

Why a Labor Party?

by Herbert Zam

The anti-Tammany and Fusion campaigns in New York in particular and developments thruout the country in general once more, in one form or another, bring to the forefront the issue of a Labor Party.

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Sectarianism From Both Sides

In commenting on the results of last Presidential elections we pointed out that neither of the existing political parties inside the working class was able to serve as the means of crystallizing the great dissatisfaction of the workers with the capitalist parties on a definite working class basis. In the intervening months this point of view has been amply justified by events. But the Communist and Socialist Parties still remain callously indifferent to the needs of the workers on the parliamentary field—whether out of sectarian notions or anti-working class ideas is of no consequence in this discussion. The Communist Party, which formally dropped the idea of a Labor Party with the onset of the "third period" of sectarianism, has maintained the position that anything the working class does, without the previous instructions of the leaders of the party, is just too bad for the workers. The workers must act with and around the party or the party will condemn their actions. "Farmer-Laborism", that is, the growing desire of the workers and farmers for independent political action, is viewed by the C. P. leaders as a "great menace."

In essence, the Socialist Party has maintained the same attitude but covered with somewhat more diplomatic language. We have already discussed the sectarian policies of the Socialist Party on other fields. Recently we had perhaps the most striking example of this. The so-called Continental Congress (presumably called to inaugurate the second American revolution) passed in the typical sectarian manner—a united front around the party. True, it was bigger than the C. P.'s united fronts, because the Socialist Party has more influence in the trade unions and other labor organizations but it was not different in manner and method. What could the Continental Congress have done of positive value to the American workers and unemployed? There is obviously one thing which could have justified the birth of the C. C. and that is to stimulate and promote the movement for an independent political party of the workers and farmers based on their organizations. This is what thousands of workers wanted when they sent their delegates to this congress. This was the expressed desire of the farm organizations at the congress. This is what a large portion of the rank and file of the Social-

ist Party looked to in building the congress. But this is precisely the one thing the Continental Congress did not do. The ultra-reactionary wing of the S. P., led by Hillquit, declare in words that they are in favor of a Labor Party—if someone else builds it! When a Labor Party has come into existence, then they will stand ready to "cooperate" with it—that is, try to use it! This marks them as practical parasites, quite willing to use what others have produced but themselves unwilling to produce. Basically, this is a position against the Labor Party. This is the position of Green, Woll and Company. They do not dare to say that they will oppose a Labor Party after it is formed. But they do everything to oppose the formation of one and that determines their position.

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Labor Party Or Third Party

But the sentiment for a Labor Party, already fairly widespread, is bound to grow. With the Recovery Act placing the full power of the Federal government openly and directly behind the trusts, the workers and poor farmers will be compelled to look for a common weapon which they can use and which is compatible with their present political development, at least to endeavor to coordinate their resistance to the increasing encroachments of big capital in every walk of life. To believe that either the C. P. or the S. P. will be chosen, is to believe in miracles. Only the sectarians of the extreme right (Hillquit) and of the ultra-left (Browder) still retain the privilege of believing in miracles. To a realist, there is only one al-

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BROACH OUT FROM ELECTRICIANS

Washington, D. C.

H. H. Broach, the central object of the opposition movement in the ranks of the organized electrical workers, resigned his position as president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The resignation which took place on July 11, was explained as "due to ill health" but it is everywhere taken to be closely connected with the struggle inside of the union. W. Tracy of Houston, Texas, was selected by the union's executive council to succeed Broach.

Rumors of the pending resignation had been current in New York labor circles for several weeks in view of the sharpening of the struggle of the conservative officialdom of Local 3 against the growing progressive opposition movement in the local. The murder of Henry Godel, a leading militant, some three weeks before, had brought the situation to a climax. It is also hinted that Broach's resignation came as a result of pressure from William Green, head of the American Federation of Labor.

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ternative to a Labor Party—a third capitalist party. Whoever, in the ranks of the working class, is today in opposition to a Labor Party, is objectively helping the development of sentiment for a third bourgeois party, is playing into the hands of the old parties.

A glance at the unemployed organizations will provide a striking object lesson in this discussion. All shades of political opinion are found dominating the unemployed organizations. An appeal on a partisan basis to the unemployed organizations will result in increasing the disunity and not in promoting unity, which is today the greatest need. The instrument which can serve as one of the most effective means of unifying the actions of the unemployed workers and their organizations is the Labor Party. Out of the million or so workers organized in unemployed organizations and the many millions who are unorganized only a very small proportion are ready to support one of the existing working class parties. To offer them no other alternative means that they will remain supporters of the capitalist parties, or, what amounts to the same thing objectively, not participate in politics at all. Surely not even the "leftist" of the ultra-left will maintain that this is the way to develop the class consciousness of the backward unemployed workers.

In New York City, the Labor Party issue is at the present time being dramatized by the Fusion campaign. What is the answer of the workers to this? What is the answer of the C. P.? Of the S. P.? Is the ticket of the S. P. proposed as the means of combating the Fusion movement? Is the ticket of the C. P. a means of breaking the workers away from support of the capitalist parties? Is it not clear that, in the absence of a Labor ticket, of a Labor Party (in this specific case a United Labor Ticket), hundreds of thousands of workers and middle class elements will have no other alternative except to cast their votes for the Fusion candidate? (A Fusion candidate who, there is every reason to believe, will be a Tammany tool!) Just as in 1924 the La Follette movement represented a means of preventing independent political action by the workers and farmers, so today the Fusion movement is a means of preventing such action by the workers of New York. Just as in 1924 the means of fighting the La Follette movement was not by an independent party ticket (as the C.P. did) or by supporting La Follette (as was done by the S. P.) but by campaigning for a Labor Party, by setting up a ticket of the workers and farmers against the ticket of the old party politicians and small capitalists, so today either independent party tickets or support of the Fusion movement will play into the hands of the Tammany cohorts. Only a United Labor Ticket, including the political parties of the workers, the trade unions, the organizations of the unemployed, the fraternal organizations, can successfully present the demands of the working class as a whole against Tammany and against the Fusionists.

The New York situation is bound to repeat itself in a thousand cities and localities. Only the Labor Party offers a practical solution to this problem because the Labor Party is today the sole means of uniting all the workers in common, independent political action against the capitalists and their parties.