

Failure to Utilize Issues Retards New York Labor Party Drive

By ROSE WORTIS

Article II

It is a discredit to the organized labor movement in New York State, consisting of close to one million organized workers, to allow a situation where the Child Labor Amendment is defeated in the State Assembly year after year. With an active campaign on the part of organized labor, even the Republican-controlled Assembly would not dare to defeat this amendment.

The last session of the State Legislature adopted some favorable amendments to the Workmen's Compensation Law. The employers who are always more alert to their class interests have already launched a campaign for the repeal of the Workmen's Compensation Law. The drive has been initiated by the employers in the building trades. The organized trade unions must answer this attack against social legislation by organizing a mass drive to enforce the Workmen's Compensation Law, and to propose and to sponsor amendments that will even strengthen the bill to the advantage of the workers.

The mass pressure of the unemployed workers in New York has forced the last session of the State Legislature to adopt the Byrne-Killgrew Bill. This bill is by no means satisfactory. It embodies the main shortcomings of the national Social Security Bill. It does not include many categories of the workers such as civil service employees, agricultural workers and domestic workers, farmers, etc. The bill also places the main burden on the workers. Yet the reactionary forces led by the Liberty Leaguers and the Merchants Association of New York State have already launched a campaign for the repeal of this miserly so-called unemployment insurance bill.

Must Counter Hearst Forces

These Hearst fascist forces represent even the half measure of the New Deal government forced on it by the workers and are determined to starve the millions of unemployed, and strengthen their attack on the employed workers. The only way to defeat this attack of the Liberty Leaguers, and the Merchants Associations is for the organized labor movement to launch a mass drive to amend the Byrne-

Killgrew Bill so that it can provide real unemployment insurance for the millions of the unemployed at the expense of the rich, and not the exploited workers.

The coming State Legislature will deal with measures for the minimum wage and other social legislation which is coming up before the State Legislature. The developments of the movement along these lines will bring before the masses of workers of New York City and State in the most dramatic form the need for electing our representatives of labor that will voice the needs of the millions of downtrodden and exploited workers and farmers in our state.

What can the Party as a political organization do to stimulate the campaign for the Labor Party, and make possible the realization of a Labor Party in New York City and State during the coming elections? The Party, in examining the situation in the U. S. came forward with the slogan for a Labor Party in 1935. It required a discussion to convince the Party members of the need and possibility for a Farmer-Labor Party.

Broad Agitation Needed

In this we have been successful. However, we seemed to have become satisfied merely with convincing ourselves, but have not done everything possible to bring this before the mass of workers.

In order to correct this shortcoming, it is necessary in the first place for our Party in the New York district to change its inner orientation. Party discussions, lectures are well and good. But they must be directed towards convincing the masses. This does not characterize the work of our sections as yet. What is necessary for our sections is to begin to look more towards the masses, to concern themselves not only with what is happening in our Party, but what is happening amongst the masses, to become intimately acquainted with the problems of the workers in their particular territory; to become closely connected with the mass organizations, with the neighborhood organizations and to pick out those issues on the basis of which we can get into joint action with these organizations.

This is the best and most effective

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 meet in convincing your fellow workers regarding the need of building a Farmer-Labor Party.

tive way of laying the basis for the development of a Labor Party movement in the various sections, and in the city as a whole. Particularly, must our Party utilize the developing strike struggles of the workers as a means of building the united front with the Socialist Party and the trade union which will lead towards the development of a movement for a Labor Party.

When we examine the movement for a Labor Party in other cities, we will see that in most instances it originated around some strike struggle. A few weeks ago we read a joint statement in the Daily Worker issued by the Communist and Socialist Parties of Lynn, Mass. Both Parties, as well as other mass organizations in Lynn have come together in support of the shoe strike. In working for this strike, all elements involved have come to recognize that what is necessary is not only support in one strike or another, but united front for the development of a Labor Party which will be the best guarantee against mass terror and suppression of strikes, and for the organization of the unorganized.

