

The Presidential Elections of 1928

By ARNE SWABECK

IN MANY RESPECTS the coming presidential elections will mark points of greater interest than heretofore, as well as a beginning toward more clearly accentuating class issues in American politics. This is expressed in the following:

FIRST. In the general line-up of candidates and forces of the two major parties. Captains of industry and finance play a more direct and a more outstanding role, making a reality of the slogan "More Business in Government" and more than ever throwing off the fetters of bourgeois democracy. This in itself signifies not only the growth of power of American imperialism but also its more conscious and deliberate preparations to remain in power.

SECOND. In the almost complete elimination of issues of difference between these two parties and a marked beginning of their inner dissolution upon issues resembling a class character. This is a process so far held back mainly by the low level of development of the American working-class movement. It is a beginning of the disappearance of the reactionary two-party system.

THIRD. By the further and complete disappearance of any working-class semblance from the Socialist Party and the absence of any third party or labor party movement as a national, organized and political factor of consequence.

FOURTH. By the emergence of working-class issues as an integral part of the elections becoming apparent to important sections of the workers. Together with this, a better prepared and more conscious participation by the Workers (Communist) Party, raising the banner of revolutionary class struggle and becoming a greater political factor.

These four factors alone suffice to indicate a prelude to a more definite constellation of class forces and, viewed in connection with the growing industrial depression, also a sharpening of the class struggle.

BIG BUSINESS SHOWS ITS HAND

Unquestionably the selection of the presidential candidates and the committees to manage their campaigns shows more than ever the hands of Big Business, finance and industrial capital. Herbert

Hoover, candidate of the leading party of capitalism, himself signifies Big Business in its most ruthless form despite the attempts to fasten the humanitarian halo onto his skull. On his campaign advisory boards are such men as Henry Ford, E. W. Litchfield, President of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber company, and others. The part played by the multi-millionaire, Andy Mellon, was not merely a secret backroom affair but performed in public view.

While strenuous, and possibly successful efforts will be made to have Al. Smith, the Democratic choice, continue in his pose as the peoples' man and friend of the workers, the selection of John J. Raskob as Chairman of the Democratic Party National Committee and Campaign Manager, with the assistance of such personalities of the financial world as Du Pont, Herbert H. Lehman, the Wall Street banker, and others, is not without significance. Raskob is Morgan's man, proclaimed heir to the mantle of the deceased Steel King, Elbert Gary, and vice-president of General Motors, the largest corporation in the world. The Democratic Party may now, fully as well as the Republican Party, lay claim to being the representative of Wall Street with the dominant capitalist-imperialists completely taking over the direction of its affairs.

The recent achievement of Dwight W. Morrow, Morgan's partner, now U. S. Ambassador to Mexico, in inducing President Calles to sponsor a bill which will make fundamental changes in the Mexican constitution to permit a new huge invasion of American capital into Mexico, may also be cited as one example of making a reality of the slogan "More Business in Government." It means a further aggression of American imperialism as well.

IDENTITY OF INTEREST OF MAJOR CAPITALIST PARTIES

The Workers (Communist) Party platform states:

"There are no real political differences between the two big political parties. Both are parties of capitalism, both are the enemies of the working class."

An analysis will easily vindicate the truth of this contention. The modification by the Democratic Party of its tariff plank has almost made it identical with the Republican Party on that issue. While the platform of both parties are skillfully evasive and artfully straddle all real issues, except in their definiteness for continued capitalist control, on such issues as economic conditions, taxation, prohibition, etc., no differences can be found. On the question of farm relief both parties, serving Big Business, fail entirely to advance any measure or even take cognizance of the interests of the

farmers. On the issues of imperialism and labor injunctions the difference is one only of phrases and form. This disappearance of differences is itself the most powerful proof of the beginning inner dissolution of the two old parties. As stated in our platform, "there is much more division within each party than real differences between them."

The divisions are mainly based upon economic and political interests, having already now in some respects a class character. Both parties break up horizontally in blocs. For instance the farm bloc, composed of elements from both parties, an industrial bloc, the so-called progressive bloc, the wet and dry blocs, the catholic and anti-catholic blocs, etc. It might be added that despite the ever-increasing capitalist domination of the bureaucracy of the American Federation of Labor and despite its reactionary "non-partisan" political policy there have at times been symptoms of third party and labor combinations. Even the "solid South" is breaking up. There are today within the two old parties plenty of indications of a break-down of the reactionary two-party system.

