

CHICAGO ELECTION PROVES FAILURE OF THEORY

LABOR SHOULD "REWARD OR PUNISH" OLD PARTIES

By ARNE SWABECK.

The recent Chicago elections will undoubtedly go down in history as the closing chapter of one of the greatest mud-slinging contests ever staged by the "celebrated" American political parties. But its pages will also record the monstrous joke of the present official political policy of the trade union bureaucracy of rewarding friends and punishing enemies translated into practice. When considering, however, the thousands of workers who ultimately become the victims of such jokes, the situation rather stands out as a dismal tragedy.

Told On Each Other

Recriminations of which such invectives as crooks, rats, skunks, etc., were amongst the most moderate used added filth to the stinking atmosphere of the whole campaign. These invectives hurled may all be true. At least the "sovereign" American voter seems long ago to have accepted the possibility of it being so—witness the record turnout of almost 1,000,000 votes cast.

The Workers Voted

This record vote clearly indicates the extensive degree of working class participation in elections. That this participation is not at all on a class basis or as a conscious section is even more certain. The trade union movement had its full share of the general mud slinging. Class issues were entirely obscured and after the net result of the weeks of feverish activities, as far as the rank and file trade unionists are concerned, is merely the one of tying them more solidly to the kite of corrupt capitalist politics. Their votes were delivered to the bosses in the interest of the bosses.

Labor Split

The Chicago trade union leadership was divided into two camps, each claiming to faithfully carry out the American Federation of Labor political policy. The Cook County Wage Earners League, headed by Oscar F. Nelson, vice-president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, endorsed "Big Bill" Thompson in the name of the American Federation of Labor policy.

Another "imposing" array of officials headed by Victor A. Olander, Secretary of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, endorsed William E. Dever also in the name of the American Federation of Labor policy. John Fitzpatrick, the President of the Chicago Federation of Labor took the stump for Dever.

Dever With Landis

The Cook County Wage Earners League claimed that Thompson had always given the working people and all elements of the city a square deal. He had been constructive. He had widened more streets and paved

more alleys, and accomplished more public improvement than any other mayor ever did.

They charged that 27 members of the "citizens committee" to enforce the Landis Award were members of the Dever Campaign Committee and that Dever is controlled by big business.

Thompson Cut Wages

The other committee of trade union officials endorsed Dever claiming he was a union man, a friend of labor, that during his term of office no injunctions had been granted against labor, and that business men had confidence in his administration and had, therefore, kept up the general prosperity.

They charged that Bill Thompson had been placed on the unfair list and that he had helped to cut down the wages of the streetcar men, and so forth.

Labor Votes Sold

The monstrous joke of this election campaign should now be clear to all. The great mass of labor being fooled by its leaders has come to occupy a miserable position. Their votes were merely bartered as pawns by one set of labor leaders or another to support their favorite candidates.

The policy of supporting friends and punishing enemies has no connection with working class issues. It is not a class policy and is therefore not a labor policy. It is no longer, and for that matter never was, a question of friends of labor as a class, but the friends of certain labor leaders to be rewarded or their enemies to be punished.

It is simply a matter of personal friendship between corrupt capitalist politicians and their tools, the corrupt labor leaders. On that basis the vote of the working masses was solicited and as long as that policy exists these masses will remain the victims.

A Corrupt Bargain

In trade union life a similar corrupt practice has already set in. Those labor leaders who have the greatest pull with the capitalist politicians become the favorites for trade union positions who then have to return the favor and deliver the votes to their political friends at election time.

The trade union leadership thus becomes part and parcel of the corrupt capitalist political machines which in the final analysis are controlled by the big business institutions. It is clear that as long as this policy remains in practice there are no possibilities of the trade union leadership leading a militant struggle against the bosses, against the big capitalist institutions for even the everyday needs of the workers, not to speak of freedom from the misery of wage slavery.