
FLP Disowns the New Party: Workers Party Takes Advantage of its Position as Guest to Start Dual Movement.

by Robert M. Buck

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Attributed to editor Robert Buck.

The national convention and conference called by the Farmer-Labor Party of the United States July 3-5 [1923], to try to find a basis for united independent political action by the working class, demonstrated that such unity is not possible at the present time.

As for the conference, one of the groups invited by the Farmer-Labor Party to participate, namely the Workers Party, seized control by packing the meeting and imposing their own program by ruthless force. Upon this group rests the responsibility, therefore, that the conference, instead of bringing unity, resulted in further division, by the establishment of still another party.

The Workers Party delegates even tried to filch the name of the Farmer-Labor Party, their tactics finally resulting in the adoption of a long and unworkable party name, the Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

The Farmer-Labor Party of the United States refused to endorse the new party, or to participate in its formation, but decided, in its convention following the conference to go on its way with the renewed courage, undertaking its task as heretofore.

Unite Despite Wreckers.

Despite the fact that, to this extent, disunity instead of unity resulted from the conference, more unity than ever before was achieved under the banner of the Farmer-Labor Party of the United States, by the adherence to it of new groups of farmers and labor who likewise refused to follow the flag of the Workers Party under the name Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

The proceedings commenced July 3, by the call-

ing to order of the Farmer-Labor Party convention by Toscan Bennett, who had been named as temporary chairman by the National Committee of the party.

The National Committee had ordered that only delegates from party units and local unions affiliated with the party be seated as delegates to this first session of the convention, the convention to recess and go into conference with all the other groups represented, as soon organized. The Credentials Committee undertook to change this rule and reported in the credentials of all delegates as delegates to the party convention.

Workers Party Seizes Command.

Efforts by National Secretary J.G. Brown and others to correct this action failed and the result was that delegates not belonging to the Farmer-Labor Party made up a majority of its convention for all practical purposes, for a few hours at least.

After addresses had been delivered by John Fitzpatrick of Chicago, Mother Jones, former Senator [R.F.] Pettigrew of South Dakota, and Lieutenant-Governor George F. Comins of Wisconsin, the convention recessed and the conference was begun.

Because of the tactics of the ruling group it was a conference chiefly in name. The first event was the presentation of a resolution on organization by the Workers Party which, instead of permitting it to go to an impartial committee of the conference, forced its immediate adoption. Its adoption included the creation of a committee on organization of the conference to report, elaborating the resolution which had

been adopted. The makeup of this committee, fixed in the resolution, was such as to give control of the committee, by a huge majority, to the Workers Party.

The following is the text of the resolution by which this situation was brought about:

Resolution on Organization.

1. This conference declares itself in favor of the immediate formation of a Federated Farmer-Labor Party in which shall be included local unions, central labor bodies, state federations, labor political groups, labor fraternal organizations, and cooperative organizations.

2. The convention shall elect an Organization Committee in which the following groups shall be represented as indicated:

The Farmer-Labor Party	2 members
The Maintenance of Way Union	2 members
The Amalgamated Clothing Workers	2 members
The Buffalo Central Labor Council	1 member
The Workers Party of America	2 members
The Detroit Federation of Labor	1 member
The Proletarian Party	1 member
The Los Angeles Labor Party	1 member

One representative of each of the national and state farm organizations having delegates in the convention, such as the Progressive Party of Idaho, the United Farmers Educational League, the Non-Partisan League, and other such farmers organizations.

Locals of the Brotherhood of Railway
Carmen 1 member

The units of the United Mine Workers
of America represented at
this convention 1 member

The units of the International Ladies'
Garment Workers represented
at this convention 1 member

The Machinists locals represented
at this convention 1 member

The Workmen's Circle units 1 member

The Workman's Sick and Death
Benefit Fund units 1 member

One representative of the cooperative organizations having delegates.

One representative from each of any other definite group having delegation in the convention.

The chairman shall declare a recess of a half an hour to permit each of these groups to caucus and select their nominees. The nominations made by the groups shall be ratified by the convention as a whole.

3. The Organization Committee shall formulate and report to the convention a plan of organization for the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, using the existing Farmer-Labor Party structure as the basis for this organization plan.

4. The Organization Committee shall prepare registration blanks for all delegates present which shall show their names, addresses, the organizations they represent, and the membership of these organizations and have these

filled out by the delegates.

5. The Organization Committee shall include in its report a plan for the election of a National Committee in which shall be represented the groups named above.

FLP Refuses Plan.

The Farmer-Labor Party was graciously allowed 2 representatives on a committee of 29, some members being added to the committee on the floor of the convention at the last moment. The caucus of the Farmer-Labor Party elected Christian M. Madsen and Robert M. Buck as its representatives on the committee.

