

MARXISM IN NEW ZEALAND

"In 1890, Marx was practically unknown and scientific class conscious socialism had not penetrated New Zealand." NEW ZEALAND IN THE MAKING, by Condliff.

One source from which Marxian socialism sprang can be traced to the New Zealand Socialist Party which was founded in 1900. Although it was not a Marxian party, there were Marxian elements in it. It sold a great deal of the literature of all the alleged socialist parties of Great Britain and North America. Works of Kautsky, DeLeon, Marx, Engels, Liebknecht and others were sold along with material such as Blatchford's.

The Marxian class conscious organized movement has passed through two periods and its present organization has been maintained for more than 14 years. Its history as a movement commenced in 1912 with the formation of the Petone Marxian Club. This club functioned for a little over a year, from 1912 to Oct. 1913. The second phase commenced in 1918 with the inauguration of the Marxian Association of New Zealand, which was actively engaged for 3 years until 1922. The present Socialist Party of New Zealand was founded in 1930. Members of the two previous organizations, supported by organizers from Australia, constituted the nucleus around which the new party was built. The circumstances that begot the formation of the Marxian group were the growth of industry with its impact on the class struggle, the influence of scientific socialists, and the introduction to New Zealand of socialist literature, especially that issued by the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

An interesting sidelight on the progress of scientific socialism is revealed in a letter to the "Petone Chronicle" during the 1911 elections. The letter, captioned "Socialist Fanatics," attacked those socialists of New Zealand whose only aim was socialism and who expressed their desire for socialism by writing "SOCIALISM" across the voting papers. This attack was ably answered in the same paper by a Marxian socialist, using the nom de plume, "wage slave." Among other things, he wrote:

"As a result of some slight acquaintance with Marxian economics, we have found out that the commodity character of our labor power prevents us from ever attaining under capitalist production more than a subsistence wage."

He also added that nationalization of monopolies is not socialism.

As socialism came more to the fore, a number of Marxian students in Petone formed themselves into a club. This club held its first meeting at Ranfurly Hall, Sydney St., Petone on Oct. 21, 1912. It called itself the Petone Marxian Club. (An interesting, though over optimistic resolution was passed at the first meeting: "That this Club meet every Monday night at 8:00 p. m. right up to the day of the revolution.") At the fifth meeting of the Club, it was moved: "That this club adopt the object and principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain." Though this Club had a limited existence (it held a total of 61 meetings) it did sow the seeds for an organization with a much wider field of operation. Contact was maintained with the Socialist Party

of Great Britain and the Socialist Party of Canada. Individual socialists still carried on after the Club dissolved.

With the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 the Marxian Socialists encountered severe restrictions in their efforts to uncompromisingly put forth the socialist position on war. Communication with the S. P. G. B. and S. P. C. was maintained, but with the greatest difficulty. Government edicts threatened all those who opposed the war. As the hostilities progressed, important socialist journals were suppressed. The first to go was the "International Socialist Review", followed by the "Western Clarion", official organ of the Socialist Party of Canada.

The consistency and persistency of the members of the old Petone Marxian Club, plus the general political agitation, bore fruit. On Dec. 28th, 1918, a conference of Marxian students was held at the Trades Hall, Christchurch. At this conference it was moved: "That a Socialist Party of New Zealand be formed." An amendment was made and carried: "That a Marxian Association be formed."

The Association adopted the Object and Principles of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. To obtain membership a pledge had to be signed: "I hereby undertake to render political support to none other than a Marxian revolutionist, endorsed by the New Zealand Marxian Association, at all elections of candidates for public office in New Zealand." A considerable amount of work of the Association was carried on by former members of the Socialist Party of Canada.

The Executive Committee of the new organization consisted of delegates from widely separated districts. These great distances prevented further meetings of the original Executive Committee. Due to these circumstances, there was elected a new Executive Committee composed of members living in the Wellington district and it held its first meeting on June 1, 1919. Throughout 1919, the Association made progress. Classes were held in many towns, especially in the mining centers. Branches were located at Petone, Christchurch, Nullerton, Huntly and Auckland. They were also in regular contact with Australian comrades. The final meeting of the Executive Committee was held on Sept. 18th, 1920.