At the recent annual Commonwealth Conference of the University of Iowa a gathering of ninety political scientists, representing forty-eight of the American universities and colleges, conclusions were drawn that the present election campaign signalizes the collapse of the two-party system in American history and the birth of a new system of smaller parties.

THE S. P. REPUDIATES THE CLASS STRUGGLE

The deletion of the issue of the class struggle from its program by the Socialist Party at its last convention coincides with its more recent attitude, as expressed by its leading elements, at the New York Socialist Party state nominating convention. There the main appeal was made to the middle class, the small business men. It certainly is aspiring to become the third party of capitalism.

In struggles of the trade unions to maintain their organizations and working conditions against the combined onslaughts of the bosses and the reactionary officials, particularly within the needle trades, the Socialist Party has fully played that role. It has been a buffer between the bourgeoisie and the revolutionary workers.

In politics, the two-party system has so far sufficiently served the interests of American capitalism. With the rapid loss of working-class character and of working-class support, the Socialist Party may hardly become, for some time yet, an efficient capitalist safety valve in the sense in which the European Socialist Parties have been such.

THE LABOR PARTY

The labor party movement as a nationally organized political factor is at a low ebb. Its existence as an independent force in the state of Minnesota and a few other isolated points will hardly be of any real consequence in the presidential elections. The gathering held in Chicago, July 10, for the announced purpose of launching a national farmer-labor ticket, was still-born. It had little farmer and less labor representation. Its candidate, Senator Norris, failed to head the ticket. The irregulars are becoming regulars.

There have been some recent mass struggles of the workers, as for instance the coal miners, the textile workers, among the workers of the needle trades and to a lesser degree in other industries. There is a growing industrial depression. Class issues are therefore becoming more apparent to important sections of workers and poorer farmers. For example the growing unemployment, due both to the industrial depression and to further rationalization of industry, the campaign for the destruction of the trade unions, the farm crisis, as well as issues of taxation and social legislation will undoubtedly come in for a greater share of attention by the workers and farmers in this election.

UNEMPLOYMENT

While production of the industries of the country have increased 26 per cent since 1919 and the individual output per man increased 42 per cent, due to rationalization and speed-up, the falling-off of employment is appalling. According to information given out by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor the decrease in factory employment between 1925 and 1928 is 1,874,050. According to more recent information of a survey of 11,231 establishments in 54 of the principal manufacturing industries, the figures of the decrease of employment in percentages are as follows:

Taking the average for 1923 as 100 per month, the 1925 average showed 91.2, the 1926 average 91.9, the 1927 average 88.5 and the average for the first six months in 1928 was 85.4.

Surely the prosperity bubble is bursting. The constantly lowered living standard of the masses of workers, particularly in the heavy industries, through wage-cuts, speed-up and deterioration of working conditions in general, cannot be without effect upon the workers. Their mood for struggle is growing, their radicalization is noticeable, and there are prospects that it will be given increased class expression in the coming elections.

Particularly will this be true with the Workers (Communist) Party taking full advantage of the situation as the sole party de-

fending the interests of the workers, as the only party raising the issues of the class struggle carrying forward the banner of proletarian revolution.

The history of the American labor movement during the last decades has been one of failing to keep step with the rapid consolidation of capitalism. While this consolidation has reached the point of a mighty empire, the level of development of the labor movement is still a very low one. The signs of radicalization of the workers are so far visible mainly in their economic struggles.

The traditional two-party system has in the past been the main factor preventing the development of such tendencies in politics. The American workers do participate in politics but not as a class. To develop a class attitude and class participation based on class issues is our first task.

THE ROLE OF THE WORKERS PARTY

This election will become a test of our Party's ability to apply its program of action. Our program contains demands in keeping with the economic needs of the workers. To apply it means to establish the closest possible contact between our propaganda for these demands with our participation and leadership in the fight for the elementary working-class needs as well as with our activities for working-class organization.

There is for example the problem of unemployment. The growing competition for world markets and the process of capitalist rationalization now definitely indicate the beginnings of a permanent industrial reserve army in this country. At present it is in its early stage and our activities have been very limited. Nevertheless only the Workers (Communist) Party is tackling this problem, so serious to the working class.

