



understood and therefore has to meet opposition, prejudice and hatred which can be overcome only through extended educational propaganda. The objective of the unions, on the other hand, is an immediate one, the securing of higher wages and shorter hours. This is instantly intelligible to everyone; does not demand deep convictions, but appeals rather to immediate interest. On this account quite undeveloped workers must not be hindered from joining the unions because of their prejudice against a world-overturning force like Socialism. As soon as the unions attempt to take in the great mass of the workers they must be absolutely independent. Of course a friendly relation to the Socialist party can still be maintained.

This is the situation in Germany. The unions are independent organizations; they are "neutral," i. e., they ask no questions as to the religious or political opinions of their members. They remain, however, constantly in friendly touch with the Socialist party, even if now and then a little friction does occur. "Party and union are one," is the oft quoted expression of a prominent union leader; this is taken for granted because of the fact that the party members and the great body of union adherents are the same persons, the same workingmen.

The need of having unions to improve the immediate situation of the workers and the advantages which grow out of these need not be examined. But the goal of the working class is the complete extermination of capitalism. Have the unions any part in this struggle for the complete liberation of the proletariat? Before this question can be answered we must make a closer investigation into the general conditions of the struggle for the freedom of the workers.

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Why does the great body of workingmen still permit itself to be ruled and exploited by the capitalists? Why are they not in a position to drive the minority of exploiters from power? Because they are an unorganized, undisciplined, individualistic and ignorant mass. The majority is impotent because it consists of a divided crowd of individuals each one of whom wishes to act according to his own impulse, regard his own interests, and in addition has no understanding of our social system. It lacks organization and knowledge. The minority, the ruling class, on the contrary, is strong because it possesses both organization and knowledge. Not only does it have in its service scholars and men of learning; it controls also a strong organization, the state administration. The army of officials, government underlings, law-givers, judges, representatives, politicians and soldiers works like a gigantic machine which instantly suppresses any attack on the existing order; a machine against which every individual is

powerless and by which, if he opposes it, he is crushed like a troublesome insect; a machine which, indeed, can easily shatter in a struggle even a great organization of workers. In this machine each works as a part of the whole: in the working class each man acts for himself or a small group. No wonder that the few, through their superior strength, rule the majority with ease.

But things are already changing. Economic development is always producing greater machines, more gigantic factories, more colossal capitalizations. It gathers ever greater bodies of laborers about these machines, forces them into organized trade under the command of capital, robs them of their personal and national distinctions and takes from them the possibility of personal success. But incidentally it suggests to them the thought of organization, of union of their forces, as the only means of improving their position and opposing the overpowering might of capital. Economic development thus brings forth the labor movement, which begins the class-struggle against capital.

The object of the labor movement is to increase the strength of the proletariat to the point at which it can conquer the organized force of the bourgeoisie and thus establish its own supremacy. The power of the working class rests, in the first place, upon its members and upon the important rôle which it plays in the process of production. It constitutes an increasingly large majority of the population. Production proceeds upon a constantly increasing scale, and so is carried on more and more by wage-workers; and the relations of its branches grows constantly more complex. Under these circumstances workingmen find it possible through the strike to bring our whole social life to a standstill. In order that they may be in a position to use this great power in the right way the workers must come to a consciousness of their situation and master an understanding of, and insight into, our social system. They must be class-conscious, i. e., clearly recognize the clash of interests between themselves and the capitalists. And they must have sufficient intelligence to find the right methods of prosecuting the class-struggle and reject the wrong ones. Enlightenment, the spreading of knowledge, is therefore one of the mightiest and most important weapons of the labor movement; this is the immediate purpose of the Socialist propaganda. In the third place, means must be found to turn knowledge into deeds, to apply intelligence in action. To do this we need an organization in which the powers of the individual are joined in a single will and thereby fused into a common social force. The outer form of organization is not the main thing, but the spirit which holds the organization together. Just as the grains of sand are held together by a cement and thus the mass of them becomes a heavy stone, so

must the individuals be cemented together so that the organization will not fly asunder at the first opposition, but rather will conquer all opposition like a mighty mass. This immaterial, spiritual cement is the discipline which leads the individual to subordinate his own will to that of the whole and to place his entire strength at the disposal of the community. It is not the giving up of one's own views, but the recognition of the fact that united action is necessary and that the minority cannot expect the majority to conform to its notions—a recognition which has become a powerful motive for action.

