

MINORITY THESIS PROPOSES PENETRATION OF THIRD PARTY

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

A significant feature of the minority thesis is its failure to acknowledge the mistake of the third party alliance. It is characteristic of the minority to be stiff-necked and to assume an air of infallibility. They never admit mistakes. They still persist in defending their opportunistic maneuvers in the Chicago and St. Paul conventions, in the grab at the farmers, and in the August thesis. A case in point is that of Comrade H. M. Wicks, a prominent leader of the minority, and one who speaks much of Leninist leadership. Just a couple of months ago he, in a wide breach of Communist tactics, principles, and discipline, supported the ultra-reactionary, James Lynch, for president of the International Typographical Union, for which he was censured publicly by the party. Typically, instead of confessing his mistakes, he persists in it and tries to justify it. In this attitude he merely follows the course taken by the minority generally regarding party policies.

But the minority attitude in failing to acknowledge the third party alliance mistake is far more sinister than merely their customary refusal to admit mistakes. Its real significance is that they still mourn for the third party alliance. And, more significant still, is that instead of being corrected and brought back to a Communist line by the Comintern decision, they are ignoring it and going still further to the right. Now, they are actually coming to accept the LaFollette movement as the expression of the labor party movement. This conclusion is inescapable after a reading of their thesis and the arguments they produce to sustain it.

The minority, simply substituting the term "farmer-labor party" for the "LaFollette movement," practically consider the latter in theory and practice as the mass political movement of the workers and poor farmers and propose to work within it. Stripped of verbiage and understood as it really is, the minority thesis does three things. (1) While presumably laying the theoretical basis for the "class" farmer-labor party, it actually lays the basis for the LaFollette movement; (2) While ostensibly indicating the organized expression of the "class" farmer-labor party movement, it is in reality pointing out sections of the LaFollette movement; (3) While proposing a pretended "class" farmer-labor party policy, it really outlines a program for penetrating the LaFollette movement. Let us look at these propositions more in detail:

1. Minority Falls to Find Theoretical Basis for "Class" Farmer-Labor Party

The minority thesis is supposedly written in defense of the use of the slogan "For a class farmer-labor party" by the Workers Party. Consequently if it has any purpose at all it must be to demonstrate the existence of a definite movement for the formation of a farmer-labor party of industrial workers and poor farmers and to analyze the forces producing it. With a great fanfare of trumpets the thesis sets out to do this. It speaks of the decay of world capitalism, of use of the government by the big capitalists against the workers and poor farmers, of the "open shop" drive, of the big agricultural crisis, of the industrial crisis, of the struggle of the petty bourgeoisie against the big capitalists, and of the general sharpening of the class struggle.

But after all the travail of the minority thesis, does it show the existence of a concrete "class" farmer-labor party movement or a tendency in that direction? It does not. It simply brings out the following propositions:

1. That masses of workers, farmers, and urban petty bourgeois are deeply discontented from the growing pressure of capitalism.

2. That these masses are breaking away from the republican and democratic parties.

3. That they have formed themselves into a petty bourgeois movement under the leadership of LaFollette.

4. That within this movement there are class antagonisms which will eventually disrupt it.

But where does the "class" farmer-labor party come in in this analysis? Nowhere. The minority thesis does not show such a movement to be in existence now nor does it even prognosticate that it will come into existence at the break-up of the LaFollette movement. The thesis, supposedly written to justify the use of the "class" farmer-labor party slogan, does not indicate a movement at the present time to correspond to that slogan, nor does it hold such a movement to be inevitable. The thesis says, "It is quite possible that the actual organization of a class farmer-labor party which will establish itself firmly and function over a period of time will not be the line of development."

What Minority Thesis Is.

