

Browder, Thomas And Mooney

Why Not United Labor's Forces Behind Mooney for President?

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

In the Daily Worker of February 11, Norman Thomas is gently chidden. His offense: He is opposed to giving up the Socialist presidential ticket in favor of "a premature effort after a farmer-labor party."

Norman Thomas is charged by Earl Browder with not doing all he can and should to bring about a labor party by July 4, 1936. Earl Browder is charged by Norman Thomas with doing much that he shouldn't do if he wants to strengthen the movement for a labor party.

In this combat we do not wish to act as judges. But the labor party has been one of our main concerns for a number of years, both when we were in the leadership of the official party (with Browder in opposition to the labor party) and since our unjustified expulsion, when we upheld the banner of the movement for a labor party while both Socialist and Communist Parties were opposing it for their own sectarian reasons. Moreover, we regard the intelligent and earnest cooperation of both the Socialist and Communist Parties for this purpose as highly desirable, almost indispensable. It is with a desire to further that movement that we offer the following observations:

1. A labor party, or a farmer-labor party must be initiated by the trade unions. One of the basic reasons for its necessity, the basic reason, is the fact that the organized labor movement is tied to the capitalist political parties. A labor party is needed to make the American working class politically self-conscious, class-conscious, to separate the organized labor movement politically from capitalism, from the middle class and its class-

organizations over a period of many years and the help extended by one to the other during periods of stress and need. This traditional spirit of solidarity now manifests itself in the important work in which we are engaged along with you and other progressive forces within the American Federation of Labor to bring the message of unionism to the vast numbers of unorganized workers in the mass production industries. We believe that the very fact that the craft union methods heretofore employed in the attempt to interest the workers in the mass production industries in trade unionism have utterly failed justifies a reconsideration of tactics and policy on the part of the leadership of the labor movement if we want to see these millions of exploited and underprivileged men and women join the ranks of bona fide labor organizations.

We further believe together with you that in rallying these unorganized workers into the fold of the American Federation of Labor we are helping to remove the roots of dualism whether in company unions or independent organizations by furthering a policy within the American Federation of Labor that will enable these workers to enter on the only basis millions of them will accept, namely, industrial unionism. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union like the other unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor which are advocating industrial unionism for the mass production industries is opposed to any splits or divisions in the labor movement. We do not consider the promotion of the principle of industrial unionism as dualism or

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less illusions concerning "the people" as a whole.

Seeds of Disaster

2. To confuse the labor party with the People's Front, to give it middle-class leadership, middle-class political figureheads as nominees, a middle-class program, and a leading committee of rabbis, ministers, liberals, petty-bourgeois politicians, with a sprinkling of labor leaders and maybe a Socialist and Communist leader or two discreetly in the background, would deal a possibly well-intentioned but inevitably fatal blow at the very essence and purpose of a labor party, which represents a union of the working class and liberal bourgeoisie on a program acceptable to the latter, as a Labor Party. He who peddles the People's Front, which represents a separation of the working class from the liberal bourgeoisie on an elementary but unmistakably working class program, is sowing winds of confusion to reap whirlwinds of subsequent disaster.

3. A movement made up of the C.P. and S.P. and C.P.O. with perhaps a few progressive unionists as a "labor front", would not be a labor party. It would be too "red" to enlist the support of the bulk of the organized labor movement and would actually short-circuit the slowly growing labor party sentiment in the trade unions, and thus tend to discredit and weaken the labor party idea.

4. There are two dangers to be avoided in the movement for a labor party. One is premature organization, on too narrow a basis. The other is needless delay, neglect of the tasks which will hasten the growth of labor party sentiment and organization. A labor party cannot be formed by an instructed calendar date, "July 4, 1936, with or without organized labor, with or without the Socialists." He who plays with the labor party movement in that fashion, hurts that movement. Neither can any stage be skipped. Mere impatience is no help. Intelligent, directed impatience is a help. It should work overtime, with restless energy at the difficult, distressingly slow job of winning the trade unions themselves to organize a labor party. In such a task, the united effort of C.P., S.P., and C.P.O. would be a help. Such an effort should seek every possible method and device to hasten the development of a labor party movement. Above all, it should realistically appraise the present situation and decide on the next possible step in furthering that movement, in stirring the trade unions, in getting them on record, in getting them into action for a labor party.

