money invested. The capitalist, being “free” to invest his money where he thinks it most profitable, will shift it from industries with smaller profits to such as offer higher returns. Investors, however, are only interested in the total returns on their investments, regardless of whether this is in fixed capital, machinery, etc., yielding no surplus value, or in labor, which produces all of the surplus value. This brings about a shifting of capital and of surplus value from the less-developed to the more highly developed industries—automatically regulated by the price of commodities; these selling above or below their values in a way to keep the profit in each industry at about the average rate.

Within the limit of an article, it is only possible to mention these fundamental problems, which are treated in the third volume of Marx’s “Capital.” Those who are not familiar with these theories will nevertheless be able to understand the general meaning and to compare the results derived from the application of the theory with the every-day facts. So they are invited to proceed.

Given monopolistic tendencies in some of the basic industries, it follows that the capitalist law, regulating the price of the basis of free competition, becomes fallacious, and is partly superseded by what the monopolists call “price policy” – a policy well described by a typical phrase derived from American railroad methods as “all the traffic will bear.”

Let us suppose that there is a perfect monopoly in one of the basic industries, such as the production of steel. Then the price of steel to a certain extent can be fixed arbitrarily by the monopolist. What will be the limit under these circumstances?

The monopolist cannot escape the laws of value, and he does not increase the amount of surplus value by his price policy. He may be in a position to reduce the standard of living of the wageworkers to a certain degree, not, however, as a monopolist, but as a powerful master. For even if the monopolist reduces the standard of living by means of high prices, it will depend upon the relative power of labor whether it is compensated by an increase in wages. The economic struggle of labor has always been for an actual (or a desired) standard of living, not for a certain money wage, regardless of what can be bought with it. And although, as a general rule, a monopolist will be at the same time a powerful master, the worker will always have to receive a wage on which he can live, so that his exploitation can continue.

But where, if not from labor, does the monopolist get his extra profit, when he increases the price of his products? The answer is that he pumps a greater part of the

general surplus value into his own barrel, by reducing the share of his fellow-capitalists, and he can go on pumping until – until the profits of the other capitalists are reduced to a certain standard of income, more or less according to historic conditions, that allows them to carry on those industries that are not yet ripe for being controlled directly by Big Capital.

So we find a new element entering the capitalist economy, which influences the profits of the independent capitalists in a way which greatly resembles that in which the salaries of employees and the wages of laborers are fixed, and although the “standard of living” is higher, there is the same tendency to reduce this standard gradually.

There remains, of course, a competition among the smaller capitalists themselves, to get a greater share of what is left by Big Capital, and besides, we must not forget that there is no such thing as a complete monopoly. But the tendency to increase the profits of Big Capital at the expense of the other capitalist groups is indisputable, and has most important results.

Monopolistic Big Capital getting an extra profit as compared with other capitalists, it is logical that the big interests want to invest their profits in some equally profitable way. This means that they will use their enormous profits principally in two ways: in industries that will soon be ripe for combining with other highly developed industries; or in extending the highly developed industries that have already monopolistic tendencies. The development of industries of lower organization into a higher capitalist form is a process that cannot be forced in a given situation, beyond certain technical and social limits. Thus the second possibility, that of extending the existing monopolistic enterprises, becomes of first importance. And here we are at the bottom of imperialism in its foreign aggression, with steel and oil interests and the extractive industries in control, preferably in their generalized form of financing banking capital.

In the United States, until very recently, conditions have been such as to induce Big Capital to pay more attention to the first form of investment, by subjugating less developed industries, under its own control. At the same time, there were opportunities for developing the western part of the United States, which gave room for quantitative expansion, without foreign aggression. Now that this possibility has, relatively speaking, come to a standstill, foreign aggression is decided upon by Financial Capital, and you may be sure that this will be carried out with efficiency and without the slightest scruples.

We have thus shown very briefly the results of economic developments as affecting big monopolistic capital. But how about the rest of the capitalist class?

Since Big Capital pumps its extra profits out of less developed capitalistic enterprises, some of us might expect that the majority of capitalists would combine to fight Big Capital. And indeed there has been some fighting of this kind. The United States has witnessed several attempts to fight monopolies, and an equal number of failures to accomplish anything. The anti-trust laws have been used against labor unions, but have had no visible effect upon the Rockefeller interests. There is unconscious humor in the big signs posted in some of the smaller New York lunch rooms, printed on paper from the paper trust, in which the appetite of customers is stimulated by the legend: “We Buy No Products from Any Trust.” As this assumes that they have oil fields, anthracite mines and steel mills of their own, the only solution of the statement seems to be that these lunch-rooms must themselves be part of a gigantic trust.

It is highly interesting to realize, why it is that this fight against Big Capital is such a failure. On one side we find a small number of interested individuals, on the other side the great majority of capitalists, in a country with so-called "democratic institutions," and without even so much as militarism to protect the interests of the few. We observe the majority making up their minds to attack the few, and failing, failing lamentably and giving it up, to become the obedient servants of Big Capital. Is not this mysterious, and can labor maintain any hope in its own victory in view of such facts?

Here is a brilliant example of the all-importance of economic facts, of economic power, when backed by historical tendencies.

