

W.Z. FOSTER: RENEGADE OR SPY?

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*With what knot shall I hold this Proteus
who so often changes his countenance?—Horace.*

*“I am one who was raised in the slums. . . .
I have no teachings or principles.”*

—W.Z. Foster, October 3, 1919.

THE revolutionary movement of labor is a living organism, throbbing with vitality. Like any other organism it passes through stages of growth—qualitative growth first; later comes the quantitative growth. Qualitatively speaking, the revolutionary movement passes through “childhood,” “adolescence,” “maturity” and finally (quality and quantity merging) achieves self-fulfillment, at which point it renders itself useless—that is, the revolution having been accomplished, the movement itself naturally dies. Like other healthy and life-throbbing organisms the revolutionary labor movement is attacked by “microbes.” The attacks in turn call forth the agencies of defense. Thus a never-ceasing warfare is waged between the forces of destruction and the healthy, life-preserving elements. Among the microbes we find a vast variety as to forms and appearances, though they are all essentially alike. We observe among the many variations the labor faker, the egotist, the incurable—hence hopelessly unbalanced—sentimentalist, the self-seeking politician, the unscrupulous, crafty and utterly corrupt “labor” lawyer, and the Anarchist. Of those enumerated here the last mentioned is, above all others, the Protean microbe. It is many-hued, it dons various disguises, and adopts different designations. It is, by the same token, the most deadly of the microbes assailing the revolutionary organism. Moreover, it is, by its very nature, part and parcel of

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capitalism both in its “philosophy” (individualistic) and its preachings and practices (violence). It is, therefore, cultivated by the powers of capitalism for the specific purpose of inoculating the revolutionary movement, there to perform its life-destroying mission, unless it is “isolated” and eliminated.

It is the purpose of this study to “isolate” one of these Anarchist microbes, to examine it minutely to the end of understanding it, and through it the species, better. The particular individual “microbe” selected is of no greater importance than the others, but he is undoubtedly the most representative. A mediocre personality, he is not worth attacking personally even if that were the object of this article. But he combines in his career and activities the two-in-one character of bourgeois and Anarchist in such a happy blending as to invite, logically and impersonally, scrutiny and examination under the magnifying glass, even as one examines the microbe or the insect. The particular Anarchist microbe under examination is W.Z. Foster, at the present time candidate for President on the Anarcho-Communist ticket.

This, accordingly, is in no sense intended as a biography of the man, though there will be mention of some biographical details. Nor does this article lay claim to being an exhaustive treatment. Space permits only of touching the high spots of what undoubtedly is a checkered career. For the gentleman, who was born in Massachusetts in 1881, successively worked as “a sculptor’s apprentice, type-founder, factory worker, steam engineer, steam fitter, railroad brakeman, railroad fireman, logger, salesman, street

car motorman, longshoreman, farmer, deep water sailor, railroad car inspector,” not to mention his political career. According to *American Labor Who’s Who*, Mr. Foster joined the Socialist party in 1900 and was expelled from that reform organization in 1909. It will be observed that he served an apprenticeship of nine years in the bourgeois reform S.P., a fact which undoubtedly goes a long way to explain subsequent incidents in his career. He is reported to have joined the I.W.W. shortly after being expelled from the Socialist party, and the time of his joining the I.W.W. is important also, for by that time that organization had definitely become an Anarcho-Syndicalist affair, repudiating political action, advocating physical force, violence, so-called mass action, sabotage and encouraging and condoning petty individualistic thefts. It is evident that our hero is ripening. In 1911 he was sent as a delegate from the I.W.W. to the Budapest Conference of the International Trade Union Secretariat which convened August 10 of that year. Mr. Foster’s claims to a seat at this conference were unceremoniously rejected. James Duncan, the A.F. of L. delegate at Budapest, and a typical American labor lieutenant, the right-hand man and worthy representative of Samuel Gompers, labor faker-in-chief, reported (according to Brissenden’s *The I.W.W., A Study of American Syndicalism*) that “a misguided man, named Foster, from Chicago, claiming to represent an alleged organization of labor in America called the International [sic] Workers of the World, had been for some time in Paris . . .” and had secured the support of the French trade union organization. “During the discussion Foster lost

control of his temper,” said Duncan. “He even threatened assault. . . .” Here we have one of the earliest concrete demonstrations of this particular Anarchist in action. It was on this occasion that Daniel De Leon, profound scholar and student of social-economic matters, and a relentless foe of Anarchist and labor faker alike, observed that “Foster traveled far [to Budapest] to illustrate the fact that the Anarchist in America differs not from his congener in Europe—a perambulating lump of erratic, contradictory foot-in-the-mouthness.”¹

It is reported that Foster returned from Europe convinced that “dual unionism was wrong.” Though an Anarcho-Syndicalist of the extremist type, he had arrived at the conclusion that the thing to do was to “bore from within” the existing reactionary craft unions. In a letter sent to the official organ of the I.W.W., the *Industrial Worker* (quoted by Brissenden), he presents the case of the Anarcho-Syndicalist in relation to the craft union movement. Among other

¹ [“While awaiting from Europe an official or coherent report of the transactions of the conference recently held by the International Labor Secretariat at Budapest in Hungary, and where Mr. James Duncan, First Vice-President of the A.F. of L., was admitted to a seat and Mr. S.Z. {sic} Foster, of the ‘Chicago I.W.W.’ was rejected, it may here be observed that, if Duncan correctly reports Foster and himself in *The Federationist* for the current month, then, assuredly Duncan ‘had the horse’ on Foster when Duncan said: ‘Foster talked nonsense in saying that Socialists could not get in our unions, that 85 per cent. of the Industrial Workers of the World members were in American Federation of Labor unions.’ If Foster did say what Duncan says he said, then Foster traveled far to illustrate the fact that the Anarchist in America differs not from his congener in Europe—a perambulating lump of erratic, contradictory, foot-in-the-mouthness.” A untitled editorial paragraph from the *Daily People*, October 9, 1911.—*Editor*.]

