

Resolution on the Third International

(Adopted by the Fifteenth National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party of America, New York City, May 5–10, 1920)

On May 4, 1919, the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party of America, in annual session assembled, adopted resolutions on the subject of the International Relations of the Party, and, based upon the information then at hand, resolved to withdraw from the so-called Second International while favoring attachment to and affiliation with an International truly representative of the world's Working Class interests. Affiliation with the Third International, then in process of formation and about which no reliable and certainly no official information was available, was deferred. These resolutions, since referred to a referendum vote of the Party's membership, were almost unanimously adopted and stand today as the expression of the said membership on the subject.

Another year has passed. The Third International, organized at Moscow, its existence authenticated by numerous pronouncements in the Socialist press of the world—though the Socialist Labor Party is still without direct official communication on the part of its officers—according to press reports and alleged official pronouncements and manifestos appears to have taken, upon matters of tactics and methods, and upon matters of the endorsement of organizations in countries outside of Russia, a position that requires careful analysis and consideration on the part of the Socialist Labor Party of America,

Under date of September 1, 1919, there was issued over the signature of "G. Zinovieff," President of the Executive Committee of the Communist International," and later published in the Socialist press, a Manifesto, which, in the absence of any other authentic utterance, must be regarded as a guide whereby to define the position taken by what is generally designated as "The Third International".

At the outset, this Manifesto, dwelling upon the coalescence of the revolutionary elements in "France, America, England and Germany," the statement is made that "The anarchistic-syndicalist groups and the groups that now and then call themselves simply anarchists are thus also joining the general current. The Executive Committee of the Communistic International welcomes this most heartily," and then, proceeding, the statement is made that "In America, and also to some extent in England, the fight for the Soviets is led by such organizations as the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the

World). These groups and tendencies have always actively opposed the parliamentary method of fighting”.

From this it would appear that the Third International, over the signature of the President of its Executive Committee, “welcomes most heartily” to its ranks Anarcho-Syndicalists and Anarchists pure and simple; that, therefore, membership in or attachment to said Third International implies bedfellowship with Anarchy and Anarchists, and that these elements, always regarded as the mildew upon the revolutionary Labor Movement, shall henceforth be regarded by and within that Movement as co-workers in the work of the Socialist Reconstruction of Society.

Socialist experience and Socialist reason rebel against such a position, moreover, that seems to be in violent conflict with all that hitherto we have been permitted to learn about the Russian Socialist Movement, the position it took and the course it pursued. But the Manifesto, such as it is, and with all its ramifying implications, is now before us and it is upon that we must speak, and, speaking, do so in language unmistakable and defining with clearness and emphasis just where we stand. Needless to say that acceptance of the position outlined in the said Manifesto implies the complete abandonment of all the Socialist Labor Party of America has ever stood for, the abandonment of its goal by implication and inferential reasoning, as well as the direct abandonment of its tactical position. It implies even more. It implies the surrender of its judgment upon American conditions, of the policy to be pursued upon the basis of these conditions and the surrender of that judgment to another influence that can scarcely be presumed to be posted upon these conditions.

The Socialist Labor Party is a product of the American Labor Movement. It represents today the highest, the most advanced expression of that Movement in principles as well as in tactics, both of which have been evolved in storm and stress, in endless conflict and friction with the reactionist, the trimmer and the compromiser, and the “bull-in-the-chinashop” direct-action idiot.

In point of principle the Socialist Labor Party openly and fearlessly proclaims the revolutionary RIGHT of the Working Class. It recognizes clearly the character and function of the political State; it knows that, in a class-divided society, the political State MUST become an instrument of CLASS RULE and that, under capitalism and capitalist economic preponderance, the political State must and will be dominated and manipulated by and for the capitalist class and against the working class; it knows that, as economic evolution and industrial development awaken and consolidate the masses of the working class, there will arise the power that will set itself against the class-ruled political State—the integrally organized useful

occupations of the land, the future constituencies of the Industrial Republic, the class-conscious Industrial Unions—as now exemplified by the Workers' International Industrial Union—the power that will eventually substitute it and thereby end class rule and with it capitalism.

In point of tactics, based upon the principles sketched above, the Socialist Labor Party has ever traveled the straight and narrow path of No Compromise. It has not sacrificed principle to numbers, votes, temporary gain, or popular acclaim. It has not placated the pure and simple trade union reactionist—it has fought him. It has not dallied with the pure and simple politicalist Socialist Party and its “parliamentary idiocy”—it has fought it. And it has not “welcomed most heartily” the Anarcho-Syndicalist I.W.W., but has fought it bitterly, relentlessly, without respite and without quarter and shall and will continue to so fight it with all the power at its command to prevent the marplot from foisting its pernicious doctrines and methods upon the American Labor Movement.

In the light of American conditions the Socialist Labor Party holds that he who wants Socialism must first want class-conscious working class organization on the industrial field and that, without such organization, there can be no working class emancipation and no abolition of capitalism; that he who calls himself a Socialist and refuses or fails to help in the task of organizing the working class on the industrial field—where alone the MIGHT of the working class can be gathered—is either one who knows not what he wants nor how to get it, or he is a faker and a fraud who does know but finds it convenient for reasons best known to himself to dodge the obligation.

