
Ruthenberg's “Farmer-Labor Audit”

by Joseph Manley

Published in *The Daily Worker* [Chicago], v. 2, no. 240 (Dec. 30, 1924), pg. 4.

Comrade Ruthenberg, in *The Daily Worker* of Dec. 9 [1924], seeks to prove to our membership that I am a common liar by his publication of an alleged audit of farmer-labor expenses, supposedly compiled with the due care and accuracy that befits his office of Executive Secretary of our party.

It may come as a shock and a surprise to our membership to find Comrade Ruthenberg using his high office to misrepresent facts and figures with the end in view of destroying a political adversary. To substantiate this grave charge I will analyze but a few of the items of the alleged audit published by him as an answer to my original *estimate*. In making my analysis I am at a distinct disadvantage, I am living “on the road” at present in the anthracite region. I can call no bat-tling bookkeeper or adding machine to my assistance.

The first fault I find with the “audit” of Comrade Ruthenberg is that, as usual with his estimates — as I will on another occasion point out — no one but himself can understand it and it does not tell the story. My estimate, on the contrary, took first the cost of operating the Federated [Farmer-Labor Party] with which I was thoroughly familiar, and the other items with which I was most closely associated and of which I had intimate knowledge.

Comrade Ruthenberg accepts my estimate on the first item — the Federated. He knows my figure of \$7,000 is a conservative one.

Now let me ask Comrade Ruthenberg if his

figure of \$6,532.41 — the alleged total labor party campaign expense for 1924 — includes (1) the subsidy given the Minnesota Workers Party to help organize the farmer-labor federation; (2) the sums advanced to the St. Paul committee to organize the St. Paul convention; (3) the expenses of Comrade [Harry] Wicks and the several organizers while engaged in the Farmer-Labor Party campaign work; (4) the sums we spent on getting farmer-labor leaders (several of whom double-crossed us and the Farmer Labor Party, the darling of their hearts) to the several conferences held in St. Paul and *elsewhere*; (5) the expenses of yourself, Comrade Foster, and others on the various trips to confer with [William] Mahoney and others; (6) the expenses of other Central Executive Committee members while on farmer-labor work and the whole Central Executive Committee to the St. Paul convention; (7) the sums advanced to the various districts to help finance delegates; (8) the advance hall rent at St. Paul and all the other incidentals while in St. Paul in connection with the actual convention.

None of the above items, and some not mentioned, are included in my estimate of the cost of operating the Federated. Therefore, they must be included in any real audit of the total Farmer-Labor Party expense. They cannot be included under the head of “national Farmer-Labor Party expense, \$990.65.” Because I remember being the agent at the March [1923] St. Paul conference through which the Workers Party pledged \$500

to the St. Paul committee and I remember Comrade Ruthenberg telling me shortly afterwards that he had to send another \$500. Neither of these items were entered in the books of the Federated and, therefore, must be either in the item of \$6,532.41 or are entered in the Workers Party books under some other head that does not show up in the Farmer-Labor Party "audit."

One more item in the alleged "audit" excites my suspicion that Comrade Ruthenberg with his usual wave of the hand and smiling countenance wishes to hang something on me. The item — *Farmer-Labor Voice* deficit, \$1,905.39. The *Farmer-Labor Voice* — of which I was the editor and which by the way taught me more about the extremes of opportunism to which I was being driven than any other one thing — had no real income at all. It was financed entirely by the Workers Party, and its mission was to peddle farmer-labor damnfoolishness to elements that in reality were LaFollette bucolics. Its circulation randed down from 20,000 in its first issues to less than 10,000 in its closing issues. In all 20 issues were published. Comrade Ruthenberg must prove it to me that the cost of printing, mailing, and the circular letters to boost circulation was as low as he claims.

Comrade Ruthenberg has completely left out

of his "audit" a reckoning of the expense to our district organizations of participating in the Farmer-Labor Party campaign. All this is done with a purpose, first, to make me appear a damnfool — though when I was a member of the Pepper faction he thought me sensible enough to nominated me twice to be the secretary of two of his pet Farmer-Labor Parties — and, second, to minimize the expense to the Workers Party of that which he was such a devout champion — the Farmer-Labor Party.

Until Comrade Ruthenberg publishes a complete itemized statement covering all the items above enumerated and showing that the total to the Workers Party national and district for its participation in the Farmer-Labor Party campaign was actually the sum he claims, namely, \$19,491.60, I will continue to stand by my original estimate, which I maintain is conservative, namely, \$50,000.

No sleight of hand audits; no insulting remarks from Comrade Ruthenberg or some of his dear followers will bluff me off. So Comrade Ruthenberg pray let me advise you to get your battling bookkeeper and adding machines busy. The dead hand of the Farmer-Labor Party has lost its grip. Down with the corpse! Up with the Workers (Communist) Party!

Edited by Tim Davenport.

Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2007. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.