
Statement on Our Labor Party Policy, November 1923.

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1. The outstanding feature of the present political situation in America is that the great masses of industrial workers and exploited farmers are beginning to take their first determined steps in independent political action. The industrial workers are being driven to this course by the ever-growing oppression of the employers and the increased use of the centralized governmental powers against them in their struggles, while the farmers are forced into political action in their own behalf by the complete bankruptcy of agriculture. The two great groups of producers are being united in their fight against the common oppressor. This uprising of the workers and exploited farmers, and their combination for a joint struggle, is of tremendous significance in the development of the class struggle in America.

2. The participation of the industrial workers in this movement is an instinctive, elementary expression of their awakening class consciousness. The growing labor party is not an artificial creation but on the contrary it is the natural, healthy reaction of the workers to the pressure of their environment. It is a profound rank and file movement, steadily gaining in scope despite the opposition of the labor bureaucracy. Gompers and all his reactionaries are unable to block the expanding movement. Likewise, reactionary leaders of the farmers are being swept aside.

3. Many labor unions, representing a large section of the organized workers, have already declared in favor of the labor party. Two of the most important additions to the list recently are the Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers' Union, and the Iron Molders' Union, both of which have long been noted as among the most

conservative unions in America. The West Virginia State Federation of Labor, within the past couple of months, has decided by unanimous vote to organize a state labor party. The farmers and workers of Minnesota are the backbone of the Farmer-Labor Party which has already elected two United States Senators. Similar parties are now being organized in a series of states, such as California, Montana, Utah, etc. All signs lead to the conclusion that a mass labor party, based on the trade unions and farmers organizations, is in process of formation.

4. The fate of the Workers Party is bound up with this mass movement of the rank and file workers and farmers towards a labor party. Our policy on this question is of supreme importance. With the right policy, especially while the mass movement is just taking shape, our party can drive forward rapidly to a position of leadership over wide masses of awakening workers. On the other hand, a wrong policy will isolate our party from this mass movement and condemn it to sterility.

5. We see three tasks for the Workers Party in this situation:

(1) To develop and unify the labor party sentiment, and help it to take organized form, locally and nationally;

(2) To defeat the efforts of liberal bourgeois politicians and their labor and farmer henchmen to divert the genuine labor party sentiment into a nondescript third party;

(3) To permeate the labor party movement with Communist ideas and to strengthen the Workers Party, morally and organizationally.

Our Labor Party Campaign.

6. Before the organization of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, on July 3-4-5, 1923, our labor party policy, as we declared many times, was simply the application of the united front policy of the Communist International. This policy was absolutely correct, and so long as we held to it we made great headway. Our campaign for a united front labor party met with a wide response. We drove the labor party movement forward and our party advanced along with it, gaining great prestige. The united front policy enabled us to penetrate deeper into the labor movement than ever before and to establish our comrades in many strategic positions. The united front labor party, along with amalgamation, was the most dynamic issue in our hands, and the most powerful weapon against the reactionaries. Under this slogan the left wing was on the offensive and advancing all along the line.

7. The united front labor party policy was the basis of an effective alliance between the Communists and the progressive trade unionists, with the Communists everywhere furnishing the driving force of the powerful combination. The alliance was of the greatest advantage to us, yet to maintain it we did not have to give up anything in principle. It yielded the maximum that any united front arrangement can ever yield to our party. We were able to broaden the mass movement of the rank and file, strengthen the position of the Workers Party, and throw an ever-increasing force against the Gompers machine. The program of the alliance was our own program. We were turning the whole fire against the reactionaries and widening the breach between them and the progressives, and we had complete freedom of independent party action.

8. This united front policy, which proved so successful, not only to the labor party movement as such, but especially to the Workers Party, practically came to an end with the formation of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party. The July conference was called upon the initiative of the Farmer-Labor Party, of which the Chicago Federation of Labor was the controlling group. The policy of the majority of the WP Central Executive Committee towards this conference was entirely wrong and inevitably led to the split which there took place. The situation was a very delicate one. Many factors contributed to make this so. The growing activi-

ties of the Communists prompted the Gompers machine to bring strong pressure to bear upon the progressive elements in Chicago, and the latter showed unmistakable signs of weakening. But the contention that this attack of Gompers would have brought about the split anyway between the Communists and progressives is unjustified. Gompers' opposition to the passage of the amalgamation resolution by the Chicago Federation a year earlier was far more intense and determined than his attack upon the labor party move, and he came to Chicago to lead the fight against it personally, but the Communist-progressive bloc stood unbroken against him. In fact the attack of the Gompers machine has not yet succeeded in splitting the alliance of the Communists with the progressives in other centers, such as Minneapolis, Buffalo, Detroit, etc., where the Federated Farmer-Labor Party issue has not been pressed by us.

The False Policy of the CEC.

9. Nevertheless, the situation in Chicago was critical. The danger of a split was manifest weeks before the July 3 Conference. This should have prompted the CEC to use extreme care to prevent such an eventuality. They were given adequate warning that the Farmer-Labor Party was weakening under the attacks of Gompers and the refusal of the Socialist Party and the large International unions to participate in the conference, and that a careful and conciliatory attitude would be necessary to hold the alliance together. But the majority of the CEC turned a deaf ear to all appeals for caution. It was animated by a false policy which was a deciding factor in causing the split of July 3. This policy, which is endangering our whole movement, was based upon two misconceptions: first, an overestimation of the tempo of revolutionary development; second, a greatly exaggerated idea of the present strength of the Communist forces.

