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Socialist League Archives



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International Institute of Social History

Cruquiusweg 31

1019 AT Amsterdam

The Netherlands

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

COMRADES,—

Directly after our last conference, which endorsed the policy carried out by the League hitherto, two separate parties were formed on the Council caused by the fact that as early as July, members on and off the Council were publicly urging the League into a parliamentary course of action; the other party wished to maintain the League as an educational party of principle. As a means of coming to some common understanding and agreement, the following resolution was passed by the Council on November 1st:—

MAHON moved.—CHAMBERS seconded,

That a committee be appointed to draft a statement of the working policy of the League towards the chief social and political parties, such policy to be afterwards submitted for approval to the branches or a special conference.

MAHON and LANE were appointed on this committee on behalf of the party, who wished to maintain the League as a party of principle. Bax and Binning on behalf of the party, who wished to make the League a political organisation. The committee agreed on all points except an Eight Hours Labour Bill, and parliamentary action. Upon Bax and Binning advocating these points, Mahon told them that if they believed in this they ought not to belong to the League, but should join the S.D.F. At the next meeting, Mahon volunteered to draw up a policy to submit to the committee. At this meeting, of which I had no notice, Mahon presented his draft, the other two finding it a parliamentary policy and nothing more, accepted it with pleasure, threw over all previous arrangements, and presented it to the Council as the report of the committee. On hearing it read to the Council, I disagreed with it and claimed my right to give in a minority report. Mahon has since regained possession of the majority report, and declines to give it up or bring it before the conference except in the way of resolutions from the Croydon branch. This I was not aware of until a week after the time for sending in notices of motion for the agenda paper. I have, to the best of my ability, carried out the instructions of the Council in drawing up a report. The council, having declined to send the minority report to the branches, the majority report having already gone round on legs, I now further carry out the instructions of the Council in submitting it to the branches. As a special conference has not been called, I shall insist at the forthcoming one that this matter be brought forward, and I trust I shall receive your support, whether you agree with the report or not. With my report I wish to bring to your notice, the circular to Socialists, issued at the time of the split from the S.D.F., and the formation of the League second, the pamphlet, *For Whom Shall We Vote*, also the first weekly number of *Commonweal*, all of which I enclose. I also refer you to the Manifesto annotated by Morris and Bax in confirmation of my contention that I only state more plainly the principles there laid down. The manifesto being anti-parliamentary, as see page 8, paragraph 2 and 3, also note F, it is antistatist, as see page 7, paragraph 5, it is also anti-religious as see page 8, paragraph 4, it also advocated freedom of the sexual relations, as see page 6, paragraph 3, also note F.

We have three courses open to us at the conference, adopt my report and still farther pledge ourselves as a party of principle without compromise. Adopt the parliamentary policy and become a second S.D.F. or perhaps worse, or the alternative proposal of the Hammersmith Branch, that the matter be adjourned for twelve months, the result of which would be that the battle would still be carried on, weakening our propagandist forces. These are very important questions, and it behoves every Branch to consider them very carefully, and instruct their delegates as to which policy they are to support, though I must contend that a parliamentary policy ought to be outside discussion as we left the Federation on this very question, and founded the League in direct opposition to it. The Manifesto, which everyone before joining is expected to agree with and pledge himself to assist in carrying the principles and policy it advocates into effect, is decidedly opposed to parliamentary agitation.

1887
JOSEPH LANE

[Mahon's excuse for his conduct in this matter is that he does not agree with the policy that he has written, but that it is the only one the members will accept. I trust you will show him otherwise.]



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