No sane movement of men will seek to shape its course with utter disregard to surrounding conditions and the course and policy of the Socialist Labor Party is and has been shaped with regard to the conditions that surround us in America—conditions historic and social, industrial and political. In the light of the historic and political conditions of the land we condemn, utterly and without the slightest reservation, the Anarcho-Syndicalist, anti-political I.W.W. position of “direct action,” “sabotage,” “strike at the ballot-box with an ax,” and general perversity. That position, we hold, is not only vicious, since it implies a first-hand resort to physical force, but it is absurd. The idea of winning over the American working class to an abandonment of political action and political propaganda is puerile. Such is the lay of the land in America, that any organization which places itself in such a position at once becomes a club in the hands of the capitalist class for assailing the Labor Movement, as has been amply demonstrated. It has been demonstrated in the case of the I.W.W., which is today very largely used by capitalist reaction partly as a scarecrow to frighten the “public” with, as ought to be plain to any intelligent person who

reads understandingly the publicity campaign connected with it, and partly as an arsenal wherefrom to draw weapons against the Labor Movement. And it has more recently been demonstrated in the case of the burlesque imitation “Communist” movements, which, taking a more or less open direct action and physical force position, and seeking to line up “most heartily” with the anti-political I.W.W., were off-hand wiped off the slate by the capitalist political State and then served it as a handy instrument to smite the general Labor Movement.

Pitiful in the extreme is the position in which these innocent imitation “Communists” appear in the light of events. Honeycombed with police spies, their very platform declarations reputed to have been written by operatives of the Department of Justice on the strength of which they were later raided, arrested and often deported, these raids made successful by the circumstance that, under police guidance, the Communists were made to call meetings all over the country on one and the same day, January 2d, there to land like fish in a net, as was brought to light in the proceedings of the Boston Federal District Court—the picture presented is one that again re-emphasizes the S.L.P. warning that the Labor Movement in America does not lend itself to and must not descend to the level of rat-hole conspiracies. Aiming as it does and must to gather the mass of the workers, it can only do so in the open, openly and in full daylight proclaiming its aims and methods, and said methods in keeping with the fundamental law of the land.

Furthermore, in the light of our social and economic conditions we condemn, utterly and without the slightest reservation, the pure and simple politicalist Berger-Hillquit Socialist Party, not only because of its position of “parliamentary idiocy,” in that it expects or professes to expect to bring about Socialism by purely political action and dodges or side-steps the obligation to help organize the working class on the industrial field, but for the further reason of its overt and sometimes covert alliance with the Civic-Federationized craft unions of the land, that bulwark of American capitalism, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, its more or less open flirtation with Anarcho-Syndicalist I.W.W.-ism. A trimmer and a compromiser, it seeks support everywhere, with the pure and simple craftist, the pure and simple bombist, the rent striker, the milk-exploitee, the political prisoner—all is fish that comes to its net with votes, or cash, or both.

Seeing that Socialism implies the centralization and co-ordination of the productive powers; seeing further that the organizing of the working class into integral industrial unions is absolutely essential to accomplish the emancipation of the working class, preventing the marshalling of these forces into industrial unions; seeing also that the pure and simple political attitude of the Socialist Party can only lead the workers into

the shambles—seeing all this we unqualifiedly denounce and condemn Anarcho-Syndicalism as well as the pure and simple political Socialist Party—the obverse and reverse of the same medal—as organizations whose methods and tactics border on insanity.

It is in the light of all this that the Socialist Labor Party of America, assembled this ninth day of May, 1920, declares:

That if we are to regard the aforesaid Manifesto signed by G. Zinovieff as an official emanation of the Third International, there can be no affiliation on the part of the Socialist Labor Party with such a body in spite of the fact that we find ourselves in full and unqualified sympathy with Soviet Russia, and mindful of the role that destiny has given her to play and of the tremendous moral influence she is bound to exercise upon the Socialist Movement of the entire world. But we shall not and will not abandon our time-tried tactical position, regarding such abandonment in the light of a desertion of all we stand for as a desertion of the American working class. Moreover, we shall not and we will not have our tactical position and the policy based thereon dictated by anybody outside of ourselves and our own judgment drawn from the knowledge of the conditions that surround us and OUR task. And, finally, we reject absolutely and unqualifiedly, in keeping with the Socialist Labor Party's entire history, any bedfellowship with Anarchism and Anarchists, now and hereafter, and we shall not and will not enter any International that harbors it and them.

We declare that however much we endorse the revolutionary activity of the "Bolsheviki" of Russia; however much we recognize the pioneer work for the world revolution of the Soviet Government of Russia; however much we admire the bravery and splendid activity of the entire Russian proletariat, we cannot because of sentimental or other appeals subscribe to or acknowledge the right of the Russian Socialist revolutionary organizations to speak for the revolutionary Proletariat of the world or to prescribe the tactics or point out the true revolutionary organizations for our country. We hold that however much we recognize the wisdom of the Russian revolutionists from a purely strategic point of view in launching the Third International, as opposed to the caricature which the Social Patriot crowd attempted to continue by their meeting at Berne, we nevertheless hold that the Third International, splendid as it may be as a rallying point for the world revolutionary proletariat during this period of chaos and disorder, is not and cannot be a true International until the various organizations of the respective countries of the world desiring affiliation have been able to meet together by duly elected and accredited representatives, and at such a meeting facing their co-representatives and rendering an account of their actions in the face of the collapse and onslaught of

capitalism—render an account of how they have kept the revolutionary banner aloft. We declare that at such a future meeting of world claimants for revolutionary honor the Socialist Labor Party is ready to meet the revolutionists of the world and face such claimants from our own country.

Our National Executive Committee is hereby instructed to bring copies of this declaration to the knowledge of every member of the Socialist Labor Party and of every Socialist organization on the face of the earth and to provide translations thereof wherever thought necessary, so that our position in this matter may become known to the Socialist movement of the world.

[Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.](#)

[Uploaded July 3, 2003](#)