The committee reported to the convention a constitution for the proposed new party, and the Farmer-Labor Party members, reporting as a minority, said that the Farmer-Labor Party could not accept the new plan, which set up a new party dual to the Farmer-Labor Party, in that it was almost a duplication by its form of organization, and further, that the majority of the committee proposed to steal the name of the party that invited them to the conference.

At the same time the committee reported in a declaration of principles by no means as far-reaching and fundamental as the existing platform of the Farmer-Labor party. The following are the summarized planks of the platform of the new party:

New Party Platform.

1. We stand for the nationalization of all public utilities and all social means of communication and transportation.

2. Industries must be run on the basis of the workers and farmers steadily increasing their control of the management and operation through their own economic organizations.

3. Industries must be operated in such a manner as to afford the working and farming masses the maximum security against destitution, unemployment, sickness, and high prices.

4. That the Federal Government enact a maximum 8-hour workday in industry, making any violation of the same by any employer a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment.

5. That the Federal Government enact a law that will make the Federal Reserve Bank System serve the farmers and workers. Industry should be encouraged to discontinue its reckless "hiring" and "firing" practices by compensating the unemployed worker temporarily when he is thrown out of employment through no fault of his own, and

6. That the Federal Government enact a Child Labor Law prohibiting the employment of children under 18 and

making the violation of this law a crime punishable by imprisonment.

7. That the Federal Government enact a law providing for a minimum living wage for all workers — the wages to be fixed in cooperation with the representatives of the trade unions.

8. That the Federal Government enact a law providing for the compulsory education of all under 18. Special attention must be paid to the creation of new and adequate schools in the rural regions.

9. That the Federal Government enact a law providing for adequate compensation to the ex-soldiers — a soldier bonus — funds for same to be obtained through the levying of inheritance, excess profits, surtaxes, and taxes on unearned income.

10. That the Federal Government enact a Social Insurance Law providing for adequate sick, accident, and death insurance for all city and rural workers. Funds for the same to be secured through the taxation of incomes, excess profits, surtaxes, and inheritance taxes and taxes on unearned income.

11. That the Federal Government enact a National Maternity Insurance Law providing for full trade union wage compensation to all prospective mothers for a period covering one month prior and one month after child birth.

Caucus Rebuffs Conference.

There was no debate on the declaration of principles, but on the constitution the debate was long and bitter. Finally C.E. Ruthenberg, leader of the Workers Party delegation, took the floor and offered to accept the name and structure of the Farmer-Labor party. The conference took a recess to permit the Farmer-Labor Party delegates to caucus. The caucus adopted the following report to the conference, which Delegate Buck offered as a substitute for the constitution proposed by the Workers Party:

The caucus of the Farmer-Labor Party of the United States gave earnest consideration to the proposal advanced by Mr. Ruthenberg in his address before the conference, namely, that those he spoke for were willing to accept the name, constitution, and platform of the Farmer-Labor Party of the United States in lieu of the report of the Committee on Organization.

Replying to the suggestion thus advanced the caucus of the Farmer-Labor Party of the United States submits to the conference that the name, structure, constitution, and platform of the Farmer-Labor Party offer a sufficient vehicle for united political action by the working class as they now stand, having been designed for the purpose of accepting affiliation from all groups of workers who subscribe to the principles of the party.

The Farmer-Labor Party now accepts and at this time urges affiliation, on a basis of autonomy, from all working class groups, including political parties, which groups accept the principles and program of the Farmer-Labor Party.

We feel, however, that it would be suicide for us and the various organizations seeking together with us the unification on the political field of all of the forces with the same object in view for which we are striving, to undertake to bring into such affiliation any organization which advocates other than lawful means to bring about political changes or is affiliated with or which accepts the leadership of either national or international political organizations whose propaganda and doctrines advocate the overthrow of the government of the United States by other than legal and constitutional methods, such as the Third International.

If united political action is to be successful, it must be founded on the organized labor and farmer movements and its most important task is to build up support from these movements. And we strongly feel that anything which would tend to alienate or antagonize these organizations would be absolutely disastrous.

The caucus of the Farmer-Labor Party of the United States wishes to say further to the conference that if two organizations undertake to operate as political parties bearing the same name, endless confusion and embarrassment for both of them will inevitably follow. Furthermore, the adoption by one group of a name already in use by another group cannot fail to create antagonism and prejudice against the organization so appropriating another's name.

Workers Party Tables Substitute.

This caucus substitute was tabled after a continuation of the debate and the constitution proposed by the Workers Party was adopted. Then followed a recess while groups caucused again to propose representatives to be elected by the conference to the National Executive Committee of the new party.

