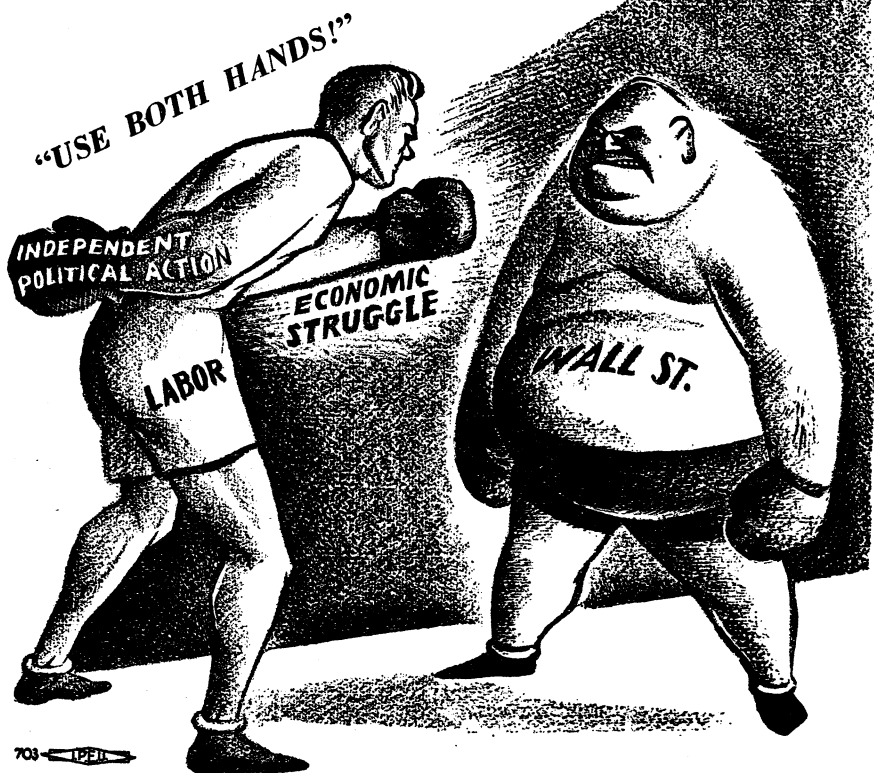


BUILD A LABOR PARTY

NOW



by **George Clarke**

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FOREWORD

When this pamphlet was written, the working class was faced with a dangerous attack by the capitalist government. The great strength of the unions repelled the attack—but only temporarily. The Case Bill was killed, but some of its worst provisions have been passed by Congress as the Hobbs Act. Truman's forced labor bill is still before Congress. Congress killed the new minimum-wage bill and now has driven the last nail into the coffin of price control.

Here is the past record of labor's political "friends": *Anti-labor laws—Inflation—Jim Crow, in the army and out—Discrimination against Jews and other minorities—Preparations for World War III.*

A labor party cannot be postponed. The SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY calls upon all workers to take action in their unions:

1. By passing resolutions committing their organizations to the immediate formation of a labor party.
2. By demanding the convocation of a Congress of Labor—AFL, CIO, Railroad Brotherhoods, etc.—to draft the following program:
 - a. Mass action to fight anti-labor laws;
 - b. A sliding scale of wages to meet the rising cost of living;
 - c. The launching of a labor party.

The SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY invites all militant workers who agree with this program to join its ranks. A strong revolutionary workers' party is the best assurance for a successful struggle for the labor party. Join today!

—G. C.

Build A Labor Party Now!

I

The Anti-Labor Offensive

Every worker must be troubled by a paradox which stares him in the face today. He sees the trade unions at the peak of their strength, numerically stronger and more powerful in action than they have ever been, and yet at the same time these unions appear practically helpless before the offensive of Wall Street's President and Wall Street's Congress.

One after another, the biggest monopolies in the country were paralyzed by great strikes and then forced to concede substantial wage increases. Neither corporation propaganda nor threats could weaken the strike front. For the first time in American labor history, scabs and strikebreakers played a negligible role against the solid array of strength built by the unions.

Yet this unprecedented power appears practically impotent today before the offensive of the capitalist government. After a series of effective and successful strikes that began last winter, the situation has been turned upside down in the one short week that followed the end of the railroad tie-up.

Spearheaded by President Truman, Congress is driving through the most reactionary, labor-crippling laws seen in this country since the open-shop days that followed the First World War.

The entire labor movement is alert to their terrifying consequences. From every union, from every shop a great outcry is heard for resistance and action against the offensive Big Business has launched from the White House and Capitol Hill. But to date this swelling shout appears to be a voice crying in the wilderness. Fourteen million organized workers, invincible yesterday on the picket lines, today give the impression of trying to stop an onrushing tank with shouts of protest.