The first of the three factors which constitute the strength of the working class will be increasingly developed by economic evolution independently of our will. The further development of the other two is the task of the labor movement. All our working and striving is devoted to this purpose: to improve the knowledge, the class-consciousness, the organization, the discipline, of the working class. Only when these are sufficiently developed can we conquer the most powerful organization of the ruling class, the state.

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Now what are the respective parts played in this development of working class power by the political party and the labor union? Through sermons, speeches and theoretic instruction we can never call into being organization and discipline—no, not even social intelligence and class-consciousness. The worth of theoretic instruction lies in the fact that it explains and illuminates practical experience, brings it to clear consciousness; but it cannot serve as a substitute for this experience. Only through practice, practice in the struggle, can the workers acquire that understanding of theoretic teaching and those intellectual and moral qualities which will make their power great.

It is generally known that in western Europe it has been the politico-parliamentary activity which has chiefly contributed to the tremendous increase of the Socialist movement and everywhere given strength to the Social Democratic parties. What is the meaning of this? That the political struggle has given a mighty impetus to the class-consciousness, the insight, the group-feeling, of the hitherto unconscious, unrelated workers. The representatives of the workers took a stand in parliament against the government and the bourgeois parties, tore from their faces the masks of guardians of "the general welfare," revealed them as expressions of bourgeois interests inimical to the workers, and through suggestions for the improvement of the conditions of the laborers forced them to show their true characters; by these means they enlightened the people as to the class character of the state and the rulers. The critique which they carried on in



debate with the mouthpieces of the bourgeoisie and the capitalist system penetrated through the papers to the uttermost corners of the land and roused to reflection those who otherwise remain untouched by public gatherings. The careful following of parliamentary struggles, of the speeches of their own representatives and of their opponents, developed to a high degree the political intelligence of the workers and increased their understanding of social phenomena. Herein lies the significance of the political struggle for the increase of the power of the working class: the totally unconscious are shaken up and induced to think; their class-consciousness awakes and they join the class organizations of the proletariat; the already class-conscious workingmen become better and better instructed and their knowledge becomes more thorough.

Just as important is the activity connected with labor union struggle. The effect of this conflict is to build up and strengthen the workingmen's organizations. Through the efforts of the union to improve the conditions of labor increasing numbers of workers who before kept themselves at a distance are aroused and brought into the organization. The most effective recruiting force, it is generally known, is not the designed propaganda carried on through meetings and tracts, but the influence of strikes and lock-outs. The chief significance of these struggles, however, lies in the development of discipline and mutual fidelity. This becomes tough as steel only when it has been tempered in the fire of conflict. The suppression of egotism, the surrender of the individual to the whole, the sacrifice of the individual interest for the organization, can be learned and thoroughly ingrained only in struggle. Experience of the fact that all together suffer defeat if the individual lacks the necessary feeling of solidarity, that on the other hand victory is the reward of unwavering co-operation, beats into everyone this necessary discipline. It is thus the labor unions which weld the scattered individualistic workers into powerful units, teach them to act unitedly as a body, and produce among them the highest working class virtue, solidarity.

In addition the labor union struggle contributes to the knowledge of the workers. It is in this conflict that most of them learn the A B C of Socialism, the opposition of interests between workingmen and employers. Here they can get hold of this fundamental fact of capitalistic society, which appears much less clearly in the political fight. On this account the unions have often been called the preparatory schools of Socialism; they might better be called elementary schools, for it is the real elementary principles that one learns in the labor struggle. Of course this elementary knowledge of the opposition of interests between employes and employers is not adequate to an under-

standing of our social system; one who knows nothing more will be nonplussed and without resource when he confronts the more complex relations, the rôle of the other classes, of the office-holders, of the state, for example, and other political and ideological phenomena.

