

The Discussion on Party Tasks

A Fighting Slogan in the Trade Unions— The Farmer-Labor United Front

By BENJAMIN GITLOW.

IN the Labor Herald of March, 1923, edited by Comrade Foster the following statement is contained on the national referendum on the labor party.

"Not to speak of the political necessity for a militant independent party of the working class, the Trade Union Educational League holds that it is impossible to have a successful trade union movement in this country until labor has declared definitely for a labor party. The Gompers political policy of rewarding our friends and punishing our enemies is fatal to labor unions. . . . The workers will never be able to think or act intelligently as proletarians so long as their trade unions are linked up with capitalist political parties. This is a fundamental of unionism. A labor party is one of the most vital needs of the American labor movement."

Now Comrade Foster and the other members of the majority that in 1923 sponsored the above sentiments propose that the united front in the unions on the basis of the farmer-labor party slogan be abandoned. In 1923 they said "The workers will never be able to think or act intelligently as proletarians without a labor party. A labor party is one of the most vital needs of the American labor movement." Now they say that the slogan of a farmer-labor party has lost its power of stirring large masses of workers. They claim that the farmer-labor movement which Comrade Foster in his article on the triple revolt stated was one of the issues that might break Gompers' control over the American labor movement is dead. They go even further and state that the whole movement for independent political action in the unions is dead. They now assume that as a result of that, that the only form the movement for independent political action can take is the form of the Workers Party.

The C. E. C. majority reiterates that the economic conditions which were the basis before for the farmer-labor party united front have not materially changed. The development of the farmer-labor party movement should therefore continue. The C. E. C. majority, however, does not reason with economic factors. It wants every one to believe that a movement that has its roots in the economic life of the country and a movement it admits had a big following among the masses and particularly among the organized workers, in a single day, was destroyed because the workers believing in a labor party who followed LaFollette were disillusioned when LaFollette received only five million votes. The majority wants to create the impression that a movement that has been developing in the United States for years, that a movement with a historical background and with an ideology that has permeated hundreds of thousands of the most militant workers in the unions can immediately cease to be a factor in the labor movement. The majority makes the mistake here of considering the labor party movement not as a development going thru a period of years, but as a phenomenon of only immediate importance. That is why they make the big error of considering the election results as the final determining factor ending the labor party movement and not an important event in its development.

The Comintern in its decision on the American question has correctly formulated the significance of the labor party movement in its relation to the Workers Party. It states as follows: "The first task of the Workers Party is to become a mass Communist Party of workers. It can fulfill this task only by most actively participating in the establishment of a labor party which will embrace all elements of the working class wishing to conduct a policy independent of the capitalist class and establishing a bond

with the farmers who are at present in a state of fermentation. These two independent tasks—the task of building around the Communist Party a broad class labor party and of establishing a bond between the labor party and the poorest elements of the farmers—have developed in the United States, thanks to the peculiarities of historical evolution as one problem. Namely, the building of a common party of workers and farmers." The Comintern demonstrates that it fully understands the nature of the farmer-labor party movement when it declares that it is the result of the peculiarities of historical evolution thruout the history of the American labor movement we can trace its development. It is true that the movement as such has not fully crystallized. That does not necessarily mean that the idea of the farmer-labor party is of no consequence. From a consideration of recent facts following the elections which the majority wants us to believe, has changed everything the direct opposite is true. The slogan for a farmer-labor party is of great dynamic value. First, the economic conditions driving the workers and poorer elements of the farmers to demand the organization of such a party exist today as never before. This even the majority admits. And second, around the slogan of a farmer-labor party we again find the militant and progressive forces in the unions rallying.

Let us go to the last convention of the American Federation of Labor recently held in El Paso in order to learn what took place there. Comrade Foster and the whole majority even before election day, considered the labor party slogan dead. That is why before election day when they drafted the resolutions for the A. F. L. convention they omitted a resolution on the labor party. As a result, the T. U. E. L. was put in the ridiculous position of publicly assuming the death of the farmer-labor party movement while Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor convention fought that movement with all the power at their command. The question then arises if the LaFollette movement swallowed up as the majority would have us believe the farmer-labor sentiment in the United States and killed it and if as they further say, the movement itself is insignificant and is organized only in a few states, why then was Samuel Gompers and the whole bureaucratic and reactionary officialdom so much afraid of the idea of a farmer-labor party? If the farmer-labor party movement is not a revolutionary development for the workers in the United States, then why did the capitalist press of the country in unison, spur on and support Samuel Gompers in his fight on the idea of a labor party in the United States?

It is up to Comrade Foster and the other members of the majority to answer these questions. But in doing so, they should stick to facts. They should not make the false charges that the minority is opposed to all other united fronts except the farmer-labor party united front. Not only does the minority include a whole series of united fronts on immediate issues in its thesis, but the minority is the one that has forced the present majority to accept after it had fought it bitterly at the last convention the idea of a united front on unemployment. It is true that the minority never agreed with the Foster idea of united fronts with leaders as the Fitzpatrick united front in the Chicago Federation of Labor. That is one of the reasons there is today such a principle difference between the Foster and Ruthenberg group.

