

How Not To Participate In Parliamentary Elections

By ABRAM JAKIRA.

Several comrades in a small steel town in the Pittsburgh district, without asking the District Committee or even their own nucleus for a policy, registered "republican" and voted the republican ballot in the recent primary elections. These comrades had an idea that they were following a correct policy by supporting elements on the republican ticket who pretend to be friendly to labor and by helping to defeat the candidates of the K. K. K. sponsored by the steel corporation.

While this may be an isolated case, yet it deserves the attention of the entire party. There are undoubtedly similar cases in other districts.

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The comrades who voted the republican ballot showed that they allowed themselves to be influenced by the general wrong conception of parliamentary action now prevailing among the masses. What is the general situation compelling even Communists to vote the republican ballot? The same situation is general throughout the coal and steel towns. The candidates running for office in these towns are usually the candidates of the coal operators or the steel magnates who own and control these towns. In most cases no one dares to oppose these candidates.

Here and there, however, the small business interests or even some rival big business interests choose their own candidates. This is exactly what happened in the city under consideration. Here a contest took place between the candidates of the K. K. K. who had the support of the dominating business interests of the city and the candidates of small business men who for business considerations have shown a more friendly attitude towards labor and civil liberties. The comrades considered that between the two evils it was best for them to choose the lesser one and cast their support to the elements running against the Klansmen.

What was the policy that the comrades should have followed under the conditions? First, it was the duty of the comrades to act not as individuals in such an important matter. They should have considered this problem in the nucleus, they should have reported to the district office asking for a policy. Second, the comrades should have raised the question of the labor party, they should have made an effort to form a local labor party or a labor party committee and to nominate candidates on its ticket—only a small number of signatures being required to nominate candidates in the primaries. This they failed to do.

They should have then issued an appeal to the workers of that city pointing out that the workers have no ticket in the field this year and calling upon them to build the Workers Party, so that in the future they may be in a position to participate in the elections thru a party of their own.

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As it is, our party members followed at best an opportunist policy, a policy which is in line with the A. F. of L. policy of "rewarding the friend and punishing the enemy," which we have exposed time and again as being nothing short of a betrayal of the workers. The republican and the democratic parties are the parties of the coal operators and steel magnates and must be considered as a whole as the enemies of the workers. It is not a question of "good or bad" men, it is a question of the party as such.

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It is our duty to speed up and deepen the division between the big and the small business interests, who themselves feel the iron heel of the big corporations. This, however, must be done by building the labor party based upon organized labor and getting these small, dissatisfied business elements to support it and its candidates.