things he stated that “the founders of the I.W.W. at its inception gave the organization the working theory that in order to create a revolutionary labor movement, it was necessary to build a new organization separate and apart from the existing craft unions which were considered incapable of development.” Ruefully he admits that “we later comers have inherited them [the theory and consequent tactics] and, without any serious investigation, accepted the theory as an infallible dogma. Parrot-like and unthinking, we glibly re-echo the sentiment that ‘craft unions cannot become revolutionary unions,’ and usually consider the question undebatable.” Here we have one of the many excellent self-portrayals of the man. “Parrot-like and unthinking” are excellent designations for that half of his life which may be regarded as having been devoted directly to the promotion of Anarchism in one form or another, as contrasted with that other half of his life which has been devoted to the promotion of capitalist enterprises and capitalist idealism.

Before proceeding in our study, let us here give a resumé, briefly, of his career to date. For nine years he was active in the so-called Socialist party boosting every political nostrum, every fake reform and every criminal deception which the S.P. practised upon the working class during those years (and after). He then became an ardent advocate of Anarcho-Syndicalism which, while in the I.W.W., meant what he and his former fellow-reformers in the S.P. called “dual unionism.” Upon his return from Europe he is convinced that “dual unionism” is all wrong, thus in this respect retreating to his former bourgeois reform

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S.P. position.

For some time he appears to have dropped out of the limelight altogether, but he staged a return with a vengeance. Having run the gamut from pure and simple politicianism to pure and simple Anarcho-Syndicalism; from anti-A.F. of L. and “dual unionism” to would-be anti-A.F. of L. but actual support of that body on the plea of “anti-dual unionism,” he subsequently blossomed forth as a super-patriot and enthusiastic promoter of capitalist warfare. This part of the story is taken from official government records. The facts were brought out before the Senatorial Committee which was investigating the steel strike in 1919, the Senatorial Committee publishing the hearings with the testimony of Messrs. Gompers, Fitzpatrick, Foster, Gary and many others involved in the steel strike. For the purpose of identification the complete title of this report is given here:

“INVESTIGATION OF STRIKE. IN STEEL INDUSTRIES
HEARINGS
before the
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
UNITED STATES SENATE
Sixty-sixth Congress
First Session
Pursuant to
S. RES. 202
on
The Resolution of the Senate to
Investigate the Strike in
Steel Industries
Washington
Government Printing Office
1919.”

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True to his pro-A.F. of L. attitude, and his support of the labor fakers at that time, Foster was attempting to round up the steel slaves and gather them into the bosom of father Sammy Gompers, that is, shackle them to the A.F. of L. and thus prepare them for final slaughter at the hands of capitalist exploiters. Under certain conditions capitalist exploiters consider the A.F. of L. extremely useful. In fact, viewing the question as a whole, the A.F. of L. is considered indispensable to the capitalist class in America, for without such an organization the workers would almost inevitably respond to their class interests and organize along revolutionary lines. There are, however, exceptions to the rule and the United States Steel Trust forms one of these exceptions. Mr. Gary and his steel corporation had no need of the proffered aid from the American Federation of Labor in keeping the steel slaves chained to the capitalist chariot of exploitation. Hence, the attempts on the part of the A.F. of L. to organize the steel slaves into that scab-herding union were frowned upon by Mr. Gary and his fellow-exploiters. As in the case of competing concerns where ruthless warfare is carried on to exterminate the competitor, efforts were made to discredit the leaders in the steel strike, efforts which, in view of the record of the labor fakers and their ally, Mr. Foster, were more than likely to prove successful. One of the members of the Senatorial Investigation Committee, Senator McKellar, questioned Mr. Gompers at length on Mr. Foster's previous record and his relation to the A.F. of L. and the labor fakers in particular. Mr. Foster had, in 1911 or so, published a book entitled,

Syndicalism, in which he gave complete and unreserved expression to his Anarchist ideas. In keeping with the tenets of Anarchism the general strike is vigorously advocated. This so-called general strike is described as an attempt at “disorganizing the mechanism of capitalist society,” following which the Anarchists (presuming to speak for the working class) declare that the workers will “seize control of the social means of production and proceed to operate them.” In short, the general strike advocate declares, first, that the workers must abandon the workshops and their tools, surrendering the plants of production to the capitalists. Having done this, according to the crack-brained reasoning of the Anarchists, the workers, having surrendered even the semblance of economic power, will then be in a position of power and will proceed to operate the plants of production! Bloodshed is approved with a generous sneer at “ultra legal and peaceful Socialists” who, strange to say, object to bloodshed. The argument is here made that in order for humanity to take a forward step, there must be loss of life and “untold suffering,” but, says our brave Anarchist Foster, “the prospect of bloodshed does not frighten the Syndicalist worker as it does the parlor Socialist.” We shall observe later to what extent this “noble principle” is lived up to. Sabotage is extolled as a weapon of the minority. It is emphasized that it requires action only on the part of a few individuals to “sabote {sic} and demoralize an industry.” And such questions as to whether methods of sabotage or other underground conspiracies are “underhanded” or “unmanly” do not concern the Anarcho-Syndicalists at all. “They are very

successful,” asserts our Anarchist, “and that is all they ask of them.” In short, the jesuitical motto, “The end justifies the means,” is the heart of the credo of the Anarchist. The late lamented Reverend Malthus is one of the major gods of the Anarchist. Mr. Foster, in the book *Syndicalism*, in this connection observes that “children are a detriment in his [the Syndicalist’s] daily struggles and . . . by rearing them he is at once tying a millstone about his neck and furnishing a new supply of slaves to capitalism. He [the Syndicalist], therefore . . . carries on an extensive campaign to limit births among workers.”

