

The ALP and the Elections-- Vital War Issues Must Be Met

By Gil Green

The most recent Gallup Poll taken to test popular pre-election sentiment in New York, indicates that the American Labor Party may receive 15 per cent of the vote in New York City. While the latest figures for the state-wide canvass are not yet available, previous polls have given Dean Alfange some 10 per cent of the vote in the state, or approximately 400,000 votes.

It should be noted, however, that these figures also include the vote for Amter, as many Communist voters undoubtedly would not confide their vote to canvassers whom they do not know. Hence it would be more correct to say that the percentages credited solely to Alfange, in reality represent the combined strength of Alfange and Amter.

The Gallup Poll of two weeks ago analyzed the probable distribution of the Roosevelt and Wilkie votes of 1940. It estimated that of those who voted for Roosevelt in 1940, 15 per cent will cast their vote for Alfange, 33 per cent for Dewey and 52 per cent for Bennett. Of those who voted for Wilkie in 1940, 22 per cent indicate that they will vote for Bennett, 77 per cent for Dewey and only one per cent for Alfange.

The above figures, inaccurate though they may be, do however present the real problem in this election. They indicate that the largest proportion of those Roosevelt voters who do not intend to vote for Bennett are swinging over to Dewey, while the largest percentage of those Wilkie voters who do not want to vote for Dewey are shifting towards Bennett. This therefore presents a challenge: How to influence this large percentage of Roosevelt and Wilkie voters from shifting their votes to what they consider the "lesser evil"? How to convince them to vote for Governor outside the columns of the two old parties? This is the problem.

There is still time to affect the final results. Large numbers of voters this year will wait until the very last minute to make up their minds, while many of them will change their minds in the course of the campaign. Much therefore will depend on how convincing and sustained is the campaign of the Communist Party against both Bennett and Dewey and in behalf of its own candidates. But much will also depend upon the character and intensity of the campaign as developed by the leadership of the ALP and it is to this phase of the problem that we wish to direct our attention at this time.

Since its formation in 1938, the American Labor Party has been an influential factor in all elections. But despite this, the ALP has not yet shown itself capable of becoming the party of the labor and progressive movements of the state. The ALP vote to date has never

yet reached 10 per cent of the total state vote. In New York City its vote reached a high of 28 per cent in 1937 dropping to about 20 per cent in 1941.

With more than two million organized workers in the ranks of the AFL and CIO in New York State, it is safe to say that these workers and their families constitute a majority of the voting population. It is clear therefore that the ALP has not yet become the political party of labor, not even of organized labor.

The failure of the ALP to win over a larger section of the organized labor movement, as well as its weaknesses in policies and leadership have also handicapped it in attracting to itself larger sections of the farmers, the Negro people and other sections of the population.

We raise these questions at this time with no partisan axe to grind. We do so in the hope that we may be able to influence the situation, may be able to help overcome those obstacles that stand in the way of a strong ALP.

We shall not dwell on the past. Let us but consider the situation as it exists today. The ALP leadership has been narrowed down to a few leaders of the ILGWU, the millinery workers and some few unimportant individuals associated with the so-called "Social-Democratic Federation."

As a labor party, the ALP has not only failed to draw the trade unions actively into its leadership; it has actually excluded some of them. Not a single one of the important CIO unions in New York City is

represented in the ALP leadership and due to no fault of their own.

Where are the representatives of the CIO Industrial Union Council of New York City with its one-half million members? Why has the ALP leadership not given representation to such unions as the transport workers, the maritime workers, the electrical and machine builders, the fur, shoe, furniture and white collar workers? Not even the Amalgamated Clothing Workers is at this time represented in the ALP leadership.

Nor has the ALP leadership shown any ability in winning to its support the more conservative leadership and unions of the AFL. But it has refused to draw into its ranks and leadership such important AFL unions as the hotel and restaurant workers, the bakers, jewelers, painters, butchers, etc.

The present ALP leadership is apparently afraid of a broad democratically elected leadership representative of and responsible to the trade unions. By such an approach, however, it cannot help but prevent the ALP from becoming a real party of labor.

Why this fear? It can only be understood by the policies of the ALP leadership. The ALP leadership does not want it to become a militant political organization, fighting for the policies of the organized labor movement of the state. This leadership wants it to remain the political instrument of their own narrow policies.

An example of this can be seen in the present election campaign. Certainly there is but one major issue in this election—the war. And we do not merely mean recognizing the fact that we are at war. We mean promoting and fighting for those policies that are urgently necessary to assure victory over the Axis. But the leaders of the ALP have thus far refused to campaign for the opening of the Second Front—the paramount issue in the winning of the war. In fact, when Dean Alfange said a few words favoring the immediate opening of the Second Front at a recent mass rally of Local 85, Warehouse Workers, CIO, he was criticized for this by the ALP leaders and has since then been completely silent on this issue.

Nor has the ALP in its platform or Dean Alfange in his speeches said a single word in favor of international labor cooperation, for in fact the ALP leadership stands opposed to American labor joining hands with British and Soviet labor. The ALP has not said a word about strengthening the unity of the United Nations. It has said nothing about the need for an overall centralized war economy. It has refused to attack Bennett and Dewey on the issue of the war; in fact, has whitewashed these appeasement-influenced candidates by accepting at face value their measly-mouthed words of loyalty to the war effort.

FDR Renews Invitation to Chile President

WASHINGTON, Oct. 15 (UP).—President Roosevelt has repeated his invitation to President Juan Antonio Rios of Chile to visit the United States "in a short time."

Rios had been scheduled to leave Chile yesterday, but postponed his trip because of "an unfavorable atmosphere" created by Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles when he charged in a speech that Axis agents were operating in Argentina and Chile against the United Nations. Chile and Argentina are the only Latin-American countries which have failed to sever diplomatic relations with Germany and Italy as recommended at the Rio de Janeiro conference.

Mr. Roosevelt's new invitation was friendly and did not mention Chile's complaint. He said he had hoped to visit Chile three years ago but the war had forced him to stay in Washington.