

# A Reply to a Non-Partisan League Farmer

By Jay Lovestone

**I. Do we hold that the revolution must come by violence?**

To answer this question by "yes" or "no" would be asinine. It may. Again, it may not. The left wing, all the protest of the right wing to the contrary notwithstanding, repudiates Socialism by assassination. The left wing hopes that the proletariat will conquer its enemy, the capitalist class, with as little bloodshed as possible. Except for the capitalist-imperialist statesmen, we know of none who delight to bathe in blood—of others. As Socialists, let us take our guidance from history for a correct answer to this question. A careful perusal of the periods of revolution will show that revolutions, in themselves, do not bring about bloodshed. There is abundant historical proof to show that it is the counter-revolution that always causes bloodshed. Bloodshed only follows when the deposed regime attempts to overthrow the revolution. For us in America, peaceful Anglo-Saxon England, the classical example of revolutions without bloodshed or violence, furnishes particularly strong evidence substantiating our contention. In Cromwell's days no one desired civil war except the Royalists. The King fled to organize an army to march against London. By this action civil war was forced upon the revolutionary party. Remember that only Charles' treachery and intrigues forced Cromwell to carry out his threat against the King:—"We will cut off his head, with the crown upon it".

The most recent proof of this historical truth is furnished by Russia and Hungary. In Russia bloodshed accompanied the Revolution because of the treachery and intrigue of the deposed regime of the bourgeoisie and landholders. A bloody trail follows Kolchack's thrusts. The Red Terror was an answer to the counter-revolution encouraged by Clemenceau, Wilson and George, "the three great representatives of the three greatest democracies of the world".

To date there has been very little violence in Hungary. But should the counter-revolution rear its ugly head, the Hungarian proletariat will no doubt show its valor and prowess. Yes! Only history can answer this question affirmatively or negatively. And in America, as elsewhere, it is the bourgeoisie who will play the leading role in this historical act. Upon them alone will fall the responsibility for violence should it accompany a proletarian revolution in America.

**II. Do we hold that the Revolution must come by the General Strike?**

Neither can this question be answered correctly by an immediate "yes" or "no". The General Strike is no doubt a powerful weapon in the hands of the proletariat. The General Strike is without question dreaded by the capitalist class. Notice how the murderous bourgeois-Socialist "democracy" of Germany trembles at the General Strike. Recall the chill sent through the backs of the American bourgeoisie by the Seattle strike. Witness the consternation in the camp of Canada's bourgeoisie as a result of the Winnipeg affair. The left wing doesn't say that the revolution must come by the general strike. But the left wing does say that there is enough historical proof to show that the General Strike is a very valuable weapon in the hands of the working class. Should conditions demand a general strike in order to undermine the bourgeoisie, then well and good, the left wing is for it. It is the purpose of the left wing to make the proletariat of America class conscious enough to resort to the general strike whenever the situation calls for it.

**III. If so why nominate candidates at all and enter politics?**

Whether the first two questions are to be answered by "yes" or "no" only the future can tell, but whatever history's answer will be, the left wing does believe in nominating candidates and entering politics. To the left wing the struggle for seats in bourgeois parliaments is a gauge, measuring working class maturity. The parliamentary method may not be a perfect method (and we certainly say that it is not perfect) of testing proletarian hopes and readiness. We are aware of the numerous bars set up by the bourgeoisie. Yet it does show to what fervor the class struggle has been worked up, and to what temperature class weapons have been heated. While Communism will reject parliamentary government, it will not destroy all of its elements. Communism will make an unprejudiced use of the only good characteristic of Parliamentarism, the representative element.

The left wing gladly welcomes the opportunity of "participating in election campaigns for the immediate purpose of winning legislative seats. In this sense, too, we urge the use of political action as a revolutionary weapon". A real Socialist, a left wing campaign will emphasize the implac-

able character of the class struggle and will become a great channel for propaganda. To the left wing the battle for legislative seats will be a means of arousing revolutionary mass (class) action on all fields. Parliament to us is a forum for agitation. It is a means of obstructing capitalism and not a means of introducing Communism. Participation in election campaigns gives us a chance to put our case before the working class and promote class consciousness without violence.

