

provided by law, shall have the qualifications of an elector and be entitled to vote at all elections.

If "23" on the September 3rd ballot receives more "Yes" than "No" votes, that clause will, from the 1st day of January, 1913, but not before, take the place of the corresponding clause in the present Constitution. Ohio men who vote against this amendment may be perfect husbands and fathers, but they will thereby prove themselves defective democrats; Ohio women who to escape the responsibilities of their citizenship urge Ohio men to vote against it, should be regarded as poor citizens though they be the best of wives and mothers.



The Boston Strike.

As with every other local labor disturbance in the United States, it is impossible to obtain trustworthy information of the merits of the traction strike in Boston. The Boston strikers are said to have been unusually well treated by the traction interests, and this is very likely true as employers usually understand good treatment of employees. Whether it be a result of that treatment or of the Boston atmosphere, the men are accounted the most courteous and considerate to be found anywhere, in their behavior toward passengers. Of the service, it is reputed to be efficient except in the rush hours, when there are not as many cars as there ought to be and could be were the management as considerate as their striking employees have been of the rights and comfort of passengers. This inefficiency, however, goes without rebuke, because the monopoly interests in control manage to avoid too severe an inspection by the Railroad Commission and know how to keep the local newspapers quiet. It is their skill with the newspapers that also makes the merits of the strike a mystery. Whether the strike is justified or not nobody except the combatants knows, for it is impossible to reconcile opposing partisan statements, and the local newspapers haven't the enterprise and honesty to make an exhaustive investigation and then report the truth. Between their fears of injuring circulation by offending organized labor, and their servile timidity (or worse) with reference to monopolistic interests, the Boston newspapers are running a neck-and-neck race in bad journalism with the newspapers at every other local field of action in the class war.



Lives of delegates remind us
That we cannot be sublime
If we let instructions bind us
To vote one way all the time.

—Chicago Record-Herald, June 11.

POLITICAL ACTION OR VIOLENCE?

At the Indianapolis convention of the Socialist party in May* an unemphasized and not very generally understood decision of the convention was its adoption by a vote of 191 to 90, of the following proposed amendment to the party's constitution:

Section 6. Any member of the party who opposes political action or advocates sabotage or other methods of violence as a weapon of the working class to aid in its emancipation shall be expelled from membership of the party. Political action shall be construed to mean participation in elections for public office and practical legislative and administrative work along the lines of the Socialist party platform.

The adoption of this amendment by the Socialist convention does not complete its adoption by the Socialist party. A favorable referendum vote of the entire membership of the party throughout the United States is necessary for that; and it is at this referendum that the intra-party bitterness which oozes out through Socialist organs and leaders, and is but barely indicated to outsiders by the proposed amendment, may force a line-up of irreconcilable factions.

The vote at the convention is on all sides regarded as having failed to indicate the party sentiment. By one side the adverse vote of 90, nearly a third of the whole, is said to have been swelled by delegates who, while out of sympathy with the movement assailed, were for various reasons opposed to giving it official party attention. By the other side it is intimated that recent accessions of party membership are largely of persons sympathetic with the movement which that amendment is intended to ostracise. There is reason to believe, too, that Socialist party growth from the same sources may shift control of the Socialist party to advocates of lawless policies and force a split upon the party.

Whatever the outcome may be, the controversy is of interest, very serious interest, outside as well as inside the Socialist party in which it is raging with extreme intensity of feeling.



To understand the bearing of the amendment on which that controversy now hinges, the notion that Socialism is a proposal to abolish competition by governmentalizing social industries upon a basis of common ownership, and only this, must be discarded.

That Socialists make such proposals is true, but it is usually as policies of a labor nation yet to be established, not as reforms of existing political systems. That they advocate advances in those

*See The Public, current volume, pages 484, 487, 515.

directions under existing systems is also true, but only as opportunists. It is furthermore true that at present the opportunist factions are uppermost in most and probably in all the strong Socialist party organizations, and consequently that Socialist platforms declare for particular and immediate reforms; but this is in the face of constant efforts by professed Socialists both within and without party organizations to bring about the abandonment of opportunistic policies as hostile to Socialism.

Notwithstanding all those circumstances it is nevertheless the fact that Socialism is not apprehended by those of us who regard its doctrinaire programs as expressing its present dominant purpose. Its distinctive characteristic at the present time is its assumption of leadership on the Labor side in a world-wide conflict between two classes—employers, called “the capitalist class,” and employees, called “the wage-working class.”



The fact of the existence of those two classes cannot be gainsaid. With intense specialization of industry on a large scale and in an old-fashioned legal environment, there has been a rapid tendency toward industrial classifications into employers and employed. There is also a tendency, growing constantly stronger, toward the increase in numbers of the employed class with decrease in its wealth per capita, and the decrease in numbers of the employer class with increase in its wealth per capita. In other words, under present industrial adjustments, we are tending toward complete division into the two great social classes which Socialists regard as having hostile economic interests and as being therefore at war with each other.