Small capital is historically doomed; it is not an indispensable economic factor. And the more highly developed, the more powerful an industry is, the greater its chance of emerging into Big monopolistic capital. The feeling of dependence upon financial Capital is already so overwhelming in the capitalist class, that any serious opposition is impossible. In fact, if any capitalist were to venture a serious attack on the Big interests, he can be most easily ruined. The tendency of history is to do away with "independent" capital, and this makes the smaller capitalists powerless. The tendency of history can not do away with labor, however; on the contrary, Big Capital derives its power from labor. In this fact lies our power and our hope.

The failure of capitalist attacks upon monopoly implies, of course, the absolute dependency of the capitalist class upon Big Capital; it means the control of the latter over the whole field of social and political life. It means therefore, that the tendency of Big Capital toward Imperialism becomes a general policy of the whole capitalist class. Since the smaller capitalist can not resist Big Capital, their only possible policy is to try to make the best of the situation by supporting Big Capital, and seeking a share in the profits that result from foreign and home aggression. For as against Labor, all the capitalists have a common interest; they all live from surplus value, and they all try to keep labor cheap and submissive. Moreover, Big Capital is perfectly willing to grant a certain higher standard of living and some material advantages to those who are needed to keep labor down; this includes not only little "capitalists" but the higher salaried employees as well, and even some elements of the laboring class. Big Capital is able and willing to pay for services, but it will not allow any form of independent thought or action. Even the highest official of a corporation or the President of the United States will be "fired" if he acts counter to the fundamental interests of Big Capital.

This means the end of old style "politics," in which the conflicting interests of different capitalist groups might be skilfully used by brilliant labor leaders to further the interests of the working class (or of themselves). This means, that we have arrived at what Marx predicted in the Communist Manifesto, "the splitting up of society into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other; Bourgeoisie and Proletariat." It means absolutism, brutality, reaction; it means in one word "Imperialism," not only as foreign aggression, but as a home policy of the ruling class as well. *It means the justification of the European conception of Imperialism.*

And it means even more. It means a tendency towards a more complete form of industrial concentration, in which the whole powerful organization of the capitalist State will be put into the direct service of the controlling Financial Interests, to exploit the workers more efficiently. *State Capitalism* is the logical outcome, because this means the highest form of capitalist organization of industries, and at the same time constitutes the political form best adapted to serve the interests of the various

capitalist groups.

The large group of better-paid employees and officials, the so-called new middle class, who depend upon their salaries, may reasonably expect to be better protected in their standard of living by a state organization, with an official standardization of salaries, than under privately controlled monopolies. The so-called "independent" capitalists as a group are, as we have seen above, practically in the same position as the salaried employees. And Big Capital, which will control the organization of the new monopolistic state, will find it the most effective machine that can be devised to enslave the workers, and therefore will accept this form of imperialism.

State Capitalism will mean the most efficient form of organization in the struggle for foreign aggression and world power, as well as the strongest form of class organization against labor, making labor strikes a crime against the nation, and international solidarity high treason.

No great effort of the imagination is required to picture this aggressive form of future State Capitalism, in which the most brutal State, with the most effective militarism in the trenches as well as in the workshop, will have the best chances for world power.

But this is a conception of the future, with some uncertain elements, above all the uncertainty whether labor will continue to support the capitalist class in its "national" ambitions – whether labor will fail to recognize its duty to its own class under Imperialism.

But *Imperialism as a class policy* of modern financial capitalism under *present* conditions, for the exploitation of the world-proletariat, is no conception of the future; it is a living fact before our eyes.

This form of Imperialism is without doubt highly developed in the United States, and the fact that the workers have not realized it, and have kept to the old and obsolete forms of lifeless democracy, accounts for the scanty results accomplished by the socialist movement on this side of the ocean. There is a beginning of new life, a beginning of mass-democracy, but it lacks a clear understanding of its relation to the past and the future, as well as to the rest of the world. As soon as red-blooded, class-conscious workers get into their heads that the present-day form of capitalism is Imperialism, and that under Imperialism the only possible form of democracy is mass action, there will be the beginning of a new fighting period; there will be an end to the present stagnation.

This new democracy and its practical methods of action will be the subject matter of our next article.

### **The Left Wing: The Passing of the Old Democracy (August 1916)**

Imperialism means the end of the middle class democracy, as we have already stated. Imperialism means the control of Big monopolistic Capital over all other grades of capitalists; means the Government of money kings (Plutocracy).

The old democracy is the form of government which best suited the interests of competitive capitalism in its growth. It permitted the capitalist class to rule with the help of the farmers and the old middle classes, against the interests of the feudal classes and land aristocracy. During the period of conflicting interests among the different groups of the bourgeoisie, the labor class succeeded in getting some results by using its political influence, together with some of the capitalistic groups. This was the period in which reformistic socialism originated.

The highest forms of this "democracy" were developed in countries with prevailing middle-class interests. The most perfect example is, perhaps, Switzerland, a country with prevailing small industries and small farmers. Another example is France, with its numerous class of small farmers. Germany never developed this system of democracy to its full extent, because of its special historical development. When in 1848 the bourgeoisie in Germany gathered sufficient strength to make a political revolution, and the King of Prussia barely escaped falling into the hands of the insurgents, the bourgeoisie decided not to use the situation to its full extent, not to establish a bourgeois democratic Government after the French model.

It has been generally admitted among European socialists, that fear for the growing influence of the laboring class, at that time, prevented the German bourgeoisie from striving for a fully developed middle class democracy, and that it therefore preferred to make a pact with the feudal classes. The result was, that feudal aristocracy put itself into the service of modern capitalism, and became a capitalist force of great importance.