Unfortunately, our sections in New York City with few exceptions, have not as yet learned how to utilize issues of this character. There is a strike now in progress in the May Department store. This strike is now in its ninth week. Although it involves no more than 100 workers, it has become a struggle around which some vital issues of the labor

movement are being fought out. The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce realizes what is at stake Brooklyn has been the center of the most rabid open shoppers. Numerous strikes have been broken in Brooklyn by the most sweeping injunctions and mass arrests. The Brooklyn workers are striving for organization. The May Department store strike has become the center of attention on the part of the workers. The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce realizes that a victory in the May strike will open the road for mass organization of the unorganized workers in Brooklyn.

They have dug up conspiracy laws that have been long dead, which they are trying to use to imprison the strikers and smash the strike, and if upheld by the courts this law will practically legalize strikes. Until very recently our Brooklyn sections have failed to realize the political significance of this strike, have failed to build the united front of the Socialists and trade unions in support of the May strike, and to utilize this strike as the rallying ground for a mass drive to defeat the terror regime of the courts and police of Brooklyn, and to undertake to convert the slogan issued by the last Party conference to make New York a Union town and building the Labor Party.

Other examples of a similar nature could be cited. The Queens Gas and Electric Company has launched an attack on the Brotherhood of

Utility Workers who in the recent period began to drift away from the company union, and organized a union of their own. They have taken the offensive against the union by dismissing the president and secretary and other active workers. The utility companies are the symbol of a handful of monopoly capital to the masses of workers in New York City. Even the most backward workers know that the utility companies have accumulated millions for the rich stockholders at the expense of the tolling population of New York City.

The workers have the full sympathy of the masses of the population. But this sympathy has to be organized, crystallized into a definite movement in support of the employees of the utility companies, as well as a movement for the reduction of the gas and electric rates that would relieve a heavy burden from the masses of workers in New York City.

A few months ago in similar situations in the Edison Company, LaGuardia helped to break and stem the strike movement. The workers are very resentful of LaGuardia.

Fail to Use Issues

Yet comrades, our Party has not fully utilized this situation to develop a united front movement of workers and consumers in support of this strike, and to show the workers that only a labor administration will back the struggle of the workers against the Utility trust.

Another example. The sales tax met with the greatest resentment on the part of the population of New York City. But because of the absence of an organized movement against it, LaGuardia's administration has been able to throw this burden on the shoulders of the workers in order to pay the bill of the bankers. The sales tax is to expire in June. Are we to wait until the bankers are ready to force its renewal. Why can we not begin to initiate a movement for the repeal of the sales tax now, which movement would mobilize such a large number of masses by the time June comes. The willing population of New York will defeat any further attempts to soak the poor in order to pay the rich.

The cost of living in New York City is mounting sky high, but there is not a semblance of a movement against the high cost of living. Surely, if there is any issue around which tens of thousands of workers could be rallied, if there is any issue around which we can build the broadest united front that will include all organizations, regardless of their present political alliance at this time, it is the high cost of living.

Unity with Socialists

The inner orientation of our Party, the insufficient mingling with the workers which would give us intimate knowledge of the burning issues occupying their minds is the one factor which accounts for the absence of a broad united front movement for a Labor Party in New York City and state.

The present developments in the Socialist Party opens the way for unity on many of these issues. The central difference between the Old Guard and the militants, when we look beyond the surface, is the question of the united front, the Labor Party and industrial unionism, etc. This brings the members of the Socialist Party, those that are aligned with the militants, as well as the rank and file workers who are still with the old guard, but who have joined forces in the united front in the trade unions, much closer to us, and opens greater possibilities for a mass campaign for a Labor Party ticket that will aim to wrest control of New York City from the bankers.

Some progress in this direction has been made in a number of sections, such as Queens where our comrades are developing a united front movement around discrimination against Negro workers, for support of the utility workers; in some of the Brooklyn sections around the current strikes, and around the issues of new school buildings; around the issues of the unemployed and relief workers; around the struggle against war and fascism, the struggle against Nazism, etc.

However, what we need in New York City is greater tempo and a Labor Party will become a rallying center for the millions of workers in New York City.