The simple truth is this: *the labor movement is politically unprepared and unarmed.* During this critical phase of its war

against the profit-greedy billionaires, organized labor finds itself without political weapons.

For as long as memory can recall, the labor leaders have beguiled the workers with the fiction that the government was the impartial umpire between the classes, that this umpire was even inclined to stretch impartiality to the point of friendship with the labor movement. When the blindfold began to slip a little during the war under the pounding of Roosevelt's regimenting decrees, the Hillmans, Murrays and Greens quickly pulled it back into place again.

The "Friend of Labor"

They assured everyone that the "great friend of labor" in the White House had been misled by bad advisors, and in any case that these were merely emergency measures that would die with the termination of hostilities. As uneasiness began to grow in the ranks and opposition to their surrender policies mounted, the political program of the trade union leaders became restricted to one plank: no independent political action of the unions, no labor party.

Thus in a series of tragic but inevitable steps the criminal, cowardly leaders of labor led the workers into the gigantic trap openly prepared by the monopolies. At the rim of the trap, waiting for the blindfolded workers, was Truman, "the friend of labor," armed with the big anti-labor stick prepared by his predecessor Roosevelt, also a "friend of labor." The great pains suffered by the workers came not so much from the injuries themselves as from the fact they were dealt by a "friend of labor."

Everywhere workers are asking: Why are we so strong on the picket line and so weak before Wall Street's puppets in Washington? What next?

The clear, unavoidable answer is that labor must have its own party, a labor party based upon and controlled by the trade unions. Unless such a party is built, *and built rapidly*, unless such a party takes control of the government, the Wall Street gang will use the present repressive legislation as the first iron hoops of a military dictatorship. The danger is grave. Let no one mistake it.

The time is ripe for the organization of a labor party. The trade union movement is prepared for it.

What then blocks the road? The very same trade union bureaucrats and the very same Stalinist bureaucrats who have blocked the road up to now and led the workers into their present peril. They are like the Bourbons of old: *they learn nothing.*

They have no program of action, no solution to the present crisis, no plan for mobilizing on the political arena the formidable power of 14,000,000 organized workers and their families. Instead they bemoan "the accident" of Truman's accession to office; they call for a return to Roosevelt's policy. Truman, they say, has "betrayed" Roosevelt.

By thus conjuring up the ghost of Roosevelt the bureaucrats are trying to keep the labor movement wandering in the graveyard of capitalist politics, supporting capitalist "friends of labor."

Truman's Policy Forged by Roosevelt

Did Truman betray Roosevelt's policy? This is not only a lie, it is a stupid lie. There was in reality no such thing as a "Roosevelt policy." There was only a Wall Street policy *to which Roosevelt, like Truman, faithfully adhered.*

It is true that Roosevelt was more skillful than Truman in applying this policy and deceiving the workers. But then Roosevelt did not face national strikes in auto, steel, packinghouse, coal mining and railroads in quick succession.

Nothing that has been done by Truman is original. Practically every link in Truman's anti-labor chain was forged under the Roosevelt administration.

The seizure of struck plants and industries was inaugurated *by Roosevelt* during the wartime mine strikes.

The run-around and kick-around of the railroad workers' demands began *under Roosevelt* in 1943.

The "cooling-off" provisions of the Case Bill are borrowed from the "cooling-off" provisions of the Smith-Connally Bill to which Roosevelt objected solely on the grounds that it would be ineffective for preventing strikes.

Truman borrowed his labor draft *directly from Roosevelt* who

wrote to Congress on June 25, 1943: "I recommend that the Selective Service Act be amended so that persons may be inducted into non-combat service up to the age of 65. This will enable us to induct into military service all persons who engage in stoppages or other interruptions of work in plants in possession of the United States."

Union Bureaucrats Betray

The record is clear. Truman learned his anti-labor political methods in Roosevelt's school. Truman was personally chosen by Roosevelt as his successor. It was not Truman who betrayed Roosevelt, but the trade union and Stalinist bureaucrats who betrayed the labor movement by supporting these capitalist "friends of labor." By advocating the same policy today, they continue this betrayal under far more dangerous conditions.

Only the most thick-skulled bureaucrat can derive any satisfaction from Truman's veto of the Case Bill. Truman vetoed the bill because he didn't think it would work. At the same time he contrived to press for his own slave-labor emergency bill as the better means of throttling the labor movement.