Although in Europe this is the general conception, I have met American Comrades who ventured the supposition that it was not Feudalism that became the servant of capitalism, but that Feudalism maintained a leading position as such. That this conception is wrong is proven by the fact that German capitalism developed in a short time the most efficient capitalist organization of Europe. The fact that the German capitalists could leave their Governmental affairs to a special class of efficient bureaucrats had the double advantage of leaving them to their task of industrial development, and avoiding the more direct class conflicts with their workers on the political field.

They could leave this to the "Junkers" and pretend that reactionary measures were taken against the wishes of the "liberal" bourgeoisie. This not only proved the most efficient method of government during the development of capitalism, but it will be easily understood that this more absolutist form of Government proved to fit most admirably the capitalist conditions under the early Imperialism.

England, the oldest among capitalist States, also had a special development of its own. In the first part of the eighteenth century, during the beginning of capitalism, it was most brutal in its governmental system. But it soon gained a position of absolute control over world industry, and could afford to originate a democratic regime, in which the upper layers of the working class counterbalanced the interests of land aristocracy; the class of small farmers and the old middle classes being early ruined by the marvelous growth of young capitalism.

This necessity of giving political influence to parts of the laboring class is one of the reasons for the better situation which skilled labor in England has long enjoyed, but at the same time capitalist class thought it wise to establish a system of capitalist safety valves, which nowhere else has been developed in such a degree. Not only is the power of the Senate in England stronger than on the Continent, and is the power of Parliament restricted by an elaborate system of "traditions." But in England originated the dominating political power of the judges, a system afterwards introduced from England into your political machinery.

Whatever may be the historical differences in European "democracies" they are all alike in that they are middle class democracies, originating in the necessity of uniting different groups of capitalists, with somewhat different interests, into one strong government, in which occasionally some upper layers of labor might cooperate.

The same holds true in the United States. The original democracy was mainly a democracy of farmers and small capitalists, and it combined features of different European countries.

Now we have seen that under Imperialism the capitalist interests gradually consolidate into *one* common interest, under the control of Big monopolistic capital. This not only does away with the original capitalist necessity for "democracy" and turns it from a tool to further capitalist interests into a stumbling block, but we *actually notice* in all of the leading countries a passing away of the old democracy, growing reaction, and a tendency towards absolutism. In Europe, this process has been proceeding during at least twenty years, and it has been recognized in the "Left Wing" socialist press. Details will not much interest my American readers, and the few examples in my June article will be a sufficient indication for those who are familiar with recent European history.

But the United States having developed even farther into Imperialism than Europe, we must expect to find, and indeed, do find, the same tendency. It is, to my mind, one of the funniest experiences, to hear members of the working class in the United States, and even well informed socialists, boast of their American "political democracy." And it is one of the best features of your International Review to have constantly, issue after issue, year after year, pointed to the facts that illustrate the passing away of those old forms of democracy.

What do you mean by your "democracy?"

Is it the fact that your "Boss" sometimes pats you on the back and calls you a jolly old boy, asking you about your wife and the kids, perhaps indexing your name for future reference? If so, there may be some democracy, although even this is on the decline.

Does political democracy simply mean that you have a vote for Congress, or for some of the political officers? Suppose at the moment you have to vote somebody with a revolver tells you how to vote, or somebody with a bag of dollars is willing to pay for the vote, and you need the money badly. Or suppose they fool you about your interests at school, in the press and in the church, and prevent you from getting your own informations about your class interests. Political democracy requires something more than a vote, something more than a formality.

Democracy means that your class must influence the Government in the broadest sense, according to its importance and its number. A farmers' democracy means that the interests of the farmers are taken care of.

Nowadays the workers are in the majority, but nobody supposes that they can dictate a policy that takes care of their interests. Many of you only look to political *forms* and the vote, and don't understand why there is no such thing as political influence of the working class.

But when you look at the *facts* there will be no longer any doubt.

It is not the most important fact, but it is an interesting one, that far more than one-third of the workers do not even have a vote: Negroes in the South, immigrants in the North, and men who must keep moving in pursuit of jobs are barred, and this percentage has been vastly increasing in the last twenty years, so as to surpass, nowadays, that in most of the European countries.

But even if all of the workers of the United States had a vote, this would not make a real difference. Congress has lost so much of its influence that it is only a lame wing of the real Government. The Senate has increased its power and exercises

it with real class consciousness.

The power of the President of the United States, in important issues like peace and war, is greater even than that of the King of England. It is of little importance that the Constitution tells you that Congress declares war, because Congress simply has to approve the results of the diplomacy of the President and the executive powers. This has been shown again and again in the last months, and it makes no difference in practice, whether this is a result of Presidential aggression or Congressional self-elimination.

The most effective method of doing away with democracy, however, is in the political function of the judges, with the Supreme Court as its highest and unparalleled form. Nowhere in the world will you find an equally reactionary institution. What becomes of the influence of your Congress, as compared with that of the executive power of Governors, Mayors, Judges, and the Police? Look over the pages of your International Review and see what has become of democracy in your courts, and under the rifles of your most brutal police and militia. And yet, these institutions form a part of your government as well, and certainly are of much more importance in the practical life of the workers than Congress. What becomes of your freedom of speech and press, as soon as you use them for a real attack on capitalist institutions?

If you look beyond the form to the facts, there proves to be no greater lie than that of political democracy in the United States.