An interesting interlude during the life of the Association was the visit to New Zealand of one of socialism's most able exponents, Moses Baritz, who came to New Zealand at the invitation of the Association. His brilliant exposition of the socialist case caused quite a turmoil in more than one sphere of political thought. His challenge to debate the Labor Party was not accepted. In fact, his trenchant criticism of all and sundry led to his deportation. The "Moariland Worker" of Jan. 28, 1920 very tersely commented upon his deportation: "Baritz' deportation is a serious blow to the socialist movement in New Zealand because it badly needs a stir up." A high light of this political blitzkrieg was the publication of a pamphlet by the Association titled, "Moses Baritz vs. H. H. Holland." It contained the facts relating to some of his lectures and subsequent expulsion.

The propaganda of the supporters of the Russian revolution and the subsidiary international organization, the Third International, that sprang from

it, generated confused ideas among many members of the Association. Sections of the Association dropped out and the Association became divided into so-called right and left wings. The "left wingers" were dubbed "long livers" and were supported by 2 Executive Committee members. This group demanded that the Executive Committee affiliate with the Third International. The emphatic refusal of the other members to accede to this demand was the culminating factor which caused the "left wingers" to abandon the Association. The seceding group participated in the formation of the Communist Party of New Zealand which held its inaugural meeting in Wellington, N. Z. in March, 1921.

The Association was not alone in its struggle with opportunism, for the Dominion Secretary of the Socialist Party of Canada, in a letter to the Secretary of the N. Z. M. A., portrays the trend of affairs in Canada:

"We are taking our vote on the Third [International]. The usual froth is in evidence like in the case of N. Z. The matter seems to have resolved itself as far as the 'fors' are concerned into a vehicle for manoueuering the trade union movement into proper position for place hunters and such like. But I think we will survive it."

The rigid stand taken by the sound members, as events have proved, was fully justified. However, the organized socialist movement was dealt a crippling blow and ceased to exist until the formation of the Socialist Party of New Zealand in 1930.

The Socialist Party of New Zealand was organized in Auckland in 1930. Later, branches were set up in Western Suburbs, Auckland and at Petone in 1931. The progress of the Party is sound though not so rapid as some would desire. It is virile. During 1934, 5 issues of an official organ, "The Socialist Review", were published. At the outbreak of World War II, a Manifesto on the war was issued. This Manifesto appeared in the July-Aug., 1941 issue of "The Western Socialist". The membership consists of those grounded in the principles of socialism. Slowly but surely, the Party is gaining ground. Those members and supporters who have given their time and substance to the spread of scientific socialist knowledge and the development of a class conscious socialist organization in New Zealand derive satisfaction from the growing reception of the socialist message in New Zealand.

R. R. EVERSON
Socialist Party New Zealand

These five parties adhere to the same Socialist Principles:

SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA —

Box 2291: G. P. O. Sydney Australia.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA — P. O. Box 1751, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN —

Rugby Chambers, Rugby St., London W. C. 1.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF NEW ZEALAND — P. O. Box 62, Petone, New Zealand.

WORKERS SOCIALIST PARTY OF U. S. — 12 Hayward Place, Boston 11, Mass.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA and THE WORKERS SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of society as a whole.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA and THE WORKERS SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE U.S. hold:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., lands, factories, railways, etc.), by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labor alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly of the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of plutocratic privilege.
7. That as political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA and THE WORKERS SOCIALIST PARTY OF U. S., therefore, enter the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labor or avowedly capitalist, and call upon all members of the working class of these countries to support these principles to the end that a termination may be brought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labor, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Those agreeing with the above principles and desiring enrollment in the Party should apply for membership form to secretary of nearest branch or local or at National Headquarters.