Wall Street has for the moment slowed down its anti-labor offensive. It has tried the strength of the working class and found a power too strong to crush by frontal attack. But it hasn't quit.

The gangsters of Big Business and high finance are only biding their time for a more favorable opportunity to resume the offensive once again.

Militant workers must hang their heads in shame to see Murray, Green and Dubinsky trying, like repentant sinners, to crawl back into the good graces of Wall Street's Man from Missouri. It's worse than a disgusting spectacle! In effect, the labor leaders are telling the workers: "You see: Truman & Co. tried to knock us down. But they didn't succeed. They were only playing. So let's keep supporting our 'friends' in the capitalist parties. It could be worse."

Yes, it could be worse, and it will be worse—unless the workers stop listening to the siren song which has almost driven the ship of labor on the rocks of disaster—unless the workers build their own independent labor party!

II

The "Third Party" Fraud

"Labor statesmen" and their Stalinist camp-followers are very angry today—and they have every right to be. They expended millions of dollars from union treasuries and workers' pocket-books to elect "friends of labor"—and now the "friends of labor" headed by the President himself have turned up in the camp of the enemies of labor.

But anger and cursing won't protect the unions or win an election. The workers want to know: *What is to be done now?*

The master-minds say that Truman will never again receive the votes of labor. Whitney has pledged part of the treasury of the Trainmen's union to defeat him.

But who will replace Truman? From what party will the new "friends of labor" be elected? These questions reduce all the brave shouting to an inaudible whisper.

These gentlemen—the most vociferous among them being the Stalinists—reluctantly admit now that as between the Democratic and Republican parties the workers are choosing between the devil and the deep blue sea. Yet they remain opposed to an independent labor party based on the trade unions.

Such a party, they say, would isolate the workers from the rest of the population and therefore insure defeat at the polls. Hence what is needed, they conclude, is a "Third Party" to be headed by the "progressives" from both capitalist parties, by such men as Henry Wallace, Ickes, Morgenthau, Pepper, LaGuardia and others.

"But Not Now"

The strangest thing about the self-appointed leaders of the "Third Party" is that not one of them favors its creation now. Wallace, Morgenthau, the newspaper *PM*—pride and joy of the millionaire Marshall Field—are all against it today. The

Stalinist *Daily Worker* says talk of its immediate creation is “a plot of Trotskyists and reactionaries.” All of them are lecturing the workers that there is still a good apple in the rotten barrel, that labor must remain loyal to the Democratic Party.

All of them are hanging on to the Democratic Party for dear life—despite the fact that the Democratic Party, like the Republican Party, is just another way of saying huge profits, high prices, lagging wages and anti-labor laws; in brief, another way of saying Wall Street. But in their own way, Wallace & Co. are right. They see no basic difference in program between the so-called “left wing” of the Democratic Party and a “Third Party.”

Same Anti-Labor Program

The criticisms of the millionaire Morgenthau are a good example. He condemns Truman for betraying Roosevelt’s program and as a result failing to curb inflation and stop strikes. What is this but a choice of one anti-labor program over another?

Skyrocketing prices began during the war under Roosevelt. It was Roosevelt who froze wages by the device of the “Little Steel” formula. Every profiteer knows that the “Big Steel” began under Roosevelt.

Morgenthau is bitter against Truman because he disbanded the War Labor Board and therefore could not prevent strikes. But the workers were bitter against Roosevelt because he created the War Labor Board which denied wage demands, buried grievances and throttled strikes.

The difference between Morgenthau and Truman is over how best to hamstring the labor movement. Truman wants to do it openly, by means of Congressional action. Morgenthau wants to pull the wool over the workers’ eyes, and then do the hamstringing by presidential decrees and presidential boards.

In essence these are the differences between the “Third Party” and the Democratic Party, and the so-called “progressives” can see no reason why these differences cannot be reconciled within the framework of the Democratic Party.

But can labor go it alone? Doesn’t it need the support of the poor farmer, the shop keeper, the insurance salesman and the

bank clerk? True enough, no sane person would deny the need. But how is this support to be won?

How Labor Wins Support of the Middle Class

First, by recognizing the real community of interest that exists between the workers and the lower middle class.

Both classes are oppressed by the same tax burden they have to carry to pay the cost of capitalist wars. Both classes suffer at the hands of the monopolies: factory workers receive low wages, the poor farmer pays exorbitant prices for machinery.

Sixty Families revel in a golden paradise that is made possible by the blood, sweat and tears of the worker, farmer and small businessman. Middle class and working class have one common enemy: monopoly capitalism. That is why they can and must unite around one program whose aim will be to drive out of power the government of banks and industrialists and establish a government of workers and farmers.