What we have in the minority thesis is this: An analysis which simply indicates that there is a LaFollette movement, which analyzes the social content of that movement and the forces that produced it, and which prophesies that eventually the proletarian elements will break away from the LaFollette movement. Then, without having showed that there is a "class"

farmer-labor party movement in existence now or in definite prospects for the future, the minority thesis, by a sort of leap-the-gap procedure, hops right to the conclusion that the "class" farmer-labor party slogan stands justified.

The minority thesis analysis has a great hole in it. As it stands, it cannot serve as a justification for the use of the "class" farmer-labor party slogan. Something is lacking in it. It cannot show a "class" farmer-labor party movement in existence now. Therefore, if the slogan is to be of value, it must demonstrate the inevitability of such a "class" farmer-labor party movement. The minority, typically evasive upon all major theoretical points, lack the intellectual courage to defend the inescapable conclusion from their slogan, that is, that the "class" farmer-labor party is inevitable. Their thesis now is merely an analysis of the LaFollette movement and a prophesy that it will break up, together with an irrelevant and lugged-in advocacy of the "class" farmer-labor party slogan. The thesis does not in any sense lay the theoretical basis for the use of that slogan.

2. Misrepresenting the LaFollette Movement as the "Class" Farmer-Labor Party.

Altho the minority thesis fails completely to establish the existence of a definite "class" farmer-labor party movement now, as distinct from the general LaFollette movement, and it also fails to show that such a movement must develop with the breaking away of the masses from the LaFollette movement, still, by a sleight-of-hand jugglery, it not only seeks to leave the impression that one day there will be a mass "class" farmer-labor party, but also that there now exists an organized movement corresponding to the "class" farmer-labor party slogan. The method is insidiously simple.

In naming organizations and movements supposedly giving body to the "class" farmer-labor party idea, the minority thesis adopts a significant shift in terminology. It drops the term "class" farmer-labor, which ostensibly represents the only form of such party that the minority advocates, and it merely refers to the farmer-labor party in general terms. Thus it brings to our attention a miscellaneous collection of granger farmer-labor parties and tries, by raising no issue of their "class" nature, to palm them off upon our party as sections of the "class" farmer-labor party movement. Thus we find cited for our edification the LaFollette farmer-labor parties of Minnesota, Washington, Colorado, South Dakota, and North Dakota. This substitution of the LaFollette movement for the "class" farmer-labor party movement runs all thru the minority thesis. It is but one indication of many that the minority, while advocating their mythical "class" farmer-labor party, are prepared to accept in its stead the LaFollette movement.

The C. E. C. majority thesis lays down the correct principle that in order for the Workers Party to profitably propagate the "class" farmer-labor party slogan, there must be mass sentiment behind it. It demands that the minority show the existence of such sentiment. The efforts of the minority to do this are the chief comedy feature of the party discussion.

The Fabulous Five.

First, their thesis cites the five LaFollette farmer-labor parties abovementioned, together with the defunct Cannonsburg party. Then, seeing the glaring inadequacy and incongruity of this showing, the minority began a campaign of discovering flourishing "class" farmer-labor party movements in various parts of the country. There was California, for example, where a bunch of renegade ex-members of the Workers Party and socialists, all of whom supported LaFollette, were trying to revive the socialist party under the banner of the farmer-labor party. The minority actually tried to call this contemptible maneuver a mass demand for their "class" farmer-labor party. After that came the farmer-labor resolutions of the moulders, potters, and stone cutters, at the A. F. of L. convention, altho these resolutions were adopted by the T. U. E. L., efforts long before the LaFollette movement absorbed the farmer-labor party proper. Next, was Massachusetts, where even when farmer-labor party sentiment was rampant in the country, not a real trace of organization could be built up. This place has just experienced a tremendous outburst of "class" farmer-labor party sentiment, to hear the minority tell it. The truth is that Organizer Ballam, a loyal supporter of the minority, was just throwing out a little smoke screen for factional purposes. Now comes Comrade Wicks, who discovers further blazing mass sentiment for the "class" farmer-labor party in Buffalo. He says that someone told him there is a rumor afloat that it has been said the dead Buffalo labor party will be brought back to life again. Such is the mass support the minority find for their "class" farmer-labor party. Only one minority stronghold has failed to "deliver," Philadelphia. What's the matter with Comrade Jakira? We breathlessly await the manifestation of a great "class"

farmer-labor party outburst in his balliwick.

