

Ninth Party Convention Discussion:

Forces Working for Formation of Farmer-Labor Party

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Article I

At the recent meeting of the Central Committee the question was raised as to the prospects for developing a national Farmer-Labor Party ticket in the coming elections. In analyzing the election results in New York we draw similar conclusions.

Two years ago the Fusion administration was elected with the support of the organized labor movement, endorsed by the Amalgamated, International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and other unions. It represented potential Labor-Party votes. The disillusionment with this Fusion administration, and the absence of a Labor Party turned the votes back to the Tammany fold on a city-wide scale, and to the Republicans on a State scale.

At the time of the Plenum, the question was raised, What are the prospects for the development of a National Farmer-Labor Party ticket for the 1936 elections? The developments since the Plenum show that the movement for a Labor Party is developing much more rapidly than appeared at the time, not only in the ranks of labor, but amongst the farmers and middle class elements.

Labor Party Tide Rises

The concrete manifestations of this are seen in many states and cities. In the past two months numerous local unions, central bodies have gone on record for a Labor Party. In some instances the movement has already reached the stage of the actual formation of a Labor Party.

Another very important development which is likely to be a decisive factor in the development of a Labor Party is the split in the Socialist Party in New York based not only on internal issues, but also in different political alignments within the Socialist Party. The recent LaGuardia appointment of Charles Solomon as judge, and the subsequent publicity brought to light the alliance between LaGuardia and the Old Guard Socialists that existed for a long time. It shows the growing possibility that the Old Guard will unite with Fusion to sponsor LaGuardia as the "Labor" candidate for Mayor in 1937.

This open alliance of the Old Guard with the bourgeois politicians has brought home to many of the militants the need for closer cooperation with the forces that are moving in the direction of a Labor Party, as evident by the Labor Party program that appeared in the December 21st issue of the "Socialist Call."

In examining the developments throughout the various states and cities we find that New York City, with the largest and most radical organized trade union movement, with potential Labor Party forces, embracing hundreds of thousands of workers, has the weakest Labor Party movement.

Why?

How can we account for this, and how can we stimulate the development of this movement?

I will first deal with the trade unions. Since the merger of the Trade Union Unity League and independent unions into the American Federation of Labor, our Party

The Party Convention discussion is on!

It is the right and duty of every Party member to discuss the resolutions and decisions adopted by the recent meeting of the Central Committee.

The Convention discussion, in the Party units, in the Party fractions, should be of benefit to the entire Party. Let every unit and fraction discussion be summarized in the form of short articles. Let the important questions raised in the discussions be written up for the entire Party.

If you have any question "troubling" you in connection with some points of Party policy, send it in for discussion. Do not hesitate. Tell us what are some of the obstacles you met in convincing your fellow workers regarding the need of building a Farmer-Labor Party.

has become a greater force in the trade union movement of New York City, in stimulating the organization of the unorganized, and exerting great influence on many of the unions. However, despite the strong sentiment for a Labor Party that exists amongst the masses of organized workers in New York City, our fractions in the trade unions have been most backward in driving towards organized expression of this sentiment. Instead of being a driving force in getting the local unions to go on record for a Labor Party, to set up committees for the promotion of the Labor Party, to give attention to the various legislative measures before the State and City legislative bodies that would stimulate the interests

of the workers in parliamentary activities, our comrades in most of the local unions have adopted a waiting attitude. They have waited for somebody else to take the initiative, for somebody else to launch the movement for a Labor Party which they would later endorse. Here is a concrete example:

The militant forces in the Painters' Union have exerted great influence over the union, and are today on the point of becoming the leaders of the thousands of painters in New York City. A number of locals of the painters are under the direct leadership of the militant forces. The support of the workers for the militants is based not only on the day-to-day struggle on the economic field, but on the general program of these militant forces on all labor problems, which are closely linked up with the Labor Party movement. The painters, as well as all other building trades workers are confronted with many urgent problems directly linked up with the political situation, as, for instance, the WPA wage scales, which undermine the standards of the workers, achieved through many years of struggle; the present campaign, initiated by the building trades employers to repeal the workmen's compensation law; unemployment insurance, a burning issue for the great mass of the workers. These are issues which are basic in the development of a Labor Party.

But No Endorsements

- Yet not a single one of these locals has as yet officially recorded itself for a Labor Party, and, of course, has played no role in developing the movement. The paint-

ers take for granted that they are for a Labor Party, and will be ready to join it just as soon as it is formed.

Another example: The unions in the needle trades. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union at a number of its conventions has gone on record for a Labor Party. At the last convention of the American Federation of Labor, the ILGWU as well as the other needle trades unions voted for the Labor Party. Yet the needle trades unions, representing more than 200,000 workers in New York City, have thus far not taken any steps to launch or give leadership to this movement. Our forces, who have great influence amongst the needle trades workers, have followed in the footsteps of the leadership and have not developed an active campaign, have done little to bring pressure on the leadership. Similar is the situation in hundreds of other locals whose members are strongly in favor of a Labor Party.

How can we correct this situation? In the first place it is necessary for our Party and the militant forces in the trade union movement to follow up the steps taken at the A. F. of L. convention, and to bring before every local union the Gorman resolution which expresses the need for a Labor Party in the most concise and convincing form.

With the opening of Congress and the State Legislature, the trade unions should take steps to develop a campaign around the various legislative measures sponsored by the American Federation of Labor and become an active force in driving for social legislation in the interests of the workers.