On the other hand, the political struggle has an essential significance for the organizations of the working class. The union organizations always have their limitations; they include only members of a particular craft, and so develop with the strong solidarity of the fellow craftsmen their guild spirit, their isolation, yes, often an unfriendly jealousy of other crafts. This narrowness is swept away by the political struggle. In politics class stands against class. There the delegates of labor speak not as the representatives of the carpenters or the miners; they do not even represent the wage-workers exclusively, but the whole body of those exploited by capital. Their opponents are not representatives of definite groups of employers, but of the whole owning class; they fight in parliament against bank capital, colonial capital, land capital, just as much as against industrial capital; their struggle is against all exploiters. Therefore the political conflict extends the view, the intelligence and also the sympathies beyond the narrow circle of the craft interests of the labor union. Where the political party is strong all workers of the most varied trades feel themselves brothers; their solidarity is no longer limited by the boundaries of their crafts, and their labor organizations appear to them as parts, as branches, as battalions in a single great labor army. In Germany, where the political organization preceded the labor union, the guild spirit was unable to develop itself so strongly as, e. g., in England.

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The relation between political party and union is often represented as though the political movement were to bring about the destruction of capitalism, and the union to effect the improvement of the laborer's condition within the capitalist system; as though the political party were naturally revolutionary and the union naturally reformatory. This may be in harmony with the apparent practice in many lands; but in France, on the contrary, the unions regard themselves as the revolutionary organizations and the political party as a bourgeois creation with merely temporary reformatory functions. In reality the truth is that both are at once revolutionary and reformatory: that is to say, they both carry on the present struggle for direct improvement and both have great significance in relation to the revolutionary transformation of society.

In the class-struggle the conflict must always concern itself with immediate, practical objects. What are the bones of con-

tention in parliament? The introduction of Socialism? One may agitate for a purpose lying far in the future, but cannot carry on an immediate fight for it. The actual fight turns about definite legislative proposals; about social reforms, laws for the protection of laborers, contraction or expansion of the rights of labor, laws in the interest of particular capitalist groups, or measures of taxation in regard to which there is a collision of class interests. Every article of a law becomes the crux of a struggle between the representatives of labor and the bourgeoisie. Labor gains only now and then a direct advantage, a favorable legal enactment; but always an indirect one, the enlightenment of the masses as to the nature of society and the state.

The difference between this and the union struggle for direct improvement—of the conditions of labor—lies in the fact that in the political fight more general interests and considerations come into question. Therefore the arguments brought to bear reach a higher level. From momentary questions the opponents reach out to remote purposes; eventually their deepest, most general convictions, their world-views, come into conflict. Socialist speakers utilize every particular case to make an attack on the whole capitalist system; their opponents answer with attempts at criticism of Socialist teaching. So the ultimate objective of the proletarian struggle always appears behind the momentary clash, and we always emphasize the fact that this clash gains its significance from its relation to this ultimate objective. So it comes about that apparently the political struggle is carried on in the interests of Socialism, and the union struggle in the interests of reform. And yet both are for reform, for the improvement of the condition and status of labor and against their deterioration. Both of them effect, as we showed above, a steady increase in the power of the working class; pave the way, therefore, for the conquest of political power by the proletariat.

In both there comes about in an analogous manner a limited conception of their function, in that all remote purposes and general interests are sacrificed to the achievement of an immediate reform. On the political field this conception takes the form of a neglect of the class-struggle, a political alliance with the bourgeois parties in a *bloc*, a strife for votes as a main object: this constitutes the tendency within the Socialist movement which is called reformist, or revisionist. The belief that through it we can accomplish more reforms usually proves fallacious, and in addition the revolutionary result of political activity, the enlightenment and organization of labor, usually fails of accomplishment. This tendency can prosper only under undeveloped conditions such as obtain among small capitalists or land-holders, conditions under which the opposition of classes



is not sharply, defined—and even there not for any great length of time.