In their citing of mass sentiment for their "class" farmer-labor party slogan, the only things tangible are the granger farmer-labor parties, sections of the LaFollette movement. They are not "class" parties at all. They are LaFollette parties. But this gives the minority no great difficulty. They are prepared to accept these parties and to work within them. The whole course of their thesis and supplementary arguments proves this.

3. A "Class" Farmer-Labor Party Policy Which Means Working With the LaFollette Movement.

In reality the thesis of the minority proposes a policy of working within the LaFollette movement, or "third party," an organization with which the Comintern prohibited Communists from even making an alliance. This is evident from an analysis of the minority "policy."

Three general lines of action are open to the advocates of the "class" farmer-labor party slogan. These are:

1. They can remain within the realms of propaganda and simply advocate the principle of a "class" farmer-labor party.

2. They can proceed to organize such sentiment as is to be found for their slogan into a definite "class" farmer-labor party.

3. They can work within the LaFollette movement for the realization of their "class" farmer-labor party.

The first of these is the policy of Comrade Brahdly and his group, the second is the old Pepper-federated policy, and the third is that of the socialist party. All three are untenable. The minority do not dare to declare openly for any one of the three. If they stood for the first one, they would be driven out of court at once, because in the very nature of things such a slogan as the "class" farmer-labor party demands a definite organizational policy. If they stood for the second policy they would fare no better, because the Workers Party has had its stomach full of federated parties. And if they stood for the third, frankly, they would also be defeated, for obvious reasons. It is a hard situation. So the minority meet it by advocating all three policies simultaneously and in utter confusion. In this way they hope to avoid the issue of a definite policy. The practical working out of their confused proposals, however, would amount in substance to putting into effect the third policy, that of working within the LaFollette movement.

The Heart of the Minority Thesis.

The minority thesis starts out with a great blare of trumpets to support (1) policy, that is of simply propaganda of the "class" farmer-labor party slogan. They enlarge upon its value as a propaganda instrument and minimize the organizational side. Says the thesis, "Our immediate campaign must be one of agitation. Whether the left class elements will be eventually organized into a farmer-labor party fighting the class battles of workers and farmers, is not the essential question at present." And again, "The slogan, 'For a class farmer-labor party' remains our most effective means of agitation for political action on a class basis by the workers and poorer farmers."

Having thus soft-soaped the elements in the party who realize the futility of a campaign to organize the "class" farmer-labor party, the minority thesis, by a typical example of its not letting the right hand know what the left hand doeth, plunges headlong into an immediate campaign of organization around its beloved and belabored slogan of a "class" farmer-labor party. This time it discovers a great love for (3) policy and unblushingly advocates permeation of the C. P. P. A., the heart of the LaFollette third party movement.

But upon this dangerous ground of penetration of the verboten third party, the minority thesis does not rest long. It hastily takes refuge in (2) policy, the famous August-thesis-Pepper-federated policy. We are told that participation in the third party is to be strictly limited in scope and time. Our dose of poison is to be small. The thesis promises us a plethora of splits from the C. P. P. A. and the inauguration of a whole series of fake federateds all over the country. The minority thesis aims to please. In its grab-bag it has a little present for every group, except the one against the usage of the slogan at all, the majority group. It pleases those who are for the slogan for propaganda purposes only, those who foresee the glory of a new federated or, perchance, a flock of them, and those, who are a numerous group of minority followers, who stand squarely for participation in the LaFollette third party.

What Will Minority Do?

