

WHAT WILL THEY DO?

The I.L.P. and the 2½ International

By T. BELL

WE wonder how many members of the Independent Labour Party have followed closely the International associations of their Party. From what we know of some of the proletarian elements in the I.L.P. we feel sure they would not stand a single moment for some of the International commitments made in their name if they only knew.

How many, for example, know that while the I.L.P. is an important prop of the 2½ International, the 2½ International stands before the world's proletariat guilty of crimes as iniquitous and abominable as the Second International;—that, in short, there is no justification for these two Internationals being separated.

It will be a surprise for them when they realise that.

Their leaders have, so far, deluded them into believing they were carrying out a fervent mission on behalf of International Labour. Wallhead and his friends pretend to carry a holy gospel of love and brotherhood to the Second and Third Internationals alike. They sigh for the reconciliation of Noske, Scheidemann, Henderson and Vandervelde (the apostles of bourgeois law and order) with Lenin, Zinoviev, Trotsky, and Bela Kun and other valiant fighters for the Proletarian Revolution.

For our part, if there is any difference at all, between the two and 2½ Internationals we should say it was in favour of the 2nd. They at least, have never concealed their traitorous policy to the working class behind specious and sanctimonious phrases.

But what is the meaning of this 2½ International, i.e., the Vienna Working Union of Socialist Parties? What purpose has it served?

That is seen when we recall the circumstances that gave it birth. The division of the International as we knew it before the Great War, into three camps, is no mere matter of chance, nor is it the outcome of malicious personal intent. You cannot build an international movement embracing millions of the clearest minds of the working class on such flimsy foundations. An international movement (like a national political party) can only take root in the historical conditions of the class struggle. To understand political groupings one must grasp the historical facts.

What are these facts? I.L.P.ers, especially the proletarian elements, scarcely need to be reminded of what happened at the outbreak of the great imperialist war. Not merely were the political parties in this country scattered to the four winds, the various currents within them, hitherto more or less quiescent, took different directions. In the International itself these antagonisms manifested themselves in a political re-grouping.

Everyone in the Labour movement is familiar with the lack-a-daisical dilletante who bemoans divisions and sighs for unity at any price. Divisions in the ranks of the working class undoubtedly make for weakness, but the weakness accruing from the splitting of the International could only be temporary. It could and did, in fact, mark an advance.

What was actually happening was a re-grouping of the working class movement on a new political basis adapted to the new conditions created by the imperialist war. It cannot be denied that a considerable number in the ranks of the Social Democrats at home and abroad (as well as in the I.L.P.) were disheartened and discouraged at the failure of the International to serve them in their time of direst need. Many looked forward to a new body and hoped for a new and better international. They hoped to pass into an International of Social Revolution. They saw in the collapse of the Second International in July-August, 1914, the triumph of Imperialism. The subsequent imperialist policy of prominent Labour and Social Democratic Leaders, confirmed this demand for an entirely new political grouping.

IN SO FAR AS THE FORMATION OF THE 2½ INTERNATIONAL KEPT AN

IMPORTANT SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAT IN THE RANKS OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY DESPITE THE LESSONS OF THE WAR IT HAS PREVENTED THE FORMATION OF A MILITANT INTERNATIONAL OF REVOLUTION AND HAS SAVED THE CAPITALIST CLASS AT A TIME WHEN IT HAD GOOD REASONS TO FEAR FOR ITS EXISTENCE.

The Communists have predicted the fusion of the 2nd with the 2½ International. The news that the Independents of Germany (with the exception of Ledebour) have joined the camp of the Noske Majority Party illustrates the accuracy of the prediction.

We may look for similar action by the I.L.P. with the Labour Party of this country in the near future.

The appointment of the pacifist journalist Brailsford, as the Editor of the "Labour Leader," and the decision to drop the word "Labour" from the title of the paper; the growing inability to distinguish between the programme of the Labour Party and that of the I.L.P., and the tendency of the former towards greater centralisation and discipline; all portends the doom of the I.L.P. as a separate political group from the Labour Party.

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To anyone who takes the trouble to examine the objective conditions of the times, it is quite clear that the role of the 2½ International is played out. There is only one thing left for its leaders to do—to break up camp and join the army of the Social traitors in the 2nd.

Their mission of reconciliation is ended. The fundamental breach between the bourgeois-democratic policy of the Second International and the revolutionary policy of the Communist International, is so widened with the growing strength of Communism that reconciliation is practically impossible. Conversely, the fusion of groups of the 2nd and the 2½ Internationals serves to show ever more clearly the real alignment taking place in the political expression of the working class struggle.

No doubt Wallhead and the leaders of the I.L.P. will herald each act of fusion as a triumph for the policy of the 2½ International—be it the I.S.P. with the S.D.P. of Germany, the passing of the *Daily Herald* to the control of the Labour Party under an ordinary Fleet Street journalist or the adoption by the middle class intelligentsia of Keir Hardie's child, the "Labour Leader."

The Communist International will wish them joy. But we question if the proletarian elements in the I.L.P. will agree to this "reconciliation" between the pacifist Wallhead and the murderers of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg.

We know the mind of the militant proletariat of the I.L.P. from experience of industrial struggles alike in the engineering shops of the big industrial centres and throughout the various coalfields, etc., too well to believe they will be disturbed at the verdict in Moscow against the S.R.'s, which is now being sanctimoniously paraded by the "Labour Leader" as an obstacle to the International co-operation of the class-conscious proletariat. We do not believe the militant workers in the ranks of the I.L.P. will be influenced by clap-trap about the "revolting barbarity of the Soviet Government sanctioned by the Communist International"—as the "Labour Leader" put it the other week.

We know that there are many good Communists in the ranks of the I.L.P. Under the spell of the Keir Hardie tradition, they accept the lead of Wallhead and Macdonald, but in reality, belong to the Communist International.

It is not therefore mere accident that causes the "Labour Leader" to spread slanderous lies about "obedience to the will of Moscow," about being "under the spell of the Moscow sect," and about Moscow

"frustrating the World Congress." When the 2½ International organs in this country, the "Labour Leader" and "Forward," knowingly spreads lies and misrepresentations about the Communist International, we understand the urgent domestic motive. They were to be expected after what happened at Berlin when the demand for a World Congress simultaneously with the Imperialist Congress of Genoa was made by Comrade Radek on behalf of the Communist International, and defeated on the initiative and by the machinations of Vandervelde, Wells, and Macdonald.

We do wonder, however, if the proletarians in the I.L.P. are content that their official organs are unable to rise above the level of the *Morning Post*.

"We cannot give up our aim to unite the workers of all countries in one class organisation," says the 2½ International. The Communist International echoes "Amen."

We, too, desire a single organisation of the working class. But it must be a *real* International. It is not enough to establish a bureau or post office at Amsterdam or Vienna. We must unite on the basis of the class struggle and be an International of action, of social revolution.

And the time is now! More and more does the intensity of the International economic and political situation cry out for a single political front and leadership of the working class.

With the Imperialist Statesmen still busy hatching and plotting to set the workers at each other's throats, we hear the leaders of the 2nd and 2½ International prating about the efficacy of a League of Nations which has been shown to be but a mere decoy duck for all would-be politicians and statesmen. We ask all honest proletarians in the I.L.P. who do not want to see Europe embroiled in another welter of blood and fire, to look to themselves.

The 2½ International will fail. And that for the same reason that the 2nd International failed. They are Internationals of words: not deeds.

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