Some clever headed theoreticians will answer: we cannot deny the facts, but there is something in the form, because this will enable us to have real democracy in the future. They forget two facts: first, that in the whole capitalist world, and especially in the United States, there is no tendency towards more democracy, but that on the contrary, a primitive middle class democracy is on the decline, is lost, and second, that if, by some unexpected wonder, the workers should succeed in using the old democratic forms in a real fight, the capitalist class would change the forms, rather than allow an easy victory to its enemies. The reality is, that Capital deliberately fools you with the form, as long as you allow yourself to be fooled, and that this is the only reason and the only "advantage" of this sham "democracy."

It is one of the most important necessities, if you wish to get out of the present stagnation, that you realize without and reserve that there exists no such a thing as political democracy in the United States, and that the old forms of parliamentary methods will not develop into real political democracy, and therefore, have only a restricted, temporary meaning to labor.

It certainly is an advantage that present-day "democratic" forms enable socialists to demonstrate effectively the class differences and class antagonisms. Congress can be a valuable platform for socialist propaganda, as for instance, is shown by the activities of Karl Liebknecht, in the Prussian Diet. But we must see its limits; we must understand that in the class struggle it is only power that counts, and that old parliamentary forms will be changed, in fact are uninterruptedly changed, as soon as they are no longer in the interest of the ruling class.

The old style of parliamentary action is rapidly losing its significance for the working class, but remember, that there is a very great difference between what we nowadays call parliamentary action and the political influences of the working class.

About this difference and the future of a new "mass" democracy on the industrial, as well as on the political field, will deal the next and last article in this series.

What this difference is, and what is the future of a new "mass" democracy on the industrial as well as the political field, will be the subjects of the next and concluding

article in this series.

### **The Left Wing Socialists: Mass Action (November 1916)**

In the August issue it was stated that the European middle class democracies are passing away, and it was found that in the United States this process had already developed so far, as to eliminate almost entirely the influence of the working class, and also to a great extent that of middle classes, on the Government controlled by Big Capital.

The result is, that as long as the Socialist Party is working on the old lines, it is doomed to inactivity. There, of course, is left the possibility of doing some work of propaganda and education, but we know that without *action*, the general educational work does not amount to much. Besides, in keeping to the old conception of a growing political democracy, it is logical that the party looks upon the empty form of democratic institutions as upon the most precious treasure, and mistakes governmental jobs, which are acquired by some of the leaders, in co-operation with non-socialist elements, for real power. The result is this most disgusting situation, of electing socialist mayors, sheriffs, aldermen, etc., only to expel them afterwards from the party or else to disrupt what is left of the socialist organization. Is there any wonder that there has been a general feeling of discontent among the rank and file, and that the workers as such do not join the Socialist Party?

As soon, however, as we recognize the fact, that the old democratic form is rapidly losing its significance under the new form of Imperialistic Capitalism, there is some hope of adopting methods in accordance with the new conditions.

Voting for Congress or for political jobs, and in general what we call parliamentary action, pure and simple, loses much of its significance as a proposition to improve the conditions of the working class, and it is simply absurd to expect that we could Vote our ruling class out of power.

*But parliamentary action is not the only form of political action.*

To understand European literature and to understand the Resolution of the Left Wing mentioned in the May issue, it is necessary to realize what European Left Wing Socialists mean by political action. In this resolution one of the most important forms of future action is indicated by what is called "political strikes," by which are meant strikes that go beyond the purpose of getting higher wages or shorter hours, or any other improvement in the position of the workers on the job. Not only a strike like the one in Belgium to conquer general suffrage is called a political strike, but also strikes for free speech or to protest against reactionary decisions by judges, and in general, those strikes in which the general class interests of the workers conflict with general capitalist class interests. An economic conflict and strike, in which the capitalist class uses its political power of militarism and militia, may broaden into a political strike, because it is no longer a conflict between the worker and his employer, but becomes a conflict between the working class and the capitalist class.

Now, some of you may feel as if this were playing with words, but it always proves an absolute necessity to keep to fundamental definitions, in order to know exactly about what we are talking. And at all events, it is essential for you to know what our European comrades understand by certain expressions, if we want to co-operate with them on an International understanding.

As far as the United States is concerned, it has long been recognized by a great number of our comrades, that the old form of economic action, as represented in the craft unions and the A. F. of L., has been outlived. The highly concentrated

monopolistic industries are beyond the reach of unions on craft lines and it has been recognized that the future forms of fighting will have to be along industrial lines. It has been realized also that, in this industrial action, unskilled labor will play a decisive part, and that this action is only possible when the rank and file emancipates itself from the system of all-powerful leaders.

This is most apparent, be it only for the simple practical reason, that it has already become a practice of your ruling class to imprison or to shoot the leaders as soon as an important mass action is at hand.

Now, there is no doubt that, as far as *economic action* is concerned, the general recognition of the fact, that class power has to concentrate from craft unionism into industrial action, has made more headway in the United States than in Europe, and this is in harmony with your more developed concentration of industrial and financial capital. But on the *political field* the old methods have been maintained on account of the successful attempts of Capital to fool the workers with the obsolete forms of a sham-democracy. It, however, must be clear to anybody with some sense for reality, that a parallel change in political action is absolutely indispensable.