Now the question arises, which of these three general lines of policy, (1), (2), or (3), would the minority actually follow if the party were so unwise and unfortunate as to support their thesis? Let us consider each phase: As for (1) policy, the minority would, of course, use the "class" farmer-labor party slogan for propaganda purposes. But, this propaganda would have to be followed up by a definite organizational program. That much is absolutely certain. Even the minority grudgingly admit it. Therefore, the attempt to create the impression that the slogan has a great value simply for propaganda

MAJORITY RETREATS RIGHT INTO ARMS OF FARMER-LABOR PARTY

By JULIUS CODKIND.

TAKING the position that there is no present mass movement toward a farmer-labor party the majority proclaim that we should withdraw from this field and apply the united front tactic in other avenues, as the opportunity arises.

Where are these other avenues to lead us?

The majority holds forth, as the leading united front tactic of today, the establishment of unemployed councils in which the Workers Party should take the leadership. Very well, let us proceed to form these councils.

We are in the midst of our unemployed agitation. Comrade X, of the majority, is addressing a vast mass of five hundred unemployed workers. We assume for the sake of charity that in this unmixed crowd of unemployed there are no Communists or sympathizers. He speaks to them of the necessity of forming councils of unemployed to fight for "Work or Wages." He proves that every worker is entitled to a job. He holds them spellbound. They stand convinced that it ought to be. They accept his leadership, but within him he knows that he has yet two tasks to perform.

First, he must tell them how! Second, he must win them to the Workers Party.

If he can approach his average American crowd, even of unemployed, and convince them only thru the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, will they gain their objective, the writer stands convinced that the majority is correct in abandoning the slogan of the farmer-labor party and the effort toward its attainment. At one stroke, Comrade X has performed his double task, and by repeating his success thruout the country before the great masses of workers he has prepared their minds for the revolution and there is no need for the farmer-labor party.

However, Comrade X of the majority will probably approach his task by explaining that only when the workers will control the government will they be able to impose on the bosses the "Work or Wages" proposition. He will explain that to accomplish this, the workers must organize their own class party and then like a good Communist, he will judge rightly that this is as far as he can go now without losing the confidence of his unemployed workers.

However, he is still under the necessity of gaining and holding prestige, not only for himself but for the Workers Party, so he will go on to describe fully the position of the Communists, emphasizing his own belief that the Communist determination to establish Soviets is the correct and only solution, but being careful to explain all the time nevertheless, that he and the party join loyally in the effort of the workers to attain government power thru those methods that the workers themselves deem best.

Now, what has Comrade X of the majority done?

He has gone as far as he could in urging a Communist program. He has explained the Communist position thoroly, without creating prejudice. He has implanted in the minds of the listeners a doubt of their own remedy, and left a slight but subconscious idea that if this fails they can still try the Communist tactic.

Very good! Comrade X of the majority has done as well as anyone could have expected of him. Nevertheless, Comrade X (in company with Comrade Y of the minority, who dislikes the task fully as much as Comrade X) will have to march along on the road chosen by the very workers who have been made class conscious by his own unemployment agitation, until they get ready to try his Communist tactic. And that road is the

purposes is vain and futile. Whether they wanted to or not, the minority would be driven to take organizational steps to put their slogan into effect.

The question is merely which of the (2) or (3) policies they would apply in seeking the inescapable organization. What an alternative for the party to contemplate! We would have the choice of either forming a new federated or of working within the third party! Now, which course would the minority take? The answer is not too difficult. For a time, no doubt, while "sectarian" objections to penetration of the third party remained strong, the (2) policy would be at least partially applied. We would be confronted with numerous splits in the C. P. P. A. and mustering of Communist sympathizers into skeleton parties. There would grow up probably a thick underbrush of little federateds. But this would be only a temporary stage.