Our platform demands unemployment insurance, initiation of public works and reduction of working hours. When together with that, we more energetically pursue our campaign for class solidarity of employed and unemployed, and organization of the unemployed to more effectively fight for their needs, our Party will establish itself more firmly among these workers.

Our platform gives considerable attention to the bosses' attacks upon the trade unions. This has reached its most acute stage in the mining industry, with the destruction of the miners' union, but it is felt elsewhere. The attacks upon the working-class standard of living has become general. The forms of attack have varied from the cunning bribing of willing trade-union officials through class-collaboration schemes and company unionism to open onslaughts,

mustering all the forces available, from economic pressure to courts, police and use of military forces.

Despite shortcomings our Party has already proven itself the only force capable of organizing effective resistance. It has led important struggles to save the trade unions, the standard of wages and working conditions, both from the attacks of the bosses and from the treasonable conduct of the labor lieutenants of capitalism. It has led the fight for amalgamation and militant union policies. It has now also made a beginning toward organization of the unorganized into new unions. These struggles themselves must become a direct part of our election campaign and become a means of helping to mobilize the workers for class political action.

The issues of government strike-breaking and anti-labor injunctions are very pertinent parts of our election campaign. The attitude of both major parties, while differing in form, is, as already stated, one of maintaining this system so indispensable to American capitalism and its continued possibility of keeping the workers in suppression. In some fields of struggle, notably in the late Pennsylvania and Ohio miners' strike, our Party has made its stand clear by actually making the first attempts to organize the workers for mass violation of injunctions and against the systematic strike-breaking. These examples will live in the memory of thousands of workers and lead them toward support of Communism in this election.

The growth of American imperialism and its war preparations are issues in this election. An effective counter-campaign can be expected only from a working-class party; in other words only from the Workers (Communist) Party. Our efforts so far in this respect have not nearly had a sufficiently broad working-class character. While carrying on our election propaganda, it is of the utmost importance that simultaneously the workers be actually set into motion against American imperialism and for the defense of the Soviet Union.

Social legislation is another matter deserving much more attention by our Party than heretofore. Nationally and in the various state and municipal governments, social legislation has been on the agenda at times in the past without our Party having taken any part.

It may be questions of workers' insurance or compensation bills, regulation of working hours by law, child labor laws, abolishment of yellow-dog contracts or injunctions, questions of school or taxation, etc. Issues may vary in the different localities necessitating a local color to our election campaign. In any event struggles for

social legislation beneficial to the workers, combined with struggle for their economic needs, will help not only to expose the capitalist political methods of the trade-union bureaucracy but also the fraud of capitalist legislation itself.

Simple propaganda methods and popular propaganda literature is of inestimable value in an election campaign. With a backward working-class movement, as in the United States, it is so much more necessary. For a revolutionary party, however, an election campaign can never be a separate thing. It must be closely bound up with and become an integral part of the economic struggles of the workers. It is one form of political expression of these struggles, which will grow in intensity as the struggles develop. This political expression will naturally also sharpen in form and content and assume more of a mass character. It will become more of a direct contest for power simultaneously with this development.

When correctly applied, this becomes the method of combining political parliamentary activities with the non-parliamentary struggles of the workers; the method to maintain its revolutionary character and to ever broaden its class basis. It becomes a method to convince the working masses that all the evils they suffer today under capitalist production are inevitable outgrowths of capitalism itself and can only be removed through the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship.

Thus the Communist election campaign differs widely from that of any other party which may claim to represent the workers. Our participation in elections is a direct part of the struggle for the proletarian revolution. We are a small party in a large industrial country, ruled by the most powerful imperialist bureaucracy in the world. This merely means that the difficulties which we have to overcome are so much the greater. We even have remnants of our own past attitude toward parliamentary elections to struggle against. When we remember that as late as 1920 our Party issued the slogan of boycotting the elections (without any effect upon the workers) it is but natural that among our members there should still be somewhat of a dual attitude toward this question; one of accepting the necessity of participation without fully recognizing or utilizing the opportunities available.

Yet these present elections should, and surely will become a starting point toward the firm establishment of our Party as a political factor in the United States, capable of fulfilling its great historic mission of leading the working class to final victory.