These and many other typical Anarchist and physical force theories, coupled with the most reactionary ideas, constituted the message conveyed through Mr. Foster’s book, *Syndicalism*. It was the purpose of Senator McKellar to ascertain to what extent Mr. Foster still believed, in the theories to which he gave expression in 1911. Mr. Gompers was asked what he knew about the matter. Naturally, Sammy Gompers was anxious to apologize for his noble ally and so he tells this delicious story:

“In response to the question of Senator Phipps I made a very brief reference to Mr. Foster. I want to amplify that a bit.

“I have heard it said, ‘Oh, that mine enemy would write a book.’ That is the sum total of the antagonism directed to Mr. Foster. He wrote a book, and when a young man dogmatically laid down the phantasies of his brain. Let me say, sir, that no one had a greater antipathy toward the personality of another than I had toward Mr. Foster. I mean, toward his attitude. I did not care how he looked or appeared, but to me a man who would assume the position

that Mr. Foster took at the Zurich² conference when representing the I.W.W. and claiming recognition by that conference he wanted Mr. James Duncan, a magnificent, intelligent man, a man of high type of character, excluded from the conference, was in about the same category with Mr. Haywood and others of that type.’

“The Chairman. ‘When was that conference?’

“Mr. Gompers. ‘That was about 1910, something like that, or 1911.’

“The Chairman. ‘And he appeared at that conference as the representative of the I.W.W.?’

“Mr. Gompers. ‘Yes, sir; that is, he so claimed. I have no authority for saying that he did, but he so claimed. Then Mr. Foster wrote that pamphlet.’

“Senator McKellar. ‘When was that written?’

“Mr. Gompers. ‘Oh, about a year or so after. That pamphlet on *Syndicalism* carried out the thought that he presented to the Zurich International Labor Conference.

“‘I should say, in passing, that Mr. Foster was not admitted by that international meeting but that Mr. Duncan was seated as the representative of the American Federation of Labor.

“‘About a year after that meeting at Zurich—no, about two years after the Zurich meeting, and about a year after that pamphlet had been printed, I was at a meeting of the Chicago Federation of Labor, conducted under the presidency of Mr. John Fitzpatrick. I was called upon to make and did make an address. One of the delegates arose after I had concluded and expressed himself as being thoroughly in accord with what President Gompers had said; that it would be wise for the men in the labor movement of Chicago and of the entire country to follow the thought and the philosophy and so forth which President Gompers had enunciated in his address. I did not know who was the delegate. He was a new personality to me. I might

² Mr. Gompers apparently got his European cities mixed. He probably meant to say Budapest.—*Author*.

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say that I was rather flattered and pleased at the fact that there was general comment of approval of not only my utterances but of the delegate who had first spoken after I had concluded.

“Much to my amazement, after the meeting was over, I was informed that the delegate was G. [sic] Z. Foster, the man who had appeared in Zurich and the man who had written that pamphlet. I think I addressed a letter to him expressing my appreciation of his change of attitude, his change of mind, and pointing out to him that pursuing that constructive policy he could be of real service to the cause of labor. He was a man of ability, a man of good presence, gentle in expression, a commander of good English, and I encouraged him. I was willing to help build a golden bridge for mine enemy to pass over. I was willing to welcome an erring brother into the ranks of constructive labor. And in view of what Mr. Foster has done in helping to bring about better conditions among the stockyard workers of Chicago and of the balance of the country, in view of the lawful, honorable methods which he has pursued in this situation now under investigation, he is entitled to have something better than a mistaken past thrown not only in his teeth and in his face, but held up to the contumely of the world in order now to make his activities impossible or to neutralize them. That is the situation, Mr. Chairman.’

“The Chairman. ‘You say, then, do you, Mr. Gompers, that his views expressed by him in his book on *Syndicalism* and his views expressed at the time you speak of have changed?’

“Mr. Gompers. ‘I have no doubt, and I have no hesitancy in saying so, Sir.’

“The Chairman. ‘I have just one more question which I would like to have in the record: If Mr. Foster had not changed his mind on these fundamental questions from the time that you speak of, I take it that you would not be willing to have him do anything with this strike situation, would you?’

“Mr. Gompers. ‘Not at all. On the contrary, as I stated in the early part of my remarks this morning, I was elected the

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first chairman of this conference committee in June, 1918. Mr. Foster was elected secretary. I would not have served with Mr. Foster if he had not changed his views.”

Before Mr. Gompers thus generously vouched for the trustworthiness of Mr. Foster as a capitalist labor lieutenant, and certified to his being an ardent foe of the revolutionary working class movement, another labor lieutenant, Mr. Fitzpatrick of Chicago, had certified to the good character of Mr. Foster in so far as the interests of capitalism in general and reactionary craft unionism in particular were concerned. Mr. Fitzpatrick was asked by the chairman of the Senatorial Committee what he knew about Mr. Foster and his previous views, especially as expressed in his book on *Syndicalism*, and his present views. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated:

“‘They are things that are past and gone. They have had to go into the graveyard and search around there to get something. They have not got anything on Foster, except something that has been dead and buried so long that it has no more use; and that is where they went.’

“The Chairman. ‘Do you think that those views as expressed by him which were put into the *Congressional Record* are not his present views?’

“Mr. Fitzpatrick. ‘Absolutely they are not his present views and on the old adage that a wise man changes his mind and a fool never does, Foster is not that kind of a fellow. He has changed his mind.’”

The following questions by Senator Walsh were then presented to Mr. Fitzpatrick who proudly acknowledged fellowship with Foster, stating that he had known him for six or seven years:

“Senator Walsh. ‘What was his attitude toward this

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country during the war, if you know?"

"Mr. Fitzpatrick. 'Absolutely loyal, and he did everything in his power to assist in every way. I worked with him during the whole of the war, and I know the service that he rendered to the country. I think that he rendered as great a service, not only to the United States Government, but to the Allies, as any man.'

"The Chairman. 'Have you ever discussed this book with him at all?"

