
The Zimmerwald Conference and its Endorsement by the Party NEC.

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The endorsement by the National Executive Committee of the manifesto issued by the International Conference at Zimmerwald may give rise to misunderstandings as to the intent and purpose of endorsement, and so I believe that it will not be amiss to define at least what the scope and purpose of the motion, as made, was intended to cover.

The manifesto issued by the conference contained no recriminations such as composed a great part of the official German Peace Manifesto. It also contains a clear-cut, definite statement of the principles which should guide us in the future. It was, therefore, entitled to recognition and the encouragement of every worker who believes in the validity of the theory of the class struggle.

The Zimmerwald Conference was in no sense official. Neither can this endorsement be said to be the endorsement of the Socialist Party. The best that can be said for the endorsement is that it demonstrated that at least 3 members of the National Executive Committee stood for the principles of Internationalism as against Nationalism, which has apparently destroyed the high idealism of the International Movement as represented by the officialdom of the several parties of the nations of Europe. The endorsement was never meant to bind the Party in the United States, but was intended to bring to the fore for discussion the questions involved in Militarism and Nationalism, so that the membership may discuss these momentous questions without the stress of actual warfare to warp and bias their opinions, and that we as a Party may come to some conclusion upon them.

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This appeared to the writer to be all the more necessary because of the fact that many of the members high in the councils of the party had expressed themselves in sympathy with the attitude of the officials of the party in Germany, France, Belgium, etc., in their abandonment of the theory of the class struggle, and the class character of the state, and their adoption of a nationalism that placed their necks beneath the feet of their masters without so much as a protest on their part — in fact, at their request. The depth of their humiliation may be measured only by a recollection of the fact that they consented, at the command of these monsters who rule them, to murder each other without hope of gain, and without reason for anger against their fellow-workers of other lands.

It may be contended, and with some grain of truth, that all have not been equally to blame, but the general failure of all is so apparent that we must concede the need of a real inventory of the principles for which we stand, in order that those who stand for the international solidarity of labor may accentuate their power by cooperation, while those who stand for the abrogation of the class struggle as a phenomenon of civilization may be relegated to the services of the masters who despise them.

A minority of all European countries has refused to be driven from the doctrine of the International Solidarity of Labor, and unless this leavening minority can become a majority of the Socialist movement, then it is far better that it begin again on a sure foundation the task of establishing international relations based upon the principle of Solidarity of Labor the world over, and with a recognition of the class struggle on the same comprehensive lines.

To do anything worthwhile for ourselves we must

eternally incur the enmity of the masters, for if it is worth anything to labor it will cost the masters some advantage which they now enjoy. Therefore we must never, under any conceivable circumstance, line up with the masters, not even on national lines. When we do that we at once obscure the class lines that are the true and fundamental basis of the eternal struggle for humanity and for industrial freedom.

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Perhaps the prime reason why the workers were led to the slaughter so readily by the master-murders of Europe was because in all the years we have over-emphasized the "economic," and underemphasized the "ideal." To be sure, the ideal must have an economic base, but without the fine idealism, the fire of the spirit, the economic is dead. It cannot have life of itself; it serves a useful purpose only as it serves for a substantial base from which the ideal may blossom and thrive. If the economic theories of Socialism have any other result than this, they must inevitably be mischievous rather than of value.

The workers of Europe, no more, no less, than the workers of the United States, were misled on the economic field of thought by pure materialists, who saw the apparent conflict between the workers, divided as they are by national lines. This made it easy for the German Junkers to make the workers believe that their interests were really adverse to those of the workers of France, Belgium, England, and Russia. But in fact the interests of all are identical. To understand the identity of interest the worker must be imbued with a rational idealism that sees the falsity of the restrictions of immigration as a remedy for the robbery of the masters.

American workers no less than European workers have been misled into the same grave error. Frank P. Walsh of the Commission on Industrial Relations strikes the keynote when he protests against all restrictions on immigration.

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The thing which gives rise to an apparent conflict on the economic field between workers in different lands lies in the fact that the welfare of the worker

is dependent upon the prosperity of the master. But this is absolutely false. The welfare of the worker depends upon his power to protect himself from the exploitation of the master. This he can do by organization alone. Individually he is helpless. The fact has been many times pointed out that the workers in Germany were better housed, better fed, better paid in actual income, than the workers of any other country engaged in war, and that this justifies the German workers in supporting a government that allows this rise in the standard of living. But if you realize at the same time that the German workers were the most efficient, and were therefore, through the systematic training which they received in lieu of education, exploited more than any of the others, you at once discover the reason for this treatment of the workers by the Junker Class in Germany. Go even a step farther, and note that of all the workers in the warring countries the German workers were the most sheep-like in the drive to the slaughter. So we may understand that the beneficent German government allowed this improvement on exactly the same terms as the successful German farmer keeps his horses fat and strong, rather out of love for his own prosperity than out of consideration for the horses; and so the ancient enemy of liberty, "The State," in Germany herds these well-trained workers to the trenches without so much as a protest. This because they have not understood that only with the world in the hands of the workers can there be any measure of real security in the material things of life, and in fact security for life itself.

And so, while the National Executive Committee cannot bind the Party, and never assumed to do so, it is well worth discussion what is to be the position of the American Movement in relation to Internationalism when the war is over? Shall we do as has heretofore been done, refuse to go on record unequivocally for labor and against war, with a pledge as binding as can be made not to assist or in any way further the war of nations, and never to bear arms against each other, and to bear arms against those who order murder in order to prevent the greater cataclysm, and to do this each in his own country at no matter what cost to themselves, bringing into the movement the trust and confidence of each in the other, that must be the base of real solidarity. The old International refused always to go on record for even the general strike in case of

war, and the lack of the courage and confidence in labor to do even this was no small factor in compelling the Germans to knuckle to their rulers, not knowing whether or no any assistance of a similar nature would be rendered the movement by the Socialists of France, England, Belgium, and Russia.

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So that those who are on the surface the most to blame are perhaps, in fact, no more to blame than we ourselves who stood with them in the International, and refused to go squarely on record for the complete solidarity unto death itself, of International Labor.

Shall the new International, born of the blood and misery of millions, make the same mistake? Shall it be dominated by the same officialdom that has betrayed the workers in nearly all those war-torn lands? Or shall it recognize the logic of the situation and its fate in its own hands and declare implacable war on the masters who feast while the workers fester in hell?

The motion was intended to bring on discussions, such, for instance, as the official utterances of the Swiss officials, who declare still for the officialdom of the movement, and want the International reorganized by and with the consent and approval of the officials who betrayed it. What shall we do? We in the United States are faced by the most insidious and poisonous propaganda for war and militarism that the world ever saw. Can we battle with this alone? We cannot. The problem is worldwide. We must face it with the Class Struggle as our battle cry, and the International Solidarity of Labor as our goal.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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