Now, let us return to Norman Thomas and Earl Browder. Earl Browder declares that we can have, and must have a labor party by July 4, 1936. Norman Thomas says that that would be "a premature effort." We must say that Earl Browder is keeping his eyes riveted (by instruction, perhaps) upon the seductive date, while Norman Thomas is keeping his eyes more closely on the less seductive situation in the country.

Strange to relate, the impatient Browder, who chides Norman Thomas for unwillingness to take necessary steps for the formation of the labor party, has actually refused to take the immediate next step himself. And that's where Tom Mooney comes in.

Where Mooney Comes In

The Socialist and Communist Parties and Communist Opposition together cannot masquerade as a labor party. But the Socialist and Communist Parties and the Communist Opposition working together can give a powerful impulsion to working class political

unity by launching a united labor ticket in 1936. That is immediately possible! And that would win much labor support.

Browder and Thomas, or Thomas and Browder on one ticket, would be better than Browder and Thomas on two tickets running against each other. But Tom Mooney for president, with some other labor leader or dirt farmer for vice-president would be still better. Tom Mooney's candidacy would electrify the American working class. It would unify the working class more than any other candidacy whatsoever. He belongs to all the workers. He is labor's martyr and champion. Even conservative unions could be aroused to endorse him. It would be the most powerful stimulus to labor unity, solidarity, political class consciousness, so far developed.

On January 24, the Communist Opposition wrote to both S.P. and C.P. suggesting that they get together for a united labor ticket with Tom Mooney for President. What was the answer of the C.P. to this obviously excellent proposal? A miserable, sectarian, factional reaction. No direct answer to the C.P.O. No communication to the S.P. No word to the militant workers who responded with a thrill of hope. Only a sneering, carefully anonymous response to a New York Times reporter: "We are not interested in any proposition coming from opposition communists." (See New York Times, Sunday, January 26.)

And another cynical sneer from Clarence Hathaway, editor of the Daily Worker, at a forum on February 16, in answer to questions. (It seems the workers are interested in the proposition!) Said Hathaway: "Who is the C.P.O. that it dares to propose Mooney or anybody else for President!"

The Daily Worker criticizes Norman Thomas for "waiting like Micawber for something to turn up, postponing action and not doing everything possible to build this urgently needed mass party of the people for the November elections." But the Socialist Party's National Executive Committee is polling its members on our proposal. We do not know what the decision of the Socialist Party will be. No doubt some of the N.E.C. members will chime in with Browder and Hathaway, even go them one better: "We are not interested in any proposition coming from communists." (They will make no distinction between official tendency and opposition.) Right wing socialists have answered good proposals from the C.P. before with clique arrogance and cynical disregard of the interests of the workers in favor of the interests real or imagined of their faction. Does Browder care to be associated with them? Why is the C.P. silent? Any worker can see that the proposal is a good one.

What Is Your Answer?

Can it be, Comrade Browder, that you prefer a camouflaged C.P. calling itself a Labor Party? Can it be that you prefer such a party with perhaps a Marcantonio, to a united labor ticket with Tom Mooney? Have you a better nominee? A more inspiring standard bearer? One that would more readily win trade union support? One more free from factional trammels? A better symbol of the unity and fighting spirit of our class?

We urge the Socialist Party to act favorably. We urge the coming convention of the Communist Party to take this clear, urgent, necessary next step. We would like to hear from the unions, from the socialists and communists: We would like to hear from every worker: **What do you think of a United Labor Ticket with Tom Mooney for President in 1936?**