
**Open Letter to James Pontius
in Sedalia, Missouri
from William L. Garver
in Springfield, Missouri
[circa Sept. 30, 1919]**

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To James Pontius, Secretary,
Socialist Party, Sedalia, Mo.

Dear Comrade:—

Now that the election and convention [Aug. 30-Sept. 5, 1919] are over, I feel that I can frankly say without being accused of trying to abuse my position as [State] Secretary that I have thought all along that there was no justification for the charge that the officials of the party had become compromisers and were no longer revolutionary. And so far from being opposed to the Soviet government of Russia, I know that the charge was not true. I can see not other explanation of the factional fight than a desire to gratify personal ambitions. I personally know that [L.E.] Katterfeld and [Alfred] Wagenknecht were both very ambitious to be leaders. I am also satisfied from my personal observation that personal enmities had its weight.

I know this: that if the Socialist Party was not radical enough and would not affiliate with the Bolsheviki, they could have gone to the Socialist Labor Party, which, in the person of Boris Reinstein, had a representative at the Moscow conference that called the Third International [March 2-6, 1919]. This fact makes it clear that there is no justification for the so-called

Communist Party, the Socialist Labor Party being recognized by Lenin and Trotsky as such a party, and Lenin acknowledging to [Arthur] Ransome that [Daniel] DeLeon of the Socialist Labor Party antedated him in planning the Soviet form of administration of industry.

So far as being in sympathy with the Soviet government is concerned, I don't think there is anyone who is a closer student of Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolsheviki than myself. I read everything available on the subject.

I have just finished reading Ransome's *Russia in 1919*, and am more confirmed than ever that the methods the Bolsheviki used in Russia are not the ones to be used here. The so-called Communists pretend to be like the Bolsheviki in Russia. What is their land program? The first act of the Bolsheviki was to win the united support of the peasants or farmers by a land decree. How many farmers have the Communists of Chicago got in their party and what is their power with regard to the land?

The Bolsheviki had the power to call a general strike. The Communists and Socialists here can call it, but without power. They don't control the people called. What do paper calls or resolutions without obedience amount to?

The Bolsheviki had the cooperatives — 48,000 societies — to take up work of distribution when the capitalist distributors declared a strike of their own. How many cooperative societies have we here to take up this work for us?

These paper revolutionists poo-hoo the idea of cooperatives; they [want no] part of bourgeois reforms, they don't want any of them. They want all or nothing. Overlooking the fact that these little things are all instrumentalities to take and hold all.

The only thing for us to do is to keep on in the slow work of educating the organized workers to the necessity of extending their organization work to the field of acquiring the ability and working out the plans by which they as labor organizations can administer and manage the industries in which they work. Every union should have a school of apprentices who should be acquiring the knowledge of managing the industry and at the

same time be bound by obligations to the labor unions instead of the private owners or corporations.

All organized labor should establish its cooperatives, so as to have the work of distribution organized and in their own hands.

When these little preliminary things are attended to, then mass action will be rational.

In truth, these little things are the first steps to mass action, and until we acquire the ability to put them through we cannot put the larger things through.

Hoping the comrades will respond to the call for the get-together in the party and redouble the efforts, I am,

fraternally,

W. L. Garver.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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