As soon as we don't stare ourselves blind on parliamentary votes and jobs, it is easy to understand that political influence can only result from power, and that power, now that the laboring class is confined to its own force and has nothing to hope for from the help of middle classes, can only be developed in mass action. So we get to the very logical result, that political action must be developed along the same lines, along which economic action has already started: *those of mass action*.

Now there can be different forms of political mass action: meetings, street demonstrations, political strikes and revolts, which gives an opportunity to develop gradually into higher forms of mass action. Even voting in an election can be made a mass action, if only there is no compromising and no effort to catch non-socialist votes, but real Socialist propaganda and education. If you don't compromise, there is not much danger of getting jobs, and wherever there should be so much influence of uncompromising Socialists, as to conquer a political position by virtue of their own strength, mass action means that the workers themselves keep control of their nominees, or else have to leave them to their own fate. Mass action, however, is by no means confined to elections, nor is this the most promising field for this form of political action.

As soon as there is a general (or political) class issue, for instance, reactionary measures in Congress or Senate, an attack on free speech or free press, a reactionary decision of the Supreme Court, an attack from the police or the militia, etc., the working class should get into the habit of showing their sentiment and indignation by protesting in meetings, on the streets, in temporary strikes of protest, etc. And the more reactionary our present-day, Imperialistic capitalism becomes, the stronger will be the feeling of protest and the more the mass actions will develop, and will gain in power. Of course, we cannot "make" a powerful mass action, but the more we make the workers see that the present methods are insufficient and that the only possible result is in mass action, the sooner we may expect that the general discontent and oppression will give birth to an organized mass action, which will lead to a new and effective form of political action.

It must be clear, that this mass action as a political method, at the same time solves the problem of democracy. The old democratic system of voting the power into the hands of leaders and leaving it to those leaders to make the best of it, has utterly failed. The German Socialist party certainly is the best and unmistakable example. There evidently is no other alternative to the old "democracy" than a permanent and

effective influence and control by the masses. We have so long worshipped the old forms of democracy that we can hardly imagine how to do without a complicated system of more or less independent leaders, but we must understand that the spirit and capacities necessary to have democratic mass control will develop gradually, together with the development of mass action itself. It is already much to see the direction in which the only solution of this important problem is to be found and it is encouraging that this is the same solution that has already been recognized on the economic field.

This leads us to another important feature of this form of political action. It solves the antagonism between political and economic action. Present day parliamentary action does not appeal to the industrial wageworkers. There really is not much to gain for an industrial wage slave in joining the Socialist Party, and every now and then they lose a good comrade, who becomes a "politician," gets a job and ends by being a traitor to his class. This proves to be almost a natural process, which only strong personalities can resist. No wonder that this sort of outgrown parliamentarism is condemned, nor that at the same time, to the disadvantage of the working class, political action as such sometimes is condemned with it.

On the other hand, some among those workers who realize, what cannot be denied anyhow, that the political power of the capitalists is a strong weapon in their class struggle, advocate a kind of political action by direct influence of the industrial organizations. This opinion, for example, dominated in some of the older preambles of the I.W.W., and also among those of many of the European Syndicalists.

Practical fighting methods, however, have increasingly developed a feeling among industrial unionists, that there is a great strength in self-restraint, and it is the prevailing opinion that the industrial organization should confine itself to the industrial field, in order to broaden its membership and to concentrate its efforts.

Some may have a conception for the future, to develop this industrial action into a general or political action, but they see this more as an ideal than as a practical working proposition for the present day class struggle.

Those who admit that it is possible to organize political Socialist parties on the principles of mass action and what we might also call a more direct action of the workers, will greet every effort in this direction with sympathy. And although it may often be difficult to decide where industrial action ends and political action begins, this is no disadvantage, provided both are real *class* action. On the contrary, whenever there proves to be a field, covered by both actions, there can be co-operation, and this co-operation will again broaden the mass action until both industrial and political action become practically one strong class action, which means the realization of the ideal of the Socialists, as well as of the Industrialists.

Many of you will perhaps admit that this sounds well, that it is almost too attractive, and they will ask, whether this is more than a scheme, and whether we may expect that the working class will be able and willing to fight in this way, which no doubt will involve great sacrifices.

I answer:

*First.* Old political "democracy" is doomed by the Imperialistic development, under the iron heel of Big Capital.

*Second.* On the industrial field, the new form of mass action has already developed, and few doubt that the future belongs to the more concentrated form of industrial action.

*Third.* Industrial Unionism, under present conditions, cannot cover the whole field. It is, as such, powerless against the most powerful modern manifestations of capitalism: Imperialism, militarism, judges, and last, but not least, the crippling of the minds in public schools and educational institutions.

*Fourth.* Political instruments of Capitalism in its Imperialistic form, with police, judges and militarism, will strongly and brutally interfere with industrial action and will compel the working class to put its *general class-power* against the general class-power of capitalism.

*Fifth.* Therefore, political mass action in the new and only possible form is bound to grow out of the very fact of aggressive capitalism and the only problem is to realize *in time* what will be the most efficient form of political class action, so as to lose no time and restrict the sacrifices in misery and life to the smallest possible amount.

*Sixth.* As soon as conditions will be ripe for it, industrial action and the political action will both emerge into the unit of one fighting organization on democratic mass action lines, in accordance both with the ideals of social democrats and industrialists.

There is another feature in this conception of political mass action which is not less important to us. It solves the dualism in the conception of the "Revolution." In reading some of the excellent articles in your REVIEW, I often found that, up to a certain point, there was a climax, leading to a final peroration about the Revolution. Almost without exception however, there was an absolute lack of sense for reality, as to how this revolution could be expected.