"Mr. Fitzpatrick. 'Oh, he joked about the views that he had in his younger days, when he associated with men who were actuated with radical thoughts, and he was imbued by it, but when he got his both feet on the ground and knew how to weigh matters with better discretion and more conscience, he had forgot all of those things that he learned when he was a boy, and is now doing a man's thinking in the situation.'"

However valuable the endorsements and the testimony of Messrs. Gompers and Fitzpatrick were to Mr. Foster, it is obvious that the gentlemen of the Senatorial Committee desired to have Mr. Foster himself explain his past and present views. The senatorial gentlemen knew Mr. Gompers, indeed, to be a man than whom there was none "more diffident and respectful than he," to quote Mr. Gompers himself. A man, in Mr. Gompers's own language, "whom no man could ever quote as having uttered orally or having penned any condemnation of the organization of employers and business men."

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the well-known Uriah Heep³ humility and "umbleness," notwithstanding Gompers's cringing servility toward

³ [A character from Charles Dickens' 19th century novel, *David Copperfield*.—Editor.]

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American capitalism, the senatorial gentlemen called upon Mr. Foster himself to explain more fully. Referring to Foster's attitude toward the war, Senator Walsh asked him:

“Some reference was made by Mr. Fitzpatrick about your purchasing bonds or your subscribing to some campaign fund. Do you mind telling the committee what you did personally in that direction?”

“Foster. ‘I bought my share, what I figured I was able to afford, and in our union we did our best to help make the loans a success.’

“Walsh. ‘Did you make speeches?’

“Foster. ‘Yes, sir.’

“Walsh. ‘How many?’

“Foster. ‘Oh, dozens of them.’

“Walsh. ‘I would like to have you, for the sake of the record, tell us how many speeches you made, what time you devoted, and what money you expended for bonds, for the Red Cross or for any other purposes.’

“Foster. ‘Well, I think I bought either \$450 or \$500 worth of bonds during the war. I cannot say exactly.’

“Walsh. ‘You made speeches for the sale of bonds?’

“Foster. ‘We carried on a regular campaign in our organization in the stockyards.’

“Walsh. ‘And your attitude was the same as the attitude of all the other members of your organization?’

“Foster. ‘Absolutely.’

And when he was asked specifically by Senator Walsh, “What was your attitude toward this country during the war,” Foster answered, “MY ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WAR WAS THAT IT MUST BE WON AT ALL COSTS.”

Pressed by the chairman for a statement as to the extent of his agreement with Mr. Gompers's views, Mr. Foster testified:

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“Chairman. ‘Mr. Gompers, however, has not changed his views concerning the I.W.W., but your views have changed?’

“Foster. ‘I don’t think Mr. Gompers’ views have changed—only to become more pronounced, possibly.’

“Chairman. ‘And you say now to the committee that your views have so changed that you are in harmony with the views of Mr. Gompers?’

“Foster. ‘Yes, sir, I don’t know that it is 100 per cent, but in the main they are.’”

Thus the sneerer at “peaceful Socialists,” the Anarchist, the alleged foe of the corrupt A.F. of L. officialdom, definitely identified himself with that officialdom in the person of the arch-labor faker of America!

As if not yet satisfied, the following estimate of the labor fakers, taken from his book, *Syndicalism*, was presented to Foster by Senator McKellar:

“The American labor movement is infested with hordes of dishonest officials, who misuse the powers conferred upon them to exploit the labor movement to their own advantage, even though this involves the betrayal of the interests of the workers. The exploits of these labor fakers are too well known to need recapitulation here. Suffice to say the labor faker must go.’

“‘To whom were you referring as labor fakers at that time?’

“Mr. Foster. ‘Well, unfortunately, I was of the opinion of a good many men that men who did not happen to agree with my particular philosophy had some ulterior motive, but I want to say, as the result of a number of years’ experience, that I think that the degree of integrity and honesty is high among the officials of these various organizations. There is no institution in the world but what has its crooks in it. I think that for disinterestedness, unselfishness, and honesty the leaders and officials of this union movement will

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compare favorably with those of any other institution in the United States, bar none.’

“Senator McKellar. ‘Then you were wholly mistaken in your criticisms of the organized-labor movement in this country when you wrote that paragraph, were you not?’

“Mr. Foster. ‘Yes; when I said there were hordes of them. I do not believe there are; but there are dishonest men in the labor movement the same as there are in every other institution, and I say that they should go.’

“Senator McKellar. ‘Were you referring to any particular one, may I ask?’

“Mr. Foster. ‘No; not any particular one.’

“Senator McKellar. ‘You were just referring generally; and as a matter of justice and right, you think you were in error when you made that reference?’

“Mr. Foster. ‘Yes, sir.’

But that was in 1919. In 1932 Foster again changes his tune. In the election platform of the Communist party (probably written by Foster, but in any case certainly accepted by him as his own), we find this:

“The reactionary officialdom of the American Federation of Labor is an agency of capitalism among the workers for putting over the capitalist way out of the crisis.”

Zig—you A.F. of L. officialdom are fakers and traitors to labor; Zag—you same A.F. of L. officialdom are the highest in “disinterestedness, unselfishness, and honesty.” Zig—you are reactionary and agents of capitalism. Zag again—?

In the following statement Mr. Wm. (Zig-Zag) Foster puts himself on exhibition as the perfect chameleon:

“I am one who changes his mind once in a while. I might say that other people do. I shook hands with Gustave Hervé

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in La Santé Prison. At that time he was in there for anti-militarism and for preaching sabotage, and today I think Gustave Hervé is one of the biggest men in France.”

Mr. Foster’s subtlety will not escape the reader. If Hervé could become one of the biggest men in France, though he once preached sabotage, why might not Foster, who also once preached sabotage, become a big and respectable man in America? Indeed, why not?