Second, this program requires the power of organization. And *this power exists first and foremost today in the trade unions which are in the forefront of the fight against monopoly capital.*

Farmers and small businessmen are in the nature of things isolated from one another and not easily organized. They can be politically effective only by supporting the political party of the working class—the labor party. It would be the height of folly to disorganize and disfranchise 14,000,000 workers through a “Third Party” when it is possible to give organization and strength to the middle class through a labor party.

The support of the middle class will never be obtained by labor’s surrendering its independence and its program in a “Third Party” dominated by Wallace, Ickes and Co.

These gentlemen do not represent the interests of the middle class. They are imposters whose role is to deceive workers and farmers alike in the interests of Big Business. They denounce labor’s struggles because, they allege, the middle class will be offended.

By thus artificially dividing the workers from their natural

allies, they only weaken and, if successful, will eventually defeat the common front of both classes against their common enemy—Big Business.

In a “Third Party” the middle class would be pampered and flattered. But this would be just words, words and more words. Without a real struggle against the monopolies—led by the workers—inflation and black market will ruin the merchant, concentration will drive the small businessman to the wall, debts will plague the poor farmer.

And the worst of it will be that the cowardice and the betrayals of the “Third Party” will turn the wrath of the middle class not against Big Business, but against the workers, where the fascist demagogues will direct it. .

No Independent Road for the Middle Class

All attempts to create a separate middle-class party in the past have proved abortive, with the party ending its life in one of the two major parties. The Populist movement, at the turn of the century, was finally interred in the Democratic Party. The Wisconsin Progressive Party, once a national party which polled five million votes in the presidential election, 1924, surrendered its ghost to the Republican Party three months ago.

There is no independent road for the middle class. If it does not follow the labor movement, it will be driven into the arms of Big Business.

There is only one reason why the siren tunes of the “Third Party” lack volume today. The movement for an independent labor party is not yet powerful enough to constitute a threat to the “friends of labor” and to the labor leaders who are still running the old skin game of two-party capitalist politics.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. The “Third Party” is NOT the labor party wrapped in a more attractive package. It is the old capitalist party with its face lifted and its name changed. Don't be fooled by substitutes. The real fight is the fight for the *independent political party of labor* based on the trade unions and supported by the poor farmers and the small businessmen.

III

The Time Is NOW!

"Yes, it is true that labor needs its own party, but it is still too early to form it."

This argument comes from trade union leaders who are now compelled to recognize that the workers have been driven into a blind alley by capitalist politics. It is their last stand against the growing demand for the creation of a labor party.

Plausible as this argument may appear at first glance, one thing it is not: *it is not new.*

Almost as long as there has been a labor movement in the United States, there have been champions of the labor party in the trade unions. And for almost the same length of time the bureaucrats have opposed the labor party with the argument: "Now is not the time."

Prior to the organization of the CIO, they said it was premature to form a labor party because the trade unions were too weak. Only the skilled workers enjoyed union protection; in the mass production industries, company unions and the open shop prevailed. The main task was the organization of the unorganized.

But this task itself was made more difficult because the state and national legislatures controlled by the capitalist parties gave legal protection to company unions, company spies and strike-breakers, breaking strikes with injunction laws, state troops and deputized thugs. Even at this time what a boon a labor party would have been, if only in easing the road to union organization!

Always "Too Soon"

After the great CIO drive which swept steel, auto, rubber, glass, aluminum, packinghouse into the union ranks, it became patently ridiculous to speak of the "weakness" of the labor move-

ment. Now it was “too soon” to form labor’s own party, because a “great friend of labor” had moved into the White House and had brought with him into Congress and the state capitals many other “friends” from the Democratic Party.

According to this myth, so carefully built up by union bureaucrats and Stalinist bureaucrats, Roosevelt virtually organized the CIO single-handed, and all of the concessions and pro-labor legislation won in this period were handed to the workers on a silver platter by the man in the White House. It is difficult to argue against a myth. But the facts are clear.

Wherever the workers won, the victory was due to their own strength and their own militancy. Wherever they lost, they could thank the “friends of labor” on whom they relied.

The “Little Steel” strike was broken in 1937 by Democratic governors elected by CIO votes in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois. When Roosevelt was asked to speak out against the use of the National Guard he belted the steelworkers in the face with his infamous declaration: “A plague on both your houses.”

Despite these sharp lessons, Murray, Hillman and the Stalinists continued to hold the halo over Roosevelt’s head. Naturally, a labor party would be premature as long as a saint sat in the President’s chair. But the workers were beginning to see the real facts. Although they continued, with diminishing enthusiasm, to follow Roosevelt until his death, the most progressive union militants had turned their backs on the Democratic Party. Not all the artful demagogy of Roosevelt could make the party of the Wall Street gang, the big city bosses and the poll-tax Congressmen, attractive again for the organized workers.