It seemed to drop from the air, rather than to result from some previous developments.

Most of us understand that there cannot be such a thing as a sudden revolution, resulting from some accident with a stone or a gun, and that the working class cannot seize *and hold* the power, unless it has developed forms of organization and democratic institutions of its own. To the old style Socialists this was easy enough and most of us will remember that there was a time when the general conception was as follows: The influence of the workers on the political institutions of the bourgeoisie was considered growing. One industry after another was to be converted into State or municipal ownership. It was admitted that this was not yet Socialism, but with a growing democracy, some day or another we would get to have the majority in parliament and State owned industries could be changed into socially owned and managed ones, while at the same time the working class would have acquired the necessary qualities as to organization and government, in the practice of increasing democratic institutions.

This idyllic conception has been destroyed, but at the same time the Revolution has become for many of us such a vague, unreal ideal that it seems to be no practical issue in our expectations. As soon, however, as we understand that the only possible form of democracy is in mass action, we must realize that this new form of democracy is able to develop gradually the qualities which the workers need to organize and maintain a new social commonwealth.

Those qualities, as well as the necessary power, will develop in the fighting itself, which at the same time is bound to disorganize the existing instruments of class power of our dominating class.

It is beyond the scope of a series of articles like this, to even attempt going into details of what action is required at present, altho a few remarks may prove of advantage.

Mass action means meetings, street demonstrations, political strikes, and can be developed from our present methods. It is, however, essential that a spirit of readiness must develop in the minds of the workers, which makes them rise to protest at important issues, without it being necessary that orders be issued from headquarters.

While the necessity of paid officers to serve organized labor cannot be denied, there must be effective control by the rank and file. To break down the so-called party machinery is one of the most important issues at hand. If this cannot be done in the present organization, it is worth while breaking down this organization and building a new one. It is far more important to develop the rank and file, so as to make future mass actions possible, than to sustain a most complete system of rules and order, which may have the admiration of judges and school-masters, but which requires, even, for them, years of practice to use it efficiently to control conventions, and to kill whatever fighting spirit there may develop in the workers of the rank and file.

Together with the development of an organization on democratic mass control lines, our meetings and street demonstrations will have to grow and will meet with the resistance of the capitalist political instruments: police, law and judges.

Protests against these brutal forces will call for stronger means and there will be a logical development into strikes of protest. Here we touch the industrial field. But the issues at hand will be such as free speech, the right to organize and to hold meetings, or such as the shooting of Joe Hill and others. And no industrial organization on class lines will have any objection to supporting such action. Political strikes, moreover, have the advantage that their character in the first place will be that of protest, and therefore, they often can be short ones. There may be not even a direct demand which could be granted at once, and the principal effect often will be that of disorganizing the capitalist instrument of class power. This is not only a conception in the air, but we have had a practical illustration in Russia after the Japanese-Russian war. Under those enormously difficult circumstances, labor there has gained most remarkable results. It even secured an eight-hour day in most of the leading industries. In this movement, economic and political demands were often mixed, and an actual "leadership" was utterly impossible, on account of Russian conditions. As soon as a labor strike was pressed too hard by the instruments of the capitalist state, the strike was dissolved, only to spring up in several other places and to be renewed as soon as pressure was released. In this way wholesale slaughter was prevented and the action resulted in such a degree of disorganization of the Government that European Socialists eagerly watched conditions in Russia; many of us expecting that this action would, at that time, spread over the rest of Europe. In fact, there was a beginning of mass action even in Germany, as shown in that remarkable successful demonstration in Berlin contrary to the most positive instruction of the almighty chief of the Berlin police. Continuation of this action was strongly advocated by Rosa Luxemburg, Pannekoek and others, but the party machine, with the assistance of Karl Kautsky, advocated a policy of defense, rather than aggression, and helped to kill a beginning mass action which might have prevented the present European war.

The Russian movement could not maintain itself against a new strengthening of the Government, inaugurating a new reactionary period. Russian industry being only in its infancy, the working class proved to be too weak even to maintain the results, without the response from the older and stronger labor organizations in other European countries. But the glorious achievements of the Russian proletariat will stand as an example of what can be accomplished under difficult circumstances by

mass action.

And it is hardly possible to imagine what could be achieved along similar lines in a country industrially developed like the United States.

Left Wing Socialists in Europe realize that the only hope in the coming reactionary period, under Imperialism, lies in mass action, internationally organized. Will our American comrades fail to join hands, or may we expect a brilliant example, which would do more to help the present European situation, than a dozen peace resolutions and as many congresses for peace and Internationalism?

### **The Left Wing: Mass Action and Mass Democracy (November 1916)**

The disadvantage of a series of articles, especially in a monthly review, is that nobody can be expected to recollect what has been said a few months, or even a month, ago. We live in such a hurry and have such a variety of impressions, provided we are not yet dumb-founded and crushed by modern capitalism, that we are prevented from fully enjoying even THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW. Most of us have lost the art of reading properly. If you only try to experiment with yourself in reading an article which interests you, asking at the end about the beginning, you will be astonished at the results, unless you read very carefully several times. To remember the contents of an article which was read a month ago is practically beyond human effort and this means a serious setback to the greater part of the American people, who, for their mental development, depend largely upon magazines and newspapers, rather than upon books and pamphlets.