However, despite Mr. Foster’s unreserved declaration of allegiance to American capitalism and capitalist warfare, the senators were not all thoroughly satisfied and insisted on putting Mr. Foster on the gridiron, in the doing of which they made the gentleman feel decidedly uncomfortable. Senator McKellar particularly put Mr. Foster through a third degree examination. Reading from Foster’s book he asked Mr. Foster repeatedly to state whether or not he still believed in the theories of Anarchism expressed therein. Mr. McKellar asked him, “Is that your composition?”, to which Foster answered, “That sounds like it.” McKellar insisted, “You know whether it is, do you not?” To which the artful dodger, Mr. Foster replied, “Well, I have not read it for a good many years.” Mr. Foster attempted to get back to the question of the steel strike, but McKellar was insistent. He put it squarely up to the chairman, arguing, “Now, Mr. Chairman, I think I have a right to have an answer to my question now.” And then and there commenced a dodging and a zig-zagging which more than anything else illustrates the career of Foster. At one point during this tedious process Mr. McKellar injected, “I am still waiting for an answer, Mr. Foster.” And finally Foster made this statement:

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“Well, I will say this. I will say not only with regard to that, but to everything that is in there, that it was written some eight or nine years ago; I do not know exactly when, and at that time—well, I might state this, that I am one who was raised in the slums. I am one who has had a hard experience in life. I have probably seen some of the worst sides of it, and I have knocked around in the industries, and I have seen many things that I did not agree with in the industries, and at the time that that was written, I want to say that I was a follower and an advocate of the Spanish, French and Italian system of unionism, and since then I have become possibly a little less impatient, a little less extreme, possibly, in my views, considerably so, in fact; and today I will state that I am an advocate of the system of unionism as we find it in America and England. Now, I will say that not only for that statement, but for everything that is in that book.”

This sounds like one of ex-Mayor Jimmy Walker’s replies to Seabury—halting, disjointed and evasive—and did not, of course, satisfy the senator who was still waiting for his answer, and so McKellar insisted:

“‘You have not answered my question, which is: Do you honestly and sincerely believe in the statement that is made on page 3 of this book on the subject of ‘revolution,’ which I have read to you?’

“Mr. Foster. ‘I will say that if I were writing that again, or if I were writing a book, I would not include any of that that is in that book.’

“Senator McKellar. ‘But my question is, which I will repeat: Do you honestly and sincerely believe in the doctrine of revolution as stated on page 3 of this book, as read to you?’

“Mr. Foster. ‘I believe I have answered you as well as I could. I stated that I would not write it.’

“Senator McKellar. ‘It is a question now that is perfectly

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susceptible of being answered “yes” or “no,” and then you can make any explanation that you like, because I want to be entirely fair with you, I would not be unfair for anything in the world. It is just a question of do you still believe in it?’

“Mr. Foster. ‘I just want to say this, Mr. Chairman. In this campaign there has been a great deal of newspaper publicity, and the newspapers have treated the men in charge of the campaign most unfairly, most unfairly, and I say that advisedly. President Gompers, who gained such a splendid reputation during the war, has been lambasted all over the country for the part that he has played in this work. The papers have made, as a rule—’

“Senator McKellar (after a pause). ‘I am listening, sir.’

“Senator Borah. ‘Mr. Foster, will you permit me to make a suggestion?’

“Senator McKellar. ‘I would like very much for him to answer that question.’

“Senator Borah. ‘This is in connection with it, but I will not break into it.’

“Senator McKellar. ‘I hope the Senator will wait just a moment until he answers the question.’

“(The witness made no response.)”

There now follow pages of questions and irrelevant answers by Foster until, finally, Foster made this statement: “Now, it is my judgment that a repudiation of that pamphlet as a whole, and a general statement that I do not subscribe to the doctrines in it is sufficient.” The chairman thereupon asked him: “Do you make that statement?” To which Mr. Foster at last responded: “I do.”

Foster’s abject and cowardly abjuration and repudiation were not confined to his advocacy of physical force and violence. His degradation went lower than that. He was specifically confronted with this quotation from his book *Syndicalism*:

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“The wages system is the most brazen and gigantic robbery ever perpetrated since the world began. So disastrous are its consequences on the vast armies of slaves within its toils that it is threatening the very existence of society. If society is even to be perpetuated—to say nothing of being organized upon an equitable basis—the wages system must be abolished. The thieves at present in control of the industries must be stripped of their booty and society so reorganized that every individual shall have free access to the social means of production. This social reorganization will be a revolution. Only after such a revolution will the great inequalities of modern society disappear.”

Being confronted with this specific quotation, he repudiated his book “as a whole,” thus obviously and specifically repudiating the above statement which, taken by itself, is otherwise sound. And by that repudiation he placed himself cheek by jowl with Gary (whom he was supposed to fight), and cheek by jowl with the “noble” Sammy Gompers “who [in the words of Foster] gained such a splendid reputation during the war” in the service of capitalism, and cheek by jowl with the capitalist class of exploiters generally.

To get the full flavor of the evasiveness, the dodging, the abject cringing and crawling before the committee, the revolting hypocrisy and apostasy of Foster, it is necessary to read in detail the questions put to Foster by the members of the committee, and the answers by Foster, or his failure to answer many of the questions.

In order to solidify himself still further with Gompersism, Foster declared, in answer to a question by Senator McKellar, as follows: “I think the method and system being pursued by the American Federation of Labor are those best calculated to

improve the lot of American working men.” Pressed again somewhat later by Senator Borah on the question of his book, Senator Borah asking, “If you are still a believer in the doctrines of that book, there would be no reason why you should not resort to violence?” Foster answered, “If I were still a believer in that book and tried to use it and put it into practice I would not be in the position I am in.” And, referring again to the pamphlet, he again asserted, “I do not believe I could defend any of that. I would not defend any of that.” Again Senator Borah asked Foster, “During that time [while in charge of the steel strike] have you advocated any of the doctrines that are found in this pamphlet among the men?” To which Mr. Foster replied, “Not at all.” Senator Borah pursued the question further, asking, “During that time has the American Federation of Labor found fault with your teachings or principles in any way?” Whereupon Mr. Foster made this final and all-conclusive answer, “I have no teachings or principles.”