This hostility of interests and the consequent warfare, are facts as impossible to controvert as the fact of the two classes—employers and employed. It is absurd to argue that under existing legal institutions the economic interests of the man who bargains to get wages are identical with those of the man, or the corporation, that bargains to pay wages. There is no such community of interest. While it is true that those interests would be identical in the general round-up, upon an equal basis for bargaining, since the bargainers would then be free co-operators in industry, this can not be true when failure to agree upon wage-terms means only inconvenience to one side (oftentimes not even that) and hunger and cold to the other. Given this disparity of independence in bargaining, and the interests of employer and employed are in no conceivable sense identical. As to the

consequent warfare, isn't the fact obtrusive all the time and all over?

Now it is this class war, this indisputable conflict between “capitalists” as a class and “wage workers” as a class, with which present day Socialism has chiefly to do.



Present day Socialism as a political movement had its beginnings in the old “International.” There was an irrepressible conflict in that body between the progressive and the revolutionary types in this war for the “labor” class against the “capitalist” class; and from the wreck of the “International” the progressives emerged as a Socialist party, with Marx as their name to conjure with. The revolutionists, left in the lurch, were afterwards little heard of except through individual voices crying out as in a wilderness, or in the occasional explosion of a deadly bomb followed by spectacles which the newspapers were wont to describe glee-fully as “the execution of a red.”

The Socialists also were revolutionary. They might resent being called “progressives.” But they proposed effecting the revolution by due process of law, by regular parliamentary procedure, by political agitation and activities, by the ballot instead of unlawful force. Their object is thereby to revolutionize the present “capitalistic” nations by turning them into a world-wide “labor” nation or federation of “labor” nations, governed by all the people (none of whom would then be idlers) as an industrial as well as a political democracy.

During the half century or less since the wreck of the “International,” Socialist parties in politics, clinging to the parliamentary policy, have taken political root in all parliamentary countries. In Europe they have distinct party representation in many parliaments, considerable in some, and in at least one, Germany, their popular vote is so large that if the apportionment were fair they would probably control the Reichstag. In the United States the original party organization, the Socialist Labor party, is now hardly more than a remnant; but an offshoot, the Socialist party, whose latest convention was at Indianapolis and of which we are now especially writing, has steadily and largely gained in voting power. Its Presidential vote in 1908 was 412,330—nearly 3 per cent of the total vote cast—and in several towns and cities it has elected mayors and councilmen, notable among its mayors being ex-Mayor Emil Seidel of Milwaukee, Mayor J. Stitt Wilson of Berkeley (California), Mayor Duncan of Butte (Montana) and Mayor Lunn of Schenectady, N. Y. There is now,

however, a pronounced revival of the old controversy in the "International" out of which Socialist parties emerged, the question of how to wage the class war being as critical and burning a one within Socialist party organizations as ever the similar question was in the "International."



Not by exactly the same methods as then is revolutionary warfare now contemplated, nor by the same persons. Half a century works changes of methods and of men in all connections. But the same spirit has revived, and it is the spirit of violence. While "direct action," the modern phrase, does not necessarily mean violent action, neither did "revolution" necessarily mean violence in the terminology of the anarchistic element of the old "International." But as "revolution" in the vocabulary of that earlier controversy contemplated violence when and where necessary for the purpose then, so does "direct action" in the present revival of that old controversy contemplate violence when and where necessary for the purpose now. The controversy in that respect is not so simple as the use of "direct action" and "violent action" interchangeably would imply.

The "direct action" policy is complicated with labor union policies that are best known abroad as "syndicalism," a familiar term in the United States being "industrial unionism."

"Syndicalism" means no more in itself than federation, and is a logical industrial development. Employers who criticize jurisdictional disputes among labor unions ought to appreciate and welcome it; for it would bring all crafts of each general industry under one jurisdiction. For example a quarrel between one branch of the carpenters' craft and another would not obstruct house-building, for all building crafts would be in the same general labor union regardless of craft specializations. This aspect of "syndicalism," or "industrial unionism," or whatever the name for the differentiation of labor unions into more general relationships industrially may be, is open to no just censure. Since labor organization is, under existing circumstances, a necessary mode of defense in a war of employers against employes, organizations along broad industrial as distinguished from narrow craft lines must have a strong tendency to lessen friction and promote better understandings between the combatants.