10. Guided by this policy, the majority of the CEC drove headlong toward the split of July 3. Its attitude towards the FLP was hostile and intransigent; the discussions in the CEC at this time were so belligerent towards the FLP that one would believe that this organization was our bitterest enemy. In the critical days before the conference, the CEC's negotiations with the FLP were casual, inadequate, and most un-

satisfactory. It went into the conference without any real understanding with the progressive leaders as to what was to be done, and thus left the door wide open for a split. The CEC, which was located in New York 1,000 miles away, had no confidence in the comrades located in Chicago, the headquarters city of the FLP, and refused to appoint a single one of them on the negotiations committee, notwithstanding their intimate knowledge of the situation. Proceeding upon the assumption that either the FLP had to go along with the immediate formation of the Federated Party, or that it would not matter if they did not, the CEC practically forced the issue and burned its bridges behind it. It rejected the compromise proposal of the FLP, made weeks before the conference, that the organization of the Federated Party be deferred until the movement could take on more volume, and that for this purpose the conference organize an affiliation committee to which the Workers Party could be affiliated. Acceptance of this proposal would have meant that the Workers Party could have continued to pursue the policy that had proved so successful in the preceding months pending the time when the Federated Party could have been launched under more favorable conditions. The statement of the majority in their August Theses that the break with the FLP could have been avoided only by sacrificing the role of leadership of the Workers Party in the fight for the idea of the labor party, and by the betrayal of the confidence of the rank and file, was a gratuitous assumption and not borne out by the actual situation. The fact is that the Political Committee of the CEC voted unanimously on October 30, 1923, almost four months after the July 3 conference, to accept a practically identical affiliation committee arrangement in connection with the proposed national labor party movement initiated by Minnesota. The trouble was that the CEC had committed itself completely to the slogan of "Organize the Federated Farmer-Labor Party on July 3, or betray the working class." The inevitable result of this intransigent attitude, in view of the delicate situation, was the split at the conference.

11. To condemn the CEC for the split on July 3, it is not necessary to defend the Farmer-Laborites. Their actions throughout were weak, hesitating, and inconsistent, and, at the crucial moment, treacherous. But such qualities are characteristic of centrist elements,

especially such weak centrists as the American "progressives," and must be taken into account in all our dealings with them. This does not change the fact that alliance with them is of the greatest value to us at the present time. The combination of the Communists with the progressives is a historic necessity in the struggle to overthrow the Gompers machine and build the labor party. To split with them on the grounds that they are not good revolutionary militants is to reject the idea of alliance of the Communists with other elements in the labor movement, and to repudiate entirely the principle of the united front.

Results of the July 3 Split.

12. Since the formation of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party the situation has been radically changed. We have departed from the principle of the united front and have gotten onto a sectarian basis in the national labor party movement. Our former offensive fight for the labor party, consequently, has been turned into a defensive struggle wherever the Federated Farmer-Labor Party has been made the issue of the fight. Wherever we raise the issue of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party we are immediately confronted with a split. The drastic effects of this are shown, for example, in Chicago and the state of Illinois, which was the center of the Farmer-Labor Party movement and where the split is definitely accomplished. In this district, which was once our chief stronghold, our alliance with the progressives has been broken. We have lost the issue of the united front labor party and are fighting now for our own labor party, the Federated. As a consequence our comrades are largely isolated, and face a united front of all other elements against them. In the Chicago Federation of Labor and, to a great extent in the Illinois Federation of Labor, the controlling element was a bloc of Communists and progressives against the reactionaries in support of many immediate slogans of the Communists. Today, however, these bodies present the spectacle of a united front against the Communists and against the entire program of the Communists. Our position has been weakened and that of the reactionaries immeasurably strengthened. The progressive program, industrial as well as political, is defeated, and the progressives are forced into the arms of the reactionaries and subordi-

nated to them. Since the July 3 split the leadership of Fitzpatrick has been practically destroyed through his retreat to the right. His position as leader is being taken, not by a stronger progressive or by a Communist, but by Oscar Nelson, an agent of Gompers. The Chicago Federation of Labor, once the leader of the opposition movement in the AFL, is again fast becoming a stronghold of the Gompers machine. The body which refused by unanimous vote to criticize the Soviet government for the prosecution of the Social Revolutionaries (a criticism in which even Debs joined) is no longer a friend of Soviet Russia. For the first time in many years its sessions are marked by hysterical attacks upon revolutionaries, customary in other AFL organizations. The policy of the majority of the CEC in dealing with the FLP has entrenched the reactionaries and isolated the Communists. A similar policy in dealing with the progressives in other labor party centers will produce similar results.

13. The sweeping advance that the Communists were making under the united front policy in the Chicago unions, and the heavy losses that followed the abandonment of it, are graphically illustrated in the following table, given in the report of the Chicago

District Executive Committee. The delegates referred to in the table as "non-party" are not the Fitzpatrick group but are left wing delegates that went the whole way with the Communists. [See below.]

14. The harmful effects of the July 3 split have been manifested in many ways. Despite the fact that, due to the primarily local character of the FLP, the split did not spread organizationally throughout the country, nevertheless the apparent break of the Communists with the progressive wing of the labor movement emboldened the reactionaries for a great counteroffensive against the Communists, which continues to be one of the most pronounced features of the present labor situation. The administration of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union commenced their drive to break up the TUEL immediately after the July 3 split. They centered their fight in Chicago and found their ablest assistants in the Fitzpatrick group, our erstwhile allies. The opposition to the League and its policies has greatly intensified since that time. A striking illustration of this was