When Mr. Foster then and there acknowledged that he had no teachings or principles, he completed his self-portrayal. Those who knew the man and who have studied his career, and those who understand the Anarchists’ navel-string connections with capitalist principles and propaganda, thoroughly agree and accept Mr. Foster’s declaration that he has no principles. It is well, however, that Mr. Foster himself should have stated as much, since he certainly is the one best qualified to testify on that point, and since unquestionably he must be considered an unprejudiced witness against himself.

Following the steel strike, Mr. Foster withdrew into the silences for a few years—or so it seemed. It is then recorded that he went to Russia on a visit in 1921. Apparently he suffered another change of heart and returned to the United States a full-fledged Anarcho-Communist. The man who in 1919 had acclaimed Sammy Gompers (alas! Sammy, where is now thy golden bridge o'er which thine enemy passed?); who had boasted of his patriotism; who had announced his fellowship with and high admiration for Gustave Hervé, who at that time was honored by that French capitalist government which was instigating warfare against Soviet Russia—that man was now hailed as a simon pure Communist and a defender of the Soviet faith! He who in 1919 had specifically repudiated Bolshevism, now appeared as the arch-Bolshevist! At the Senate investigation Senator McKellar had asked this direct question of Foster:

“Are you in sympathy with the Bolshevistic movement in Russia?”

And Foster had replied, “I don't know much about it.”

Senator McKellar had persisted, “Then you do not believe in it?”

To which Mr. Foster had finally replied, “*Not knowing about it, of course I cannot say that I do.*”

And yet by 1924 he had advanced so rapidly in the hierarchy of American Anarcho-Communism that he was selected as the Presidential candidate on the Communist ticket. Two souls, alas, still dwelt in his breast, one of which forever contended against the other. And so we find him whooping it up for the petty capitalist candidate Robert M. La Follette, until that

astute politician administered a few well directed kicks at the posterior of Mr. Foster and his “party,” after which the admiration for La Follette suffered considerably. “For,” Mr. Foster might justly have said, “it was all right, Mr. La Follette, in you to dissemble your love, but why, oh why did you kick me downstairs?” From that time the further development of American Anarcho-Communism bears the unmistakable impress of Fosterism—or, to use De Leon’s apt description anent Foster himself, American Anarcho-Communism came to represent “a perambulating lump of erratic, contradictory foot-in-the-mouthness.”⁴ Always topsy-turvy, ever imitative of things foreign, definitely anti-Marxian, it now represented the embodiment of Fosteristic dualism, that unmistakable compound of Anarchist physical force advocacy and petty bourgeois reform pleas. The Foster marks of the renegade and the *agent provocateur* stood out, and stand today, so prominently that none but the blindest fools can fail to see them. And yet Stalin and his fellow revolutionists continue to recognize this adventurer (now acting the part of an *agent provocateur*, now the part of a social patriot, and again the part of the paid provocateur) as a worthy representative of the cause which in Russia brought liberation to the oppressed masses!

Let us now quickly review this Zig-Zag career: Zig—S.P. reformer. Zag—Anarcho-Syndicalist. Zig—patriot and upholder of capitalism and capitalist warfare in particular. Zag again—Anarcho-

⁴ [See footnote on page 6.—*Editor.*]

Communist. And now a few collateral Zig-Zags:

Zig—pro-A.F. of L. as a member of the S.P.
Zag—anti-A.F. of L. in the Anarchist I.W.W. Zig—pro-
A.F. of L. (“boring from within”) as anti-I.W.W.
Anarcho-Syndicalist. Zag—anti-Anarcho-Syndicalist,
pro-A.F. of L., as organizer of the Gompers-directed
steel strike. Zig—anti-A.F. of L., yet “anti-dual
unionism,” a la early Anarcho-Communist “thesis.”
Zag—pro-“dual unionism” (T.U.E.L.,⁵ etc.).

Zig—Zag, in and out, catch him if you can! One is reminded of the story about the little boy and the “darky” who kept missing the rabbits. “How come, Uncle, that you can’t hit that rabbit?” “It’s this way, boy,” said the old darky. “You see, dat thar’ rabbit was runnin’ zig-zag. Ah aims at him when he wuz in zig, and ’fore ah could shet mah shootin’ eye, dat rabbit had shifted into zag! Dem critters is gettin’ more eddicated every day!”

That Foster, who did all he could to help United States capitalism to win the war, should still be in favor of subsidizing “the boys” and to strengthen that reactionary body, the American Legion, is the most natural thing in the world. And so we find him again, cheek by jowl, with capitalist politicians and petty bourgeois reformers, eagerly pleading for the bonus. If there is one body in this country which lends itself best to Fascist purposes it is the American Legion. It is one of the bulwarks of the capitalist system and that is one of the reasons why certain capitalist politicians are so eager to cater to them, even to the extent of yielding on the bonus, however hateful the

⁵ [The so-called Trade Union Educational League.—*Editor.*]

thought is to these politicians to hand out good coin that they can use so well themselves. And so when Foster and his imbecile followers find themselves whooping it up for this Prætorian guard of capitalism, is there any reason why he should be annoyed (to quote the New York *Herald Tribune* of September 17) “as relentless interviewers asked him if he was pleased that the action of the Portland [American Legion] convention had rallied the legion to the same stand as his party on the bonus issue.” From Liberty Bond salesman to bonus advocate—what could be more logical? Selling bonds in 1917 to enable “the boys” to go over the top “over there” is but the initial step in the process which winds up with the payment (the bonus) due the same boys (or what is left of them) for having gone over the top, and Foster naturally wants to reward the faithful servants of capitalism for good work done in butchering European workers. And who knows? Perhaps we may yet find Foster at the head of the American “Steel Helmets,” playing the ludicrous, but none the less sinister role of a Hitler. The cases of Napoleon III, Mussolini and Hitler prove that one may be an adventurer, an ass and a person of less than heroic proportions, and yet become “a man of destiny”—if capitalist interests conceive it to be necessary to hoist the puppet into the “seat of the mighty.” And surely Foster’s advocacy of the bonus should be as good a recommendation in the future to Industrial Feudalism (the American Fascisti), as his proud war record was to the Senate Committee. It is a poor Zig-Zagger who is not holding himself in readiness for the next jump.

Mr. Foster’s brave words from his earlier Anarchist

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period will be remembered, "The prospect of bloodshed does not frighten the [Anarcho] Syndicalist worker as it does the parlor Socialist." Time and again he has led his deluded followers right up against the clubs of the police, and when these clubs descended freely on the heads of the poor wretches, blood, indeed, flowing freely, Mr. Foster's head was never among those present. Why should not he boast of being unafraid of bloodshed who never exposed himself to a blood-letting? The outstanding example was the riot precipitated on March 6, 1930, in Union Square, New York City. A mass meeting had been called on that occasion by the Anarcho-Communists with probably a few hundred of Mr. Foster's followers present. The vast majority of the twenty thousand-odd onlookers were largely excitement hounds who came "to watch the fun." Defying the police (which under the guidance of the redoubtable Grover Whalen was just waiting for an excuse to break loose), Mr. Foster urged his dupes to resist the police. The result was cracked, bleeding heads all around, many being beaten into insensibility. Where was Mr. Foster and his noble lieutenants? As soon as the blood began to flow they betook themselves hastily to the subway where in perfect safety they traveled to the City Hall a couple of miles away. Escorted and protected by a couple of officers, they were quietly taken away. Illustrative of the Anarcho-Bourgeois fakerism of Foster are the accounts given in European Communist papers of the "battle" at Union Square. The 20,000 onlookers and few hundred Anarcho-Communists grew (in the German *Die Rothe Fahne*, i.e., "The Red Flag") to 125,000 revolutionists who,

according to the Foster-inspired reports, stormed City Hall, which, so went the legend, was surrounded by thousands of policemen who manned guns and fired volleys into the monster crowd, Grover Whalen himself being wounded in the desperate struggle, etc., etc. This, and much more childish nonsense and pure fairy tale, was related in this particular foreign paper, all to show how mighty had grown the Anarcho-Communist movement in America under the leadership of Wm. Zig-Zag Foster!

Bluff and bluster, fakes and frauds, Anarchist egotism and the yellow cringing and ducking of the renegade, with overwhelming indications of *agent provocateurism*, these are the high spots in the Zig-Zag career of William Zebulon Foster—S.P. reformer, Anarcho-Syndicalist, war monger, patriot, liberty bond salesman, A.F. of L. labor skate, ally and friend of Sammy Gompers, Anarcho-Communist, advocate of bonus for reactionary legionnaires, and friend and admirer of the bitterest foes of Soviet Russia, whose leading men, with an obtuseness that passeth all understanding, extend to him recognition as the official American representative of the workers' first Proletarian Republic!

"Tis the time's plague,
When madmen (and knaves)
Lead the blind."⁶

⁶ [William Shakespeare, *King Lear*.—Editor.]

The sighed-for period of prosperity will not come; as often as we seem to perceive its heralding symptoms, so often do they again vanish into air. Meanwhile, each succeeding winter brings up afresh the great question, "what to do with the unemployed!"; but while the number of the unemployed keeps swelling from year to year, there is nobody to answer that question; and we can almost calculate the moment when the unemployed, losing patience, will take their own fate into their own hands. Surely, at such a moment, the voice ought to be heard of a man [Karl Marx] whose whole theory is the result of a life-long study of the economic history and condition of England, and whom that study led to the conclusion that, at least in Europe, England [and, by parity of reasoning, the United States—Publishers] is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a "pro-slavery rebellion," to this peaceful and legal revolution.

—*FREDERICK ENGELS.*

November 5, 1886.

THE SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY AGAINST THE FIELD.

By Arnold Petersen.

Present-day society is divided into two classes—the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class is composed of various strata or layers, the topmost of which is the plutocracy, which is made up in the main of the owners of the huge trusts and manufacturing plants, and of the banking fraternity. It is that numerically small fraction which gives the present system its peculiar impress, and what the plutocracy requires for the safeguarding and promotion of its economic interests, that is, in the final analysis, what is done. On the whole, that section is represented politically by the Republican party. Below the plutocracy there are various layers currently and collectively designated “the middle class.” The higher “middle class” consists mainly of the smaller manufacturers, smaller bankers, corporation lawyers, etc., etc. They are represented in the main by the Democratic party. The lower “middle class” is composed mainly of the petty business men, corner grocers, farmers on the ragged edge, doctors with a small practice, petty lawyers with a limited clientele, etc. These are represented, or aim to be represented, on the political field by various reform parties which include the Social Democratic party, miscalled the Socialist party. Still within the petty capitalist boundaries there are elements consisting of bankrupt business people, bankrupt farmers, doctors without patients, “petty larceny” lawyers without clients, preachers without a pulpit, ex-college professors,

professional writers and journalists with no market for their "talent," etc. These bankrupt business people, bankrupt farmers and professional derelicts, having become violently disillusioned with respect to the accumulation of property, are naturally inclined to violence. They are represented politically (if that is what one might call it) by the Anarcho-Reformists or the so-called Communist party, which also takes to its bosom the slum-proletarian elements in society. Whatever differences there may be between these layers they are essentially alike in that they all believe in the permanency of the State, and share a fixed belief that the State is capable of curing the social disease or ameliorating their lot. Hence they are all in favor of reforms in varying degrees. The plutocracy is willing to yield just enough reforms to make the system safe (as if that were possible), whereas the lower layers demand reforms in keeping with their group interests. None of them, of course, concern themselves with organizing the workers' economic power for the complete overthrow of capitalism, including the Political State.

Arrayed against all these stands the Socialist Labor Party which represents the interests of the working class. The historic mission of the working class is to overthrow capitalism and all that belongs to it. The social system that is to be ended cannot and should not be mended. Hence the working class has no interest in all the "issues" thrown up by a decadent capitalism. High or low tariffs, high or low taxes, graft or efficiency in federal, state and local governments—these and similar problems of the "practical politicians" do not concern the working class in the least. While capitalism lasts, the workers have but one immediate interest:

higher wages and shorter hours. If these things are obtainable at all under present-day capitalism (which they are not except as conciliatory concessions made by an alarmed ruling class), they can be secured only through powerful Industrial Unions. Hence, the Socialist Labor Party, which represents the true interests of the working class, is not in the least interested in the tariff, in taxes, in prohibition, the water power question. It is interested in but one thing: *the integral industrial organization of the working class*. This is what we urge the workers to build. Our battle cry is: *Away with reform. Capitalism must be destroyed.* ALL POWER TO THE SOCIALIST INDUSTRIAL UNION.

It is the Socialist Labor Party against the field, championing the cause of the working class and the social revolution, against the field of capitalist reaction, or its twin brother, Anarchism, raw-boned or refined. It is the Socialist Labor Party against the field, with the “field” solidly arrayed against the Socialist Labor Party.

BAKUNINISM IS ANARCHO-COMMUNISM.

I.

“We have confidence only in those who reveal by deeds their devotion to the revolution, without fear of torture and dungeons, and we disavow every word which is not directly followed by a deed. We don’t require purposeless propaganda any more; we need no propaganda which does not fix with definiteness the hour and the place where it will realize the purpose of the revolution. . . . All babblers who will not understand this will be brought to silence by force. . . . Whilst we admit no other activity but destruction, we acknowledge that the form in which this activity must manifest itself may be highly manifold: poison, dagger, rope, etc. *The revolution sanctifies all this without distinction.* [Jesuitism]. . . . The idea has value for us only in so far as it serves the great work of *universal and total destruction.* A revolutionist who studies revolution only in books will never be worth anything. . . . We term external demonstrations only a series of actions which positively destroys something, a person, a thing, a condition that hampers the emancipation of the people. . . . Without taking any thought of our lives, without shrinking from any threat, any hindrance, or any danger, we must break into the life of the people with a series of bold, yes, audacious undertakings, and to instil them with a belief in their own strength, arouse them, unite them, and lead them to the triumph of their own affairs.”—From *Principles of Revolution*, by M. Bakunin, Russian Anarchist.

BAKUNINISM IS ANARCHO-COMMUNISM.

II.

“At Lyons (France) the revolutionary movement had come to a head. Bakunin hastened to the place to assist his lieutenant Albert Richard and his sergeants Bastelica and Gaspard Blanc.

“On September 28, 1870, the day of his arrival, the people had taken possession of the city hall. Bakunin took up a station inside. Now the critical, the long awaited moment had finally come when Bakunin could execute the greatest revolutionary act which the world had ever seen,—so he decreed the abolition of the State. But the State, in the shape and form of two companies of bourgeois national guards, entered through a passage which it had been forgotten to secure, and cleared the premises and sent Bakunin hastily on the road to Geneva. . . .

“The principal means of propaganda [of Bakuninism] consists in this, in misleading the youth by fictitious descriptions and lies of the extent and power of the secret society and prophecies of the imminent outbreak of the revolution. . . .

“In the place of the economic and political struggle for the emancipation of the workers they substitute the all-destroying deeds of the rabble of the jails [slum elements] as the highest personification of the revolution. In short, one must release that riff-raff kept in check by the workers themselves . . . , and thus of their own impulse place at the disposal of the reactionaries a well disciplined gang of agents provocateurs.”—From *Report of Commission of the International*, held at The Hague, 1872, the commission being headed by Marx and Engels.

LENIN ON DE LEON.

“Lenin, closing his speech on the adoption of the Rights of Workers Bill in the congress [of Soviets] showed the influence of De Leon, whose governmental construction on the basis of industries fits admirably into the Soviet construction of the state now forming in Russia. De Leon is really the first American Socialist to affect European thought.”—Arno Dosch-Fleurot, Petrograd despatch to N.Y. *World*, Jan. 31, 1918.

“Lenin said he had read in an English Socialist paper a comparison’ of his own theories with those of an American, Daniel De Leon. He had then borrowed some of De Leon’s pamphlets from Reinstein (who belongs to the party which De Leon founded in America), read them for the first time, and was amazed to see how far and how early De Leon had pursued the same train of thought as the Russians. His theory that representation should be by industries, not by areas, was already the germ of the Soviet system. He remembered seeing De Leon at an International Conference. De Leon made no impression at all, a grey old man, quite unable to speak to such an audience; but evidently a much bigger man than he looked, since his pamphlets were written before the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Some days afterwards I noticed that Lenin had introduced a few phrases of De Leon, as if to do honor to his memory, into the draft for the new program of the Communist party.”—Arthur Ransome in *Six Weeks in Russia in 1919*.

Lenin said: “The American Daniel De Leon first

W.Z. FOSTER — RENEGADE OR SPY?

formulated the idea of a Soviet Government, which grew up on his idea. Future society will be organized along Soviet lines. There will be Soviet rather than geographical boundaries for nations. Industrial Unionism is the basic thing. That is what we are building.”—Robert Minor in the *New York World*, Feb. 8, 1919.

Premier Lenin is a great admirer of Daniel De Leon, considering him the greatest of modern Socialists—the only one who has added anything to Socialist thought since Marx. . . . It is Lenin’s opinion that the Industrial “State” as conceived by De Leon will ultimately have to be the form of government in Russia.—John Reed, May 4, 1918.