Dear Comrades:—I have just finished reading THE COMMUNIST of April 26, in its entirety. I am in hearty approval of a Party of action, but I'm afraid I am not as well informed on the subject as I ought to be, and I am writing you for light. I am a farmer and in the seven years since I joined the Socialist Party, I have been recognized as the most successful local organizer the Party had in this state prior to the debacle caused by the Non-Partisan League and I seem to be considered still so much of an enemy of society that many folks hereabouts think the country would be safer if I were deported—although my highland forebears came to Massachusetts about 1630.

Lack of opportunity for close association with old time Socialists and dependent almost entirely upon propaganda papers for our information of Socialist activities, we who want the truth so much have been forced to our own interpretations of events and sometimes we find it very difficult to analyze them satisfactorily.

For instance—Do you hold that the revolution must come by violence? Or by a general strike? If so, why nominate candidates at all or enter politics? I have proceeded on the theory that when 51 per cent of the electoral should vote the S. P. ticket, we could institute an industrial regime and I am certain that that idea is uppermost in the minds of the red-handed, nervy Socialists who organized the Non-Partisan League and three years ago stole the machinery of the Republican Party in this state and have so marshalled the support of the workers in this state that we virtually have a state Soviet—of farmers.

I can scarcely conceive of your asserting that the Constitutional amendments adopted here last fall by plebiscite and the legislative acts now about to be referred are not revolutionary. But if such is your contention please explain.

I have refrained—as have many other Reds out here—from endorsing the League until this year. But I cannot help feeling that our Governor and many other state officials are standing up nobly to the job of carrying out the industrial program inaugurated by our recent legislature and deserve the earnest support of all radicals. The Non-Partisan League program does not encompass as much as I should like, but still we refuse a baby's cry for food because it cannot eat meat?

It seems to me that this is fundamental. Some of our state officials had proved traitors, but they are only making the farmers firmer in their determination to fight the exploiters.

I do not want to be found conservative if the time comes for "action," but it strikes me that possibly you who have taken so active a part in the struggle for liberty, have seen so much abuse that you fail to grasp the idea or doubt the possibility of a peaceful revolution brought about at the ballot-box.

If the control of the A. F. of L. should shift from Gompers to men of your choosing, would you still insist on a "Socialist" party or would you grant that a "Labor" party might get more votes? In other words, would you administer quinine in a teaspoon or a capsule?

Sincerely yours, D. I. Toon.

But participation in political campaigns is not the only form of political action. To the left wing any action on the part of the proletariat which aims to undermine and overthrow the political power of the Capitalist class is political action. Thus a strike of miners and railway workers to win freedom for the Class War Prisoners, is a political act in spite of the fact that thousands of "foreigners" and non-voters may participate in such political action. By participating in political campaigns we are also more able to expose diplomatic trickery, cheating, and knavery. What is more, the parliamentary offices can be used to political advantage for the proletariat by employing them as a means of protesting against "the absolutism which hides behind the parliamentary forms".

In short the left wing, not being Anarcho-Syndicalist, will gladly use the election campaigns to increase the latitude of its revolutionary propaganda.

**IV. We have always believed that fifty-one per cent can vote Socialism into existence. Is that not so?**

This is not so. First of all, it is most improbable that a class conscious proletarian political party can ever get a majority of the ballots cast. Remember that as long as capitalism lasts the workers will not own their jobs. We have a notion that there is some connection between the fear of losing a job and a vote. Of course the powerful press, ever serving the master class, also has something to say as to how the ballots are to be cast. The educational institutions mould the workers' minds to no small extent. And this has a marked influence upon the voter. The church and sundry other organs of public opinion complete the bourgeois task of misleading the proletariat. Furthermore, poll taxes, educational, and residential qualifications, legal technique, theft, corruption, and disenfranchisement always come to the rescue of the bourgeoisie. Such are the insuperable barriers confronting class conscious proletarian political parties.