Yet it may be easily seen that the broader form of organization—this "syndicalism" or "industrial

unionism"—must contribute greatly to the development of that "class-consciousness" among the wage working class to which both "political action" and "direct action" Socialists look forward as the condition precedent to their victory in the class war. To "political action" Socialists, it appears that when the wage-working class achieves its own solidarity through a vital class-consciousness, such as the "capitalist class" already has, it will vote as a unit for its own men and policies and against the men and the policies of the enemy class. To "direct action" Socialists, this "class-consciousness" of the wage-working class is expected to dictate not only their class use of their voting strength as a whole, but also, as occasion may occur, their class use of any other kinds of strength which individually or collectively they may possess. It is these possibilities of "syndicalism" or "industrial unionism" that generate a variety of more or less divergent policies among Socialists. There are in this country three general factions, representing as many policies. First are the political Socialists who as yet dominate the Socialist party. They are for political action only, leaving trade unions to their own devices outside of politics, but looking to trade union membership as recruiting ground for Socialist party members and Socialist voters. Then there are the Socialists of one of the national bodies known as "the I. W. W." (Industrial Workers of the World), the "Detroit" body, which is for political action and also for "direct action." Third, there are those of the "Chicago" body of "the I. W. W." which, regarding political action as futile and calculated to militate against the interests of the "wage-working class" in its war upon the "capitalist class," by generating political ambitions and conservative policies, is for "direct action" exclusively. All those elements are in the Socialist party, and recently the "direct actionists" have been urged by "direct action" leaders to divest themselves of prejudice against political action and to join the party in order to control its policies.

Such is the situation that accounts for the submission of the amendment to the Socialist party constitution quoted above. If adopted it would exclude from party membership all who oppose political action or advocate violent methods of "direct action." Its adoption by the convention was a convention victory for Socialists who stand for political action exclusively, although a sinister significance was apparent in the fact that 90 delegates voted against it. Its adoption on referendum would be another, and possibly a permanent, intra-party victory for the political action

wing of the Socialist party. Should it be defeated on referendum there would seem to be little possibility thereafter of confidently regarding the Socialist party as representing a peaceable political movement. Defeat of the proposed amendment would be in the nature of a declaration of class war by methods which cannot and would not long be tolerated by the great body of the people of this country of whatever class.



Needless for us to say that our sympathies are with the political Socialists in this controversy.

That there is an unjust and growing division of our people into "capitalist" and wage-working" classes, tending to a centralization of wealth and power in the narrowing few and to economic dependence and poverty among the widening many, seems to us obvious. Not many are there any longer who deny it. That there is already a class war under way seems to us to be proved by an overwhelming mass of facts. That the warfare is becoming more bitter and is tending to greater lawlessness on both sides is also evident. That it can be won by the wage-working class as a class, either by political action or "direct action," we do not believe. That it can be won by non-class political action looking to the reversal of the unjust laws of property that cause the differentiation into those two classes, we do believe—but that is another story.

The special point we would make just now is that while the wage-working class can have no reasonable hope of winning this war as a class either by political action or by "direct action" (and that either in politics or out of it their effective fighting power for their own class will diminish as their numerical strength increases), yet that the Socialist party as a political movement has a rightful place in the forum of American citizenship, but that physical force "direct actionists" have not.

We do not mean that the protection of the law should be withdrawn from those who defy the law. On the contrary, for the common good the law ought to protect enemies of the law equally with everybody else. Though any were to scout all distinctions of right and wrong and all allegiance to law, nevertheless, in the interest of right and of the common good, their rights too ought to be scrupulously conserved. But we do mean that the law will wholly disappear and a reign of terror take its place, in which not the "capitalist" class but the wage-working class will be the pathetic victims, if violent forms of "direct action" are resorted to in this war of classes.

For "direct actionists" to proclaim, as they frequently do, that they are not advocates of violence doctrines is useless. They are in fact prompting and pursuing a policy of violence such as that which the proposed Socialist amendment indicates. This policy is not confined to Socialist organizations. There are reasons for believing that it connects with labor agitators who, some of them Socialists and some not, adopt destructive methods of waging the "working class war." Whether "direct actionists" advocate violence doctrinally or not, they are looking to violence and depending upon it as a policy of class warfare. Should they be brought to book lawfully for crime, the plea that they are not violence doctrinaires would be no defense. Should they be run down lawlessly by "vigilante" mobs, it won't make any practical difference whether they have argued for violence or only welcomed and promoted it.

It is not for lack of sympathy with the impulses of the "direct actionists" that we say this. The injustice that prevails, through which great masses of industrious human beings suffer, so that favored ones may luxuriate in idleness or worse, makes any one's blood boil if he has red blood in him. If a period of violence could, sooner or better than the ballot, remedy these conditions, then for those who advocate violence or would welcome it there might be much to say, even though it meant a reign of terror. Bloody international and civil wars are excused for less reason. But violence won't remedy those conditions. Violence can't remedy them. Violence can only make them worse and give them a longer lease.

The privileged classes could hardly adopt tactics for the class-war that would serve their own side better than the tactics of violent "direct action" which the Socialist party convention urges its party membership to exclude from the armory of its class-war weapons. "Direct action" of that kind, at this time and in this country, by or for the working class means reaction in favor of the privileged class.



JAMES E. MILLS.

In the earliest days of what is now known as the Singletax movement, about the time when Henry George first sprang into fame in Great Britain and was yet but barely known in his own country, "Progress and Poverty" caught the thought and the conscience of a busy man of science on the Pacific slope. Snowbound in the Grizzly Mountains, among the Sierras of Plumas county, northern California, he found his first