To develop any kind of logical reasoning on a serious subject generally demands more words than can be pressed into one article, the more so because lengthy articles are very seldom read carefully. The only half-way remedy seems to give a short summary at the end, which, altho it will always lack logic and force, may induce some of the readers to take up once more the original articles and re-read them as a whole. The Left Wing series, not being the expression of the point of view of some individual, but of a growing group of International Socialists, it is worth while to reconsider their new conceptions and to compare their experience with American practice.

To facilitate this, I give the following summary:

Capitalism with its concentration of capital and growing productivity of labor, develops monopolistic tendencies, which enable the monopolists to get a bigger share in the general surplus value. To invest these big profits in a profitable way, it is necessary to extend big business and monopolies, broadening the field by opening new territories or deepening the monopolistic tendencies by subjugating new industries.

This leads to aggression, both abroad and at home and to a complete breakdown of whatever was left of a more or less independent capitalist class. The big monopolistic interests, concentrated in the banks, secure complete control of the so-called independent capitalists and middle classes, economically as well as politically, which are only two sides of the same condition. (July issue.)

This leads to a new aggressive policy of the capitalist class against the workers all over the world and it is this new form of class struggle which we call *imperialism*, of which the foreign aggression is one face and brutality against the workers at home, another. In this sense, the United States are by no means behind in the imperialistic race, altho the special form of development here has prevented the workers from recognizing its complete form in time. (June issue.)

Instead of a growing democracy, this development means the end of the old middle class democracy. Democratic forms are used in the political control of financial

monopolistic capital, and develop into a new form of absolutism, the so-called "plutocracy" (government of money kings). The United States show the most typical and most advanced form of this political system, and it is the worst of self-deceptions to tell the workers that there is so much as a political democracy in this country. (August issue.)

The new forms of capitalist class struggle and the fundamental change in what we may expect from middle class democracy greatly affects our own class struggle. The old form of Socialist parliamentary action becomes ever more obsolete; we can no longer hope to gain practical results by instructing our leaders to skilfully exploit the differences in the interests of capitalist groups, even if we put our power into the hands of the most prominent lawyers. We gradually realize that we confront one solid opponent, who succeeds only too well in fooling the workers by all kinds of promises or even by accidentally voting a labor law, that often is not even put into effect, or that is more than checked by other measures.

The situation certainly must look hopeless to those comrades who fail to see the new development which brings its own solution of the problem.

Instead of putting our hope on leaders, on which we were fully dependent in the period of political negotiations, the workers are forced to take their fate more in their own hands. We have to realize that the "leaders" generally belong to a (middle) class, which becomes ever more antagonistic to labor, which makes it still more dangerous to depend upon them, and at the same time the issues at stake lose the complexity of old style politics and become more and more straight issue of class power. It may require a competent lawyer to understand at least some of the tricks of politicians and bankers, but to protect against the shooting of peaceful strikers requires class sentiment and courage in the first place. Our Socialist politicians and office holders gradually become useless, because they have no success and cannot have any real success in their old style fight for the working class. They are worse than useless, because the rank and file trust in the ability of leaders to protect their interests and fail to develop their own energy and class power.

The cleverest and strongest among a group always will have a certain amount of influence, but experience has already shown that those who have influence upon the workers in critical times of class war are thrown into jail. And we cannot hope to gain the slightest advantage when our methods of fight are not such as to allow every open place in the ranks to be readily occupied by another worker during the fight. This demands simple, open methods of fighting and a general class consciousness and understanding among the rank and file.

Strong leaders who did complicated fighting were a feature of the old form of "democracy" and they failed, together with the general failure of middle class democracy. In fact, a class of powerful leaders is out of harmony with the very principle of real democracy. The new form of class fighting, in which the masses (rank and file) will have understanding and control, solves the problem of democracy, as the very meaning of democracy is the control of the masses.

Mass action and mass democracy have to develop gradually; in fact, there is a beginning of this development, mostly on the economic field, and there is no use in denying that the future of labor belongs to these new forms and not to the Gompers, Hutchinsons and other leaders of the A. F. of L., nor to the politicians and officials of the Socialist party. (October issue.)

So far, this is a summary of what has been illustrated more fully in the preceding articles. It seems to me that the facts as stated are very plain. They may be wrong

and then you should say so, but if not, if the facts are all right, then it cannot be denied that this conception of the Left Wing is very important; that we have to make up our minds what to do; how to help the new developments, the new methods; how to act to increase our class power.

Somebody asked me: how can you expect the workers to understand their own interests without sufficient schools and teaching and time to read and to study? and, as in Europe, as well as in the United States, imperialism has decided that the present school system is already too expensive, that the workers know already too much to be good slaves, to agree with this view means to give up all hope in a victory of the working class in the near future.

We readily admit that, very likely, the workers will never learn to clearly understand what is their interest in fighting for certain laws, discussing whether labor is a commodity or not; they will not learn to understand what it means when the same policy is called first a protective tariff, then a competitive tariff, then fiscal, then anti-dumping, etc.; they will not understand parliamentary fighting as long as their own leaders follow the capitalists in their methods, which are established by the capitalists for the sole purpose of fooling the workers.

