
**Letter to the Central Executive Committee,
Workers Party of America in Chicago
from M. Hansen, Secretary of
English Branch — Seattle, WPA
July 17, 1924.**

A document in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 324, l. 77.

July 17, 1924.

From: English Branch, Seattle, Washington
To: Central Executive Committee,
Workers Party of America

Dear Comrades,

English Branch — Seattle has unanimously instructed me to write a letter stating the situation faced by our organization in Washington as a result of the withdrawal of the Presidential candidates named by the Convention at St. Paul [June 17-19, 1924], and to request an early and complete explanation of the entire matter so that we may be in a position to act and speak with some assurance regarding same.

As the matter stands now, the action appears to have entirely cut off the WP here from the close contact which had already been established with many organizations, both of organized Labor and Farmers. The explanations heretofore made through the columns of *The Daily Worker* have failed to explain in any real manner. The reasons advanced lacked sincer-

ity, and were [entirely unanticipated] in articles previously carried in the *Daily* promoting the St. Paul Conference. The attitude of the delegates seen, to whom the withdrawal came as a bolt from the blue, is that they have been betrayed; that the Workers Party played upon and fostered their great desire for a real F-L Party only to double-cross them without even an inkling of their contemplated action.

There is in Washington a considerable sentiment for a political organization so rooted in the economic life of the organized producers as to be permanent and enduring, and especially is this true of the delegates who attended the Convention, and who were so favorably impressed with the attitude of our Party. They had been convinced thoroughly that they did not want LaFollette, which to them meant the death of their hopes for a real F-L Party. Neither did they hold any hope for reaching any considerable number of the masses through the WP direct. They were enthusiastically behind the candidacy of the men named in the Convention, and the withdrawal leaves them out on a limb with our organization in the position of sawing it off next to the trunk. † That the Executive Commit-

†- In the wake of the monumental success of the Labour Party in Great Britain in the early 1920s, there was broad sentiment among progressive Americans of all organizational stripes for a similar federative Labor Party in America. From 1922 forward, both the Socialist Party and the Workers Party sought to establish and actively lead just such a movement — although the two organizations loathed one other and constantly sought to outmaneuver and isolate their erstwhile competitor of the left. The Socialists sought to lock the Workers Party out of the Conference for Progressive Political Action and to then win active trade union commitment to a new Labor Party emerging via that organization. The grand concept was to combine a CPPA-based Labor Party with the energy and sentiment growing for an independent campaign by maverick Wisconsin Senator Robert LaFollette for the Presidency. A July 4th Convention was called by the CPPA, at which the SP hoped the planets would align — with the union movement coming out for independent political action and the LaFollette bandwagon hitching itself to the new organization, thus creating critical mass for a lasting political party of the left. The Workers Party, frozen out of participation in the CPPA and any political organization that would result from the CPPA, sought to steal the thunder of the Socialists by holding a convention of their own, seeking to join with already

tee of the F-L Party should withdraw these candidates without consulting in any way whatever the [55] members of the National Committee, especially since 5 of the members of that Executive Committee were members of the WP adds fuel to their belief that they were played false.† We are not in a position to make an effective reply, and unless it is done, and at once, it will be many, many moons before we can again stand in a position of securing the cooperation from these sources.

There is considerable ground for the belief that we have not approached this entire problem of the formation of a Labor Party through collaboration in the manner befitting a communist party, but it seems after going as far as we have that a grave injustice has been done to many who were trusting and friendly, and that it will be difficult to heal the breach. Of course, we are not in possession of the real reasons. The rea-

sons given in *The Worker* do not explain. If there has been a mistake made, and it was necessary to withdraw before it was too late, let there be a full and frank explanation and confession. It ill becomes our Party to play sharp politics in dealing with members of our class. Frankness is our strongest asset. Let us not lose it by failing in this most outstanding instance where frankness is desirable.

Trusting to be in receipt of your reply by return mail, and further hoping that a better and more complete explanation of the entire situation be given through the columns of *The Daily Worker*, we remain,

Yours for the Cause,

M. Hansen, Secretary.

2117 — 7th Ave.

existing state Farmer-Labor Parties and the most committed wing of the labor movement in establishing a new Farmer-Labor Party before the CPPA had a chance to capture the field. This would either undercut and defeat any momentum for a CPPA-based Labor Party or alternatively pave the way for unity negotiations between the two new parties, in which the Workers Party would maintain significant leverage.

Although initially seeking a convention date in May, the Workers Party compromised with the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and set a date of June 17-19, 1924, for the holding of a convention. The WPA funded the mailing of a convention call for the gathering, which was ultimately attended by over 500 delegates representing farmer, labor, and political organizations located in 26 states. The gathering nominated Illinois union official Duncan MacDonald for President and Washingtonian William Bouck of the Western Progressive Farmers' League for Vice President. The declaration of this campaign did nothing to derail the CPPA gathering, however, which proceeded as scheduled on July 4-5 Convention in Cleveland. This "1st Convention" of the CPPA proceeded to nominate Robert LaFollette for President. The planets did not further align for the Socialist Party, however, as the delegates representing the main participating unions stated in no uncertain terms their refusal to establish a new political party at that time; nor did Robert LaFollette have the slightest interest in building a political organization beyond the apparatus necessary for his own campaign.

More isolated than ever from the mainstream of the union movement, faced with running a campaign in opposition to the popular independent campaign of LaFollette (who ultimately received approximately 1,250,000 votes), the Workers Party abruptly terminated the McDonald-Bouck campaign — thus essentially putting quit to the Federated Farmer-Labor Party. This decision of the National Executive Committee of the FFLP was taken on July 10, 1924, less than a week after the conclusion of the CPPA's convention. Instead, the WPA determined to run a campaign for the Presidency under its own banner. This decision was sudden, shocking, and baffling to rank and file supporters of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, as this document gives testimony. A strategic miscalculation was turned into a harried retreat verging on a route for the Workers Party, while the Socialist Party found themselves dumping time, energy, and money into a personal campaign which ultimately placed them no closer to their goal of a powerful Third Party of the Left.

†- The 7 members of the National Executive Committee of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party were: Alice Lorraine Daly, Clarence Hathaway, Alexander Howat, Alfred Knutson, William Mahoney, Joseph Manley, Scott Wilkins. Of this group, Daly and Mahoney were non-members of the Workers Party of America.

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