

(Fictional) Interview with Norman Thomas

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- Interviewer: What is Communism?
- Norman Thomas: Communism is the perfect form of government. It allows everybody to be equal in all aspects such as wealth and rights. Of course, there will need to be an elite bureaucracy to manage everything and make it all work. We wouldn't want anyone to get less than their fair share, now would we?
- Interviewer: What you just described sounds a lot like "Socialism." What is the difference between Communism and Socialism? How does Marxism fit in?
- Norman Thomas: Communism is entirely different from Socialism! As you know, I'm head of the Socialists of America, and we split off from the "Communist" Party back in '22. In any case, there is no difference between Communism and Socialism. The "Communists" are really just a front for the evil anarchists who want no government at all.
- Interviewer: Really? The only things that I've heard about "fronts" is that the Communists are all a big front for the Soviets.

- Norman Thomas: Nonsense! Oh sure, the ComIntern gives some friendly suggestions to all of us, such as "Increase membership in New York now!" or "Comrade Johnson has not demonstrated enough fervor in his devotions and is henceforth expelled." But these suggestions are only minor, and only directed at the Communist Party USA.
- Interviewer: Thank you for that clarification. On to the next question, what would you call the Soviet government?
- Norman Thomas: I would call it Communism, of course. Although you could also probably call it Socialist, since Socialism and Communism are the same. The wonderful leadership of Comrade Stalin has helped to make that country a marvelous place for all workers.
- Interviewer: Would you mind telling the audience how the Communist movement got started in America? What about the USSR?
- Norman Thomas: Communism has been going on in this country for quite some time, since at least the 1870's. Further back the movements origins are obscured. Several Socialist Labor parties were formed at that time. The next major party formation was the International Workers of the World in 1905. After the success of the Communists in Russia, our movement gained some members, but more would have joined if the two parties didn't have to go underground to avoid the persecution by the bourgeois. In the USSR, Comrade Lenin lead the underground Bolsheviks. They waited until the oppression of the bourgeois was intolerable, and then gathered all the people in a massive uprising.

- Interviewer: You just mentioned their being two parties. Could you explain why there were two Communist Parties?
- Norman Thomas: Certainly. Some of us thought that it would be best to create a backup plan in case the bourgeois proved too strong for the revolutionaries to overcome. Unfortunately, the others were in power, so we had to leave the convention that formed the party and create our own. Since then several more of us in both parties have had some more disagreements, resulting in further splitting.
- Interviewer: You've obviously had quite a bit of contact with the Communist movements. So who are some of the main figures?
- Norman Thomas: Well, there is Browder, who is officially the current head of the Communist Party of America. Then you have Bedacht, who helped found one of the parties. Weinstone represents America in ComIntern, and Mingulin is the official head of ComIntern, and therefore the official chief executive. There used to be a lot more, but it was discovered that they were really Bukarinists and consequently expelled. And of course there is me, the leader of the Democratic Socialists of America.
- Interviewer: I thought you tried to point out that ComIntern doesn't control the Communist movement. Your last statement implies that ComIntern is in charge of everything.
- Norman Thomas: I said that the ComIntern gives some friendly suggestions from time to time. And we are all members of the ComIntern, are we not comrade?
- Interviewer: Well put. Just what type of people make up the Communist parties?

- Norman Thomas: Every type of people make it up. Poor, homeless, the middle class, even actors and other prominent figures. We welcome anyone who follows Marx, Engels, and Lenin.
- Interviewer: Marx is widely recognized as being the founding father of Communism. When did he live? What about this Engels that you mentioned?
- Norman Thomas: Marx lived during the early half of the previous century, about 100 years ago. As for Engels, he is also one of the founding fathers, along with Marx and Lenin. He helped create some of our most important documents such as "The Communist Manifesto".
- Interviewer: You are being interviewed because of your bid for the presidency this past November. Were there other candidates besides yourself from the Communist movement?
- Norman Thomas: Of course! They may not have been on the ballot in your state, but every party had a candidate. I just happened to get 700,000 more votes than the nearest competitor from the other parties.
- Interviewer: You obviously made a decent showing in the last election, so do you have any plans for running in the future?
- Norman Thomas: Not at this time, although that may change as the next election nears.
- Interviewer: That just about wraps up all the time we have. Thank you for coming, Mr. Thomas.

References

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- [4] Harvey Klehr. *The Soviet World of American Communism*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998.