But the workers will easily understand their interests in important class issues, they will understand their interests, when their fellow workers are shot by thugs or militia, or jailed by capitalist judges, and they would rise to protest if they had not lost the control of their own interests and their own self-respect, and yet the victims of capitalist power will not have fallen in vain, because the brutality of the ruling class will gradually awaken the workers. They will see this series of bloody crimes from Ludlow to Minnesota and they will note that their leaders did nothing to prevent or even to protest seriously. And if the class consciousness of the workers is not dead, if the workers are not prepared to be beaten to pieces, one group after another, they will back up protests with their masses, if necessary, over the heads of their leaders.

It is not, in the first place, the difficulty of understanding what are the real interests of the workers in the class struggle, it is the difficulty of how to act, how to break the old forms of power, including the power entrusted to leaders, and how to get the habit of fighting and experience to fight and to control the fight, both on the political and economic field. The capitalist class uses political instruments, militia, judges, etc., as strong, efficient tools in their class struggles; the workers will have to fight those tools as well as the economic instruments, but in a manner that suits their purposes and not according to the methods their foes invented for them; not in parliamentary negotiations and hair-splittings, but by the power of their masses, compelling the capitalist class to openly oppose or to submit to their demands.

Fighting, as everything else, has to be learned in practice, and mass fighting means that the rank and file has to do some independent thinking and has to get its own understanding of important class issues under imperialism, not resting before there is organized protest and organized action in each special case. The form of this mass action will develop with a growing class consciousness and a growing international understanding, and will at the same time enable the workers to acquire the qualities necessary to organize a co-operative commonwealth.

### **The Left Wing: An Actual Beginning (December 1916)**

While many of us were "talking it over," a group of comrades in Boston performed a deed, made an actual beginning in trying to organize the Left Wing forces in the Socialist Party of America. Born in the actual fighting of a minority opposition in the

State Convention of Massachusetts, the "Socialist Propaganda League" is a legal offspring of the Socialist Party.

Its first manifesto appeals to the members of the Socialist Party asking for revolutionary socialism instead of opportunism; democracy instead of bureaucracy, a firm stand for Industrial Unionism as being superior to Craft Unionism and endorsement of Political Action in its fullest sense instead of Parliamentarism for reforms and offices only.

Furthermore, this manifesto appeals to all Socialists who stand for the uncompromising class struggle on the industrial, as well as on the political field, to unite and emphasize the fact that this unity should be made international in a new international organization "with authority on questions affecting workers in more than one nation," under control of a world referendum.

It goes without saying that a special demand is made that the party members should take a firm stand against all militarism, including compulsory military service, as well as defensive wars.

It was inspiring to meet the Boston comrades who took the initiative for this "Socialist Propaganda League," a bunch of class-conscious workers who, mostly through every-day facts and experiences of life, had come to realize the new forces of imperialism as it develops all over the world and who rightly responded by an *act*. Organizing means preparing for action, is a part of the action, and once started on a sound basis is bound to proceed. Local in its beginning, the Socialist Propaganda League has now decided to make a nation-wide appeal and to support their action and their organization by a weekly paper, "The Internationalist Weekly of the Left Wing."

### **Comrades all over the United States**

This is an effort to organize the workers of the New World to take their share in the immense world struggle between the capitalist and the working classes, of which the European war is only a most frightful but instructive episode. The Socialist Party in this country confronts a capitalist class unscrupulous in its methods, fully under control of financial monopolistic capital. In no other country of the world has "bourgeois democracy" been so abused to fool the workers, and the results of parliamentary action along the old lines nowhere have been poorer. There is not the least doubt but among the rank and file of the Socialist Party, as well as among thousands of former members and uncounted workers who have not joined it, there exists a hopeless feeling and a disgust with the inefficiency of present methods of fighting. They know that the working class has to fight and has to win, but they do not see how it can be done. Let them look the world over and notice that everywhere, even on the battlefields of Europe, new hope is arising.

Left Wing organizations are an international feature in the Socialist parties of all countries. They mean new life rising from old ruins. Do your share; join the Socialist Propaganda League; read the new weekly, together with THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW, the monthly that has kept to the fighting line all the long years of its existence. Don't say that the program in the Manifesto should be a little more this or a little more that. It is a living proposition that will grow and develop with the facts and with you—if you at least join and work for it with heart and soul.

Don't worry about this not being the most formal way to reorganize a Socialist Party. We have already had far too much of formalities. The party members advocate new forms of action, new forms of organization, and the party will have to follow,

no matter in what manner this majority expresses itself.

Freedom of speech and of criticism is the very fundamental democracy, and we have the right to form organized groups to criticise and if possible to reorganize the party in every land. To deny the full rights of criticism or to keep to dead formalities in a period of rebirth and readjustment will mean to disrupt the Socialist Party. We want a new adjustment of opinions and a new lining up. This is to the interest of new groups, which can only gain by clearing up the situation. But suppression of free speech has often been the tactics of old elements who fear that criticism will hasten their downfall. If those elements refuse a chance for reorganization, this will only illustrate their lack of vitality.

There now is a beginning of *action*, however small as yet. Some of you may not like it at this moment, others perhaps would have preferred it in some other form. Don't bother about smaller details. Act; join; participate in discussions, in meetings, in demonstrations; give your backing, give your personality, and this will gradually develop into a strong group, an organized power capable not only to disorganize the government of the capitalist class, but to build up the organized "New World" of the workers. It is worth while to join and to try.

Send \$1.00 to P.O. Box 23, Roxbury, Boston, Mass, for a yearly subscription to the new paper, *The Internationalist Weekly*, and join the League.