
National Defense vs. Socialist Principle: Letter to the Editor of the *New York Call*, written March 26, 1917.

by Edward Lindgren

Untitled letter published in the *New York Call*, v. 10, no. 87 (March 28, 1917), pg. 6.

Editor of *The Call*:

In your editorial today on the statement issued by the so-called Socialists, Stokes, Russell, etc., you invite discussion on the question of national defense. In so doing you endorse the position taken by Hillquit and London and “unhesitatingly” declare it to be the Socialist position. If this is true, why shout against militarism in any form or degree? Why split hairs about the action of the above-mentioned comrades? If we agree that national defense is a Socialist principle, there can be no condemnation for those who advocate militarism, whether it is on a large or small scale.

But, Comrade Editor, I want to inform you, though this ought not be necessary, that this viewpoint may be accepted as a Socialist principle by parlor Socialists, lawyers, other professional people, and property-owning members of the Socialist Party, but not so by the enlightened working class members, who understand that the fundamental principle of Socialist agitation is the class struggle; that Socialists when they line up for the defense of any nation with a capitalist government must necessarily suspend this class struggle in order to join hands with their exploiters, to defend their (the exploiters’) territory.

A national convention of the Socialist Party is to be held in a few days. Are you using the editorial columns of *The Call* to misinterpret Socialist working class principles, in order to confuse and mislead the del-

egates who may attend, and who may take you seriously when you so positively assert that Socialists stand for national defense? Answer, Comrade Editor, I and scores of other working class members of the Socialist Party want to know wherefrom you secured this information. Did you get it from any decisions of the local party organizations, or from the state or national organizations? We want to know by what right you misuse your position as editor of a Socialist paper, to mislead your readers.

I am not so much concerned about what [Graham] Stokes, Russell, etc. have to say. They can be excused on the grounds of emotionalism and ignorance of Socialists’ working class principles. Anyone reading their writings or speeches for the past few years will be forced to admit this charge. But I am about you, who are to teach the American working class class-consciousness, and then inform your readers that the Socialists stand for a principle of national defense. It is high time that you, and others like you, be removed from positions in the party and editors of party papers where you have opportunities to destroy instead of building up a working class movement.

Edward Lindgren,
Brooklyn.

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Edited by Tim Davenport.

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