These little federateds would be a burden upon our party's hands. Forlorn orphans, they would be at once a pity and an expense. A policy of birth control would be inevitable. The situation would be intolerable to the W. P. The opportunist minority, following out their present tendency to accept the LaFollette movement, would soon probably propose to put an end to the hopeless splits and organization drives that called into being

LABOR PARTY, which he himself has been compelled to accept in the logical development of his own speech. The General Labor Congress and the Farmer-Labor Party.

Another avenue that the majority suggests as a good way to establish a united front, is, to immediately begin to popularize the idea of a Labor Congress to prepare the minds of the workers for the coming tasks."

Of course, one might suggest to the majority that the sentiment for such a labor congress does not exist, and according to their own law on the labor party they contradict themselves when they propose to work for something for which no sentiment exists. It is well to remember that they criticize their own expenditures for the farmer-labor party for which so much actual mass sentiment did exist when the Workers Party took the field. How much more will it cost to build up a movement for a labor congress to prepare the minds of the workers for the coming tasks? Let us remember—to build up a movement for a congress that holds out no objective to the workers outside of the proposition that the Workers Party is to prepare their minds.

Let us assume, however, that the majority has gained its point. The victory has been won in the party. The farmer-labor party has been cast aside. All obstacles have been overcome; a labor congress, is in session.

Can the majority there offer the program of the Communist Party, i. e., the Workers Party, for acceptance, in line with its own policy, which reads as follows:

"A fundamental principle of the united front tactics is that a Communist Party must absorb into its own ranks every section and group of the working class that accepts in the struggle the policies and slogans of the Communist Party."

Will the majority dare to dismiss this congress without affecting a permanent form of organization? No, they won't dare. They won't even dream of such an absurdity. They will provide a permanent form of organization. What will that organization be?

We must remember, if the form of organization is anything less than the Communist Party, that it becomes a violation of the thesis of the majority. Let us be lenient, however. Let us grope with the majority for a means to avoid the formation of the labor party, for this seems to be their real objective. Very well. Let them propose some form of organization whose character will be such as to make unnecessary for the organization to enter the parliamentary field, i. e., the elections, for if it enters the parliamentary field it becomes a political party of labor which must stand in conflict or in alliance with the Workers Party.

Perhaps the majority proposes a new I. W. W. You never can tell!

Who Are the Opportunists?

The majority is most solicitous of the welfare of the minority. It wants to save all these young Communists who have but found the party within the last couple of years as a result of the party's united front tactics. It wants to save them from the clutch of the farmer-labor party, so it declares war on the farmer-labor party for their sake. Pepper, Ruthenberg, Lovestone, Bedacht, Gitlow, must be saved by Foster, Dunne and Browder. In New York also, the old guard minorityites are busily being saved, by newcomers.

The Workers Party seems to have disappointed our newer members. It held forth the idea of a vast labor party. Now it is evident that a labor party can never be proportionately as large as the labor party of Great Britain. What is more bitter still, is that the labor party here cannot hope to become a powerful factor on the

these worthless little "class" farmer-labor parties, liquidators and rivals of the Workers Party. While not abandoning in theory their "class" farmer-labor party, the farmer-labor Communists would postpone its formation indefinitely. The policy of penetrating the third party, which they now propose as a temporary expedient, would become the settled farmer-labor program of the Workers Party.

The policy of the minority leads straight to penetration of the LaFollette third party. Their thesis analysis develops, not the "class" farmer-labor party movement, but the LaFollette movement. The organizations they seek to palm off as "class" farmer-labor parties are in reality only sections of the LaFollette movement. Their pretended "class" farmer-labor party policy leads directly to a liquidation-opportunistic policy of penetrating the LaFollette third party. Such a "policy" as the minority proposes must not be adopted. It would poison our young and struggling Workers Party with the worst forms of opportunism. In its latest decision the Comintern emphatically repudiated every suggestion of penetrating the third party movement as highly injurious to the integrity and development of our own party. We must support this decision, we must check farmer-labor opportunism once and for all by overwhelmingly defeating the minority thesis.