The reformist tendency is much more persistent among the unions. Where on account of particular circumstances the unions have been successful in improving the labor conditions there may easily develop in their ranks a self-satisfied, bigoted conservatism; they give up the thought of a vigorous campaign against capitalism and surrender themselves to the stupor of the "community of interests between capital and labor"; they neglect further enlightenment, isolate their organizations like guilds, look with scorn on the miserable, unorganized mass of sacrifices to capitalism, and become small bourgeois, lacking anything like revolutionary feeling. The classical examples of this are furnished by the English and American trades-unions. In such a labor movement, in distinction from a reformist political movement, the very name of the Socialist enlightenment is proscribed. Under such circumstances a better view of things becomes effective only with great difficulty and as the result of the most painful lessons of experience. In most countries, naturally, the conservative, reformist tendencies are most powerful in the unions; while the political party, on the contrary, represents more energetically the revolutionary standpoint. But the opposite is also possible. Where the Socialist party loses itself too deep in the quagmire of bourgeois parliamentarianism there awakes in the workers a native, primitive class feeling, a disgust at the coquetting with the representatives of the bourgeoisie. Then they repudiate the whole fight on the political field as a quarrel of ambitious politicians which can only compromise the class-struggle; and they come to place their only trust in the natural organizations of the working class, the unions. So in France, chiefly as a result of the *bloc* policy and Millerandism, there has arisen a revolutionary unionism which advocates the general strike as the only weapon whereby labor can accomplish the overthrow of capitalism.

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The goal of the labor movement, the conquest of the political power, indicates in itself that its attainment can be accomplished only by the working class organized as a political party. Repeatedly has the idea been presented, especially by the revisionists, that this conquest can be brought about in a simple, peaceful, parliamentary manner. In every election we poll an increased number of votes, a constantly increasing number of voters is being converted to our views; and when at last we have won the majority of the people we shall have—universal, equal suffrage being taken for granted—the majority in parliament and will make laws according to our principles. But this beautiful idyll goes to smash the moment we take into account the restric-



tions upon suffrage which the bourgeois parties are in a position to put through so long as they are still in control of the majority. It goes without saying that the ruling class will not allow itself to be so easily discarded. It will attempt to assert itself against us with all the weapons at its command; its wealth, and above all its actual control of the political administration, the bureaucracy, the army and the newspapers, give it a tremendous power; so long as it has a majority in the law-giving bodies it can by legal methods do away with the popular rights which are dangerous to it. Experience has shown that in defense of its privileges it is not inclined either in Europe or America to respect recognized rights. In the face of these facts the workers will be forced to call into the field every power which they possess.

In this final struggle for the mastery—which will not be a single battle, but a long war with many ups and downs of victory and defeat—the unions will play a part not inferior to that of the Socialist party. Or, to put it more clearly, the political and the union movement will come together in this conflict. The workers must present themselves as a single, strongly united class with a definite political purpose—that is, as a political party. They must at the same time come into action as a mass organization, i. e., lead into the field their unions and make use of their union weapon, the strike, for political purposes; they must act as a body against the power of the state. In the mass strike the two proletarian methods become one; political understanding and union discipline are here like the thinking head and the strong arm of an individual combatant.

The more the great body of the workers take part in the war on capitalism, the more will labor union conflicts become social cataclysms, great political events; and thus the unions will be forced to take more active part in the political struggle. In these great struggles the old methods of parliamentary and labor union diplomacy will be found inadequate; the cleverness of sharp leaders and versatile spokesmen will be overshadowed by the power of the masses themselves. In the persons of the leaders, who develop according to the particular demands of each form of action, the political and union movements are different; in the persons who constitute the masses behind the leaders they are identical. Thus where the mass of the workers themselves come into action the dividing line between the two methods of struggle disappears; they march upon the field of battle to a single, undivided warfare against capitalism, armed with the class-consciousness, the discipline, the intelligence and the power of action gained in all previous conflicts; the union constitutes their organization; Socialism, their political intelligence.

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