Non-Partisan League and PAC

To elect Roosevelt, the trade union leaders were compelled to organize the workers into a separate political body: Labor’s Non-Partisan League in 1936, and the Political Action Committee of the CIO thereafter. In *form* both of these organizations were labor parties; they were delegated bodies representing the various CIO unions and membership organizations consisting of workers

and their families. But in *aim* and *program* they were not labor parties at all.

Although LNPL and PAC drafted their own programs, they had no means of demanding action; they guaranteed to support Democratic politicians, who then felt free to act as they pleased — or rather, as Wall Street pleased. The best that LNPL and PAC could hope for was a few crumbs. A few crumbs for the millions of votes that decided every major election since 1936!

Not only was the time ripe for a labor party, but without organizing the workers independently, without bartering the combined millions of union votes, without betraying the deepest aspirations and interests of the workers, the Democratic administrations in Washington for the past ten years would have been impossible.

What Counts Is Power

The crowning argument of those who keep postponing the labor party to some time that never comes is the theory of the "lesser evil." It is true, the more honest admit, that Roosevelt was becoming less friendly to labor all the time. But what was the alternative? If the trade unions ran their own candidates, they would split the Democratic vote and a Republican like Landon, Willkie or Dewey would be elected. And to make the bogeyman even more terrifying, they never fail to recall the odious memory of Herbert Hoover.

But one little fact punctures this argument completely: There were less than three million organized workers during Hoover's administration. He could slug the workers' movement without fear of counteraction or reprisal.

Today any president must count with the largest, the most conscious and the most powerful trade union organization in history. Short of establishing an outright dictatorship, not even the most reactionary president could ignore this formidable, organized power.

Now suppose for a moment that to the organized *economic* power of the trade unions there is joined the organized *political* power of the labor party. Suppose that the labor party in its

first presidential election polls only one-third of the popular vote—12,000,000. Suppose that the labor party wins one-third of the seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives and an equal number in the state legislatures. (This is not at all far-fetched; if anything, it is an understatement of the electoral power of the union members, their families, friends and their supporters among the nation's poor.) Can anyone conceive of a Republican President and a Republican House under such conditions acting in the style prescribed by Hoover?

Henry Ford was a friend of Hitler and he acted like Hitler to the auto workers until they shut down River Rouge and made him sign a union contract. What counts in politics as it does in union business is NOT promises, gratitude or good-will. *What counts is power.*

Labor's weakness permits "progressives" to act like reactionaries. Labor's strength makes reactionaries pause many times before they yield to their natural impulses.

When indeed will the time be ripe for the formation of a labor party? This question the slippery-tongued gentlemen always evade. We need not wait any longer for their evasions and ambiguities, for their procrastination and delays. We have seen how they postponed, blocked and sabotaged the labor party through the depression, then through the days of the great rise of the CIO, then through the war. And now in the midst of the gigantic postwar struggles they are still not ready.

The Time for Waiting Is Over!

But the enemy is not waiting. Acting through its lackeys in Washington, Wall Street is crashing its fist down on the working population. The FEPC is slaughtered. The open sky is becoming the ceiling on prices; fact-finding boards cut the wage demands of striking workers. Plants, mines, railroads, entire industries are seized by the government to force the workers into unequal battle with the state instead of individual employers. Truman was prepared to go into the strikebreaking business in a big way by using the army, navy and coast guard to smash the projected maritime strike. And Truman and Congress vie with each other to see who can place the worst labor-crippling laws on the statute books.

Shall we wait, politically paralyzed, politically disarmed, politically impotent, until organized labor is bound and gagged? Shall we wait until the unions are beaten, defeated and cut to pieces, robbed of their treasuries, persecuted by capitalist courts and capitalist laws, tied hand and foot by arbitration, crushed by armed forces? Shall we wait until Wall Street brings down the iron heel of military dictatorship?

The time for waiting is over. *The time for action is now.* The independent labor party must be organized immediately.

The unions stand at the peak of their strength. They represent a formidable power. The workers have emerged from every strike undefeated—every strike but the railroad strike. And there the setback has torn the blinders off the eyes of the entire working-class population. It is alert, militant and eager to repel the attack of labor's enemies.

Great victories are possible—on one condition: the knot must be untied that binds the political arm of labor.

The independent political party of the working class and the poor farmers — the LABOR PARTY — must be built NOW!

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