The minority wants to build a Communist Party not a syndicalist Lore left social democratic sectarian party. The minority wants to develop the Workers Party into an effective revo-

lutionary political party of the working class. The minority wants a Workers Party that will go into the unions not one that will hold itself aloof from the unions, not one that will stand passively by watching the political consciousness that is developing inside of them. The minority wants to be the leader in developing this political consciousness instead of the Johnsons, Fitzpatricks, Mahoneys, Kramers, Hillquits, and Bergers.

That is why the minority is for the farmer-labor party slogan. The farmer-labor party slogan is a militant slogan. It is a slogan of the rank and file in the unions. The realization of that slogan can only be gained thru a bitter struggle on the part of the rank and file against all the agents of capitalism in the unions. What form does the fight in the unions against Samuel Gompers' policy of reward your friends and punish your enemies take? It takes the form of the labor party against the policy of non-partisan political action. But this special form Foster and the majority wants us to abandon. To abandon the struggle for a labor party is to abandon one of the most effective and special means for awakening the political consciousness of the American workers.

Because the fight for the labor party is a fight against Gompers, a fight against the petty bourgeois politicians who would convert the labor

party movement into a petty bourgeois party, against the socialist party betrayers and a fight against the big capitalist politicians the slogan for a labor party is a militant revolutionary slogan. In assuming leadership in the militant struggles of the rank and file for the labor party the Workers Party puts itself in a position where it can gain influence and leadership over the masses engaged in the struggle. And the more numerous the masses engaged in the struggle for the labor party the greater the prestige of the Workers Party among them the more sure is the Workers Party of its leadership over them. This will make it possible for the Workers Party to draw the best elements of this movement into its ranks and as a result of its wide influence of the broad masses involved to become the mass Communist Party that it is striving for.

The minority is therefore not composed of liquidators but builders of the Communist Party. The liquidators are the members of the present majority who have already in their alliance with the Loreites laid the basis for the contamination of the Workers Party with the 2½ sectarianism of the left social-democrats. We of the minority want a party not only of members but of active members who are Communists and who will loyally under all circumstances support the Communist International.

Facts for Communists The Foster-Lore Alliance and the Communist International.

By JAY LOVESTONE.
Article I.

IN view of the instructions of the Communist International that the Ruthenberg and Foster groups should work together and carry on an active campaign against the ideology of the Two-and-a-Half International in our party as represented by Comrade Lore, the following first of a series of analyses of the voting record of the central executive committee should prove illuminating to the entire party membership in the course of the present discussions.

1. C. E. C. majority votes for or proposes measures in behalf of Lore (Two-and-a-Half International tendency).

Date.

No. 1—March 7, 1924. Council.

Motion.

Ruthenberg—Motion to censure Lore for printing in Volkszeitung item referring to conclusions of Workers Party observer at St. Louis conference for progressive political action as being an act in contradiction to declared party policy.

Vote.

Foster—Motion to refer to next central executive meeting. (Carried by majority.)

Date.

No. 2—March 7, 1924. Council.

Motion.

Ruthenberg—Motion to censure Lore for stating in Volkszeitung that Zinoviev's information regarding United States comes from unreliable sources.

Vote.

Foster—Motion to refer to next central executive meeting. (Carried by majority.)

Date.

No. 3—March 7, 1924. Council.

Motion.

Pepper—Motion to have central executive committee make public statement defending Comintern and Zinoviev against Lore's articles.

b. To endorse fully the old guard in Russian Communist Party.

c. To protest against Lore's statement that majority of central executive committee is for Trotsky's position.

d. That Pepper be allowed to write article in Liberator defending position of old guard in Russian Communist Party.

Vote.

Foster—Motion to refer to next

central executive committee meeting. (Carried by majority.)

Date.

No. 4—March 7, 1924. Council.

Motion.

Lovestone—Motion to instruct district executive committee No. 2 to investigate Lore's report on last central executive committee meeting to New York German group meeting in which he is reported to have said that Pepper would be one of the delegates to the Communist International and that steps would be taken to see to it that he did not return.

Vote.

Foster—Motion to refer to next central executive committee meeting. (Carried by majority.)

Date.

No. 5—March 17, 1924. Central Executive Committee.

Motion.

Pepper—Motion that Lore instead of Olgin should be delegate to the Communist International.

Vote.

Foster majority votes against motion and for Olgin.

Date.

No. 6—March 17, 1924. Central Executive Committee.

Motion.

Pepper—Motion to postpone sending of delegation to Communist International in view of inability of Ruthenberg to go at this time.

Vote.

Foster majority against motion.

Date.

No. 7—March 17, 1924. Central Executive Committee.

Motion.

Pepper—Motion to censure Lore and district executive committee No. 2 for praising help of New York police department at Lenin Memorial meeting.

Vote.

Cannon—Amendment—That central executive committee condemns their action and also action of all party papers which may have handled the matter in an incorrect manner. (Carried by majority.)

Date.

No. 8—March 17, 1924. Central Executive Committee.

Motion.

Pepper—Motion to send circular on this incident to all party branches.

Vote.

Defeated by Foster majority.

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