

# Radicalism as a Fashionable Pose

## How Easy It Is for Parlor Socialists and Even Paid Propagandists to Find Gullible Listeners

By HELEN M. WAYNE.

**I**F you happen to believe in law and order, or marriage, or love of country, or religion, or even in the rights of capital as well as labor, be sure to keep it dark. And if you don't happen to believe in free love or the domination of the unpatriotic over the earth, and above all if you don't believe in socialism, keep that dark, too. For it's very unfashionable to be the least bit conservative nowadays, and very, very fashionable to be radical! If they found you out, certain college professors, settlement workers, and New Republicans generally who are engineering this fad or crusade—

tors) on finding out that patriotism was, at the last gasp, common sense and bred in their very bones.

It is, however, with the sinister success of the after-the-war propaganda on perfectly well intentioned Americans that I have to deal; and perhaps the best way to achieve my purpose is to illustrate:

As long ago as December, 1917, I heard Lincoln Steffens give a most eloquent talk to some two hundred and fifty clubwomen, presumably on "Russia," holding them spellbound for nearly two hours, and all the while subtly preaching revolutionary socialism between the lines. If I had confided in any one of these women (except the sprinkling of pacifists, Socialists, and semi-professional agitators who understood the underlying motive of the impassioned speech) she would not only have thought me a little mad, but have said so. Still, Mr. Steffens, who has that magnetic quality of voice which is so musical and sympathetic that people are often swayed by it regardless of logic, was steadily inserting here and there some powerful (if specious) arguments for straight revolutionary Socialism.

Here we arrive at the crux of the matter: It is through their very idealism, their desire to do the right thing toward people, that the shrewd propagandist can often influence high-minded American men and women actually away from common sense. If, for instance, Albert Rhys Williams is in good form, he can inspire a great audience to working wildly for what he calls internationalism. It doesn't matter that Mr. Williams is inaccurate or that he exaggerates, or even that he cleverly perverts President Wilson's own ideas of internationalism! It doesn't matter that Rhys Williams—even as cleverly—manages to ridicule most of the old-fashioned virtues one by one without offending more than about one-half of the women present. What does matter is that he has inserted the entering wedge of making his hearers at once a little ashamed of being decently conservative and of not having an open mind toward everything radical.

The next step is for one of these women to register at one of the new neighborhood leagues or progressive schools or neighborhood centres or welfare councils, all of which have "uplift" or even, if you please, patriotism as their excuse for living, but all teaching quietly some form of socialism between the lines. Always the instructors are charming and magnetic men and women, as often as not of good American stock, always highly educated and always chosen for their ability to influence masses of people. Here if the reader

should ask, "Does the writer wish to imply that these professors and teachers are paid propagandists?" the writer would reply, "Often, but not necessarily always!"

As a matter of fact, I should say there are three classes of propagandists—the shallow parlor Bolshevik, who adores being "radical" and who would be following some fad in any case; the sincere idealist who may, indeed, have vision (even though he may merely be having visions!) and the master of these two, the bribed propagandist. Included in these classes are the many college professors, editors of magazines, writers, lecturers, ministers of the Gospel, and high school teachers. I could point out, for instance, three different women instructors at three different colleges for women who have boasted to me of being Revolutionary Socialists.

If you don't believe me, read John Reed's recent testimony before the Senate Investigating Committee to the effect that he "expected soon to start an information bureau of Bolshevism in New York," and adding that "there are some wealthy women in New York who have nothing else to do with their money." Or go to a college where one of the Faculty is named on the Stevenson famous list of pacifists, and hear one of the students remark, (as I did:)

"I am a Revolutionary Socialist. If I



"I am a Revolutionary Socialist. If I had my way, I should burn and kill—and kill and burn!"

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"And then what?" I inquired.



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"Then—then—if I could control myself, I should talk to the mob!"

I have of course given extreme cases here—cases against which most sane folk need no warning. On the other hand, let it be said that there are perfectly well-intentioned and apparently perfectly sane ways of adding to the general hue and cry for a Socialist State in this country; also that the Socialists have allied themselves very closely indeed with the anarchists.

I should therefore say first of all to those erudite and sincere prophets who wish honestly to teach socialism:

"Come out honestly and say so. The Rand School, for instance, though not a thing of beauty from any point of view, is at least honest and above board in its aims to teach Americans that our own democracy should be demolished in order to try the Socialist experiment."

Then I should say to our college students, clubwomen, uplifters, and idealists of both sexes before they begin to study socialism with a too "open mind":

"Why not carefully study your own form of government first? Be sure that you believe in the overthrow of our own patient old Constitution first. Suppose you do believe that great riches and great poverty are crimes, that the laboring man must have justice, and that there are some flaws in our own democracy. Even so, there are many opposed to socialism who believe as much. Why not give the present huge experiment along Socialist lines in this country time to digest and the prophets time to prove themselves either false or true before joining the Bolshevist Brotherhood?"

"Why not wait, for instance, until the Russian Bolsheviki can prove that they can run a Government beneficently without both capital and labor—and not 'pick on' capital in the meantime?"



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as you choose to call it—would at once point at you with a finger of scorn as an "imperialist" or a reactionary, and they would certainly make fun of you.

Oh, what a weapon ridicule may be in the hands of a clever propagandist, often a foreigner who has made a close psychological study of the genus American! How many among us can bear up under the lash of laughter from those set in high places? How many college boys and girls there were, both before and after we entered the war who went about repeating:

"Patriotism is an insanity! Patriotism is a complex! I don't believe in it"—usually reverting suddenly to type (once away from the influence of their men-