But for the sake of argument, let us grant the almost impossible—that the fifty-one per cent vote can be secured. It most decidedly does not follow that Socialism is thus brought into existence. The

differences between Socialism and Capitalism are so definite that the indefinite and unsteady wave of campaign victories cannot determine them. If fifty-one per cent could vote capitalism out of existence in 1920, why cannot fifty-one per cent vote capitalism back into existence in 1924? Why can't this process go on *ad infinitum et ad nauseum*? Truly common sense yells for help!

In Finland the Socialists won a majority of the seats in the Diet. And to-day the assassins of the Finnish proletariat are drilling in Labor's Hall. After more than fifty-one per cent of the Finns had voted Socialism into existence and Capitalism out of existence, the hellish White Guard of the Finnish Bourgeoisie began to menace Petrograd and to strike a blow at the heart of the Proletarian Republic of Russia.

Why is this so? In the answer to this question lies the vital difference between moderate "Socialism" and revolutionary Socialism or Communism. We must look into the relationship of the state to the class struggle. Here let us again call on history for an answer. The story of the Paris Commune is most enlightening. It shows clearly that the proletariat cannot simply take hold of the ready made state machinery and make use of it for its own ends. Scientific investigation clearly shows that the State is not at all a power foisted on society from the outside. It is not an organ taking root in Heaven. And it cannot be used by every one and any one anywhere at anytime and for any and all purposes. The State takes root in the material conditions and is a product of society at a certain stage of evolution. "The State is a real organization of defense to guarantee and perpetuate a mode of association, the foundation of which is a form of economic production". In capitalist society the State is an organization for perpetuating the capitalist mode of production. The State is capitalist society. The Capitalist State serves the bourgeoisie as a machine for oppressing the proletariat. This holds true in a republic as well, as in a monarchy. "The Modern State is only the organization, bourgeois society forms in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments, as well of the workers, as of the individual capitalist." With the development of modern industry class antagonisms become intensified and widened. "The State power is more and more turned into an organ of Capital's mastery over Labor. Of a public force organized for Social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism."

Witness the Espionage Acts, the Orders in Council, the Criminal Anti-Syndicalist Laws, the War Labor Boards, the State Cossacks, the use of troops as strike-breakers, the citizens and witch-hunting investigating committees to protect the "public".

The capitalist state does not end within the four walls of the Parliament building. The army, the navy, the police, the courts, the sundry justice dispensers, the prisons, the administrative and financial bureaucracy, and the countless agencies of propaganda and misinformation are part and parcel of the capitalist State. In short this State is the total power of the owning (capitalist) class. The declaration of confiscation of bourgeois property is merely a judicial act. Every single bourgeois will have to be expropriated is actuality—individually. A majority of the delegates to Congress without the possession of the last mentioned agencies will not give the working class the political power or control which it must have in order to gradually introduce Communism. Remember that the bourgeoisie do not control these means of baffling and thwarting the will of the masses because they have a majority in the legislative chamber. On the contrary the Capitalist class has a majority of the votes because it has control of these means of suppressing the will of the masses.

A study of the State's historical development shows that the society in which there is a State "is hopelessly divided against itself, has entangled itself in irreconcilable contradictions which it is powerless to banish. In order that these contradictions, these classes with conflicting economic interests, may not annihilate themselves and society in a useless struggle, a power becomes necessary that stands apparently above society and has the power of keeping down the conflicts and maintaining order. And this power, the outgrowth of society, but assuming supremacy over it and becoming more and more divorced from it, is the State."

The State divided its members by territories and created a public power of coercion that is diametrically opposed to a self-organized and armed population. The State is a product of class society, and with the division of society into classes it is impossible to have a self-organized army of the people. Hence a special power of coercion becomes a necessity in every State.

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