Notwithstanding that it was a conference to find a basis of agreement which the delegates could report back to their groups, the Workers Party ran the conference off at high speed and insisted on even electing their National Executive Committee at that conference, thus turning it into the first convention of the new party.

The Farmer-Labor Party caucus referred the question to its own convention and the National Committee issued a call for a convention of delegates to the party, excluding all others, the following day, July 6 [1923]. The other groups selected their representatives and the conference adjourned.

When the Farmer-Labor Party convention came to order the next day, Robert M. Buck was elected permanent chairman of the convention. Practically the only item of business transacted was reiteration of the stand of the caucus the day before, and complete re-

fusal to have any connection with the Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

Breach is Made Complete.

The question came up on a motion offered by Toscan Bennett, to elect 5 representatives on the committee of the new party, but to make their services provisional upon whatever conditions the convention chose. This question was debated for more than 4 hours and finally the motion was decisively defeated.

A glance at the makeup of the Committee on Organization, upon which the National Executive Committee of the new party was based, reveals it to be such that, although they had increased the Farmer-Labor Party representation to 5 instead of 2, the Workers Party, through other organizations added to its own, had overwhelming control of the new party machinery.

After defeating the motion, the convention voted to reaffirm the statement offered by the caucus in the conference as a substitute for the Workers Party constitution. The convention then adjourned.

The Farmer-Labor Party remained intact following this severance, except for its Washington state branch, the delegates of which bolted the convention and attached themselves to the new party. John C. Kennedy, former [Socialist] Chicago alderman, led this bolt and one of his colleagues, William Bouck, was made National Chairman of the new dual party. Added to their 3 delegates, a few individuals bolted with them, but there were no others who could take their organizations with them who ever had enjoyed any connection with the Farmer-Labor Party.

These bolters, before the Farmer-Labor Party convention had determined its action on the motion to elect representatives to the new party, met and picked 5 persons whom they palmed off on the new party as Farmer-Labor Party representatives. This was an illegal action, since the Farmer-Labor Party refused to have any connection with the Federated Farmer-Labor Party. These 5 were: John C. Kennedy [of Washington]; Mary B. Brite of Ohio; C.L. Stevens of Kentucky; Rich Swift

of Illinois; and J.W. Rossmiller.

Personnel of New Party.

The other members of the National Executive Committee of the new dual party are the following (there are no international organizations affiliated, but when unions are named, locals only are really represented):

Mrs. Anna Mae Brady, Non-Partisan League of South Dakota; J.G. Scott, Socialist Party of Minnesota; James McCollom, UMWA of Illinois; Alex J. Boyd, Fairmont, W.Va. State Federation of Labor; F.H. Shoemaker, American Equity Society of Wisconsin; W.E. Zeuch, Non-Partisan League of Wisconsin; H.M. Ware, United Farmer Educational League of North Dakota; W.H. Green, Progressive Party of Nebraska; I.L. Davidson, Ladies' Garment Workers of Chicago; George M. Tries, Detroit Federation of Labor; William Bouck, Western Progressive Farmers of Washington; E. Backus, Non-Partisan League of California; James Campbell, Buffalo Central Labor Council; N. London, Workmen's Circle of New York; Joseph Manley, Trade Union Educational League of New York; W.Z. Foster, Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of Chicago; C.E. Ruthenberg, Workers Party of New York; Ludwig Lore, Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Assn. of New York; Thomas Myerscough, UMWA of Pittsburgh; Anthony Capraro, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of Rochester; Max Tenkins, Industrial Workmen's Circle of Pittsburgh; O.H. Wangerin, Miscellaneous Crafts of St. Paul; C.A. Hathaway, Machinists' Locals of St. Paul; Mrs. C.E. Hoebel, Wisconsin Women's Progressive Assn.; S. Alanne, cooperative Organizations of Wisconsin; D. Gorman, Los Angeles Labor Party; M.J. Loeb, Miscellaneous Crafts of Chicago.

Joseph Manley was elected National Secretary of the new dual party and W.H. Green of Nebraska and F.H. Shoemaker of Wisconsin were made 1st and 2nd Vice President, respectively. The 7 members constituting the Executive Council are Manley and Green and J.C. Kennedy; Mrs. Anna M. Brady of South Dakota; G.M. Tries, Detroit; O.H. Wangerin, Minnesota; and James Campbell, Buffalo.

Due to shorthandedness on the staff of The New Majority and the fact that the editor was a participant in the convention, which took 4 days out of his working week, attempted interpretation of the conference and convention will be postponed until the following issue of this paper.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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