

THE TALE OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

By MAX SHACHTMAN.

ONCE upon a time, many years ago, there existed in this country a political organization that was called the Socialist Party. The basis of its program and aims was that there was absolutely nothing in common between the workers on the one hand and the capitalists on the other. They believed in the class struggle and even wrote about it in their papers and books. Very often they would actually speak of this class struggle.

They maintained that this government was a capitalist government, and that it didn't matter a piper's squeak whether an honest man was in office or whether he was a second story man. They said that "good men in office" would not solve the problem, and that the thing that was necessary was a complete change not only in government but in the system of society in which we are all unfortunate enough to live. They believed in doing away with capitalism and inaugurating the co-operative commonwealth.

But that, dear children, was many years ago. O, many, many years ago.

Today, the funny little thing that is left of the Socialist Party has collected into itself a number of freaks. Amongst these is a gentlemanly reverend, by the name of Norman

Thomas, whose nearest approach to the class struggle has been the editing of a sports newspaper with an alleged socialist appendage, The New Leader, which died a quiet death.

In a speech made by this honorable and learned man, who is now the candidate of the socialists for the governorship of New York State, he lets loose the following original stream of English: "Eternal vigilance is the price of clean government."

The reverend is touchingly generous. If the capitalist will only be clean, and not exploit the workers in such a silly, open fashion, will not use the government so openly to beat down the objections that the workers have to getting cuts in wages and increases in the working day, then Dr. Thomas is perfectly willing to share the management of this fair land with him.

In the meantime, Dr. Thomas is vigilant. Every evening before he does his nightie he lights a lamp and says a prayer for clean government and hopes that the workers will forget that there is or should be or might be such a thing as a class struggle. Then he goes and makes up another speech for the Socialist Party.

What we started out to say was that once upon a time there existed a political party which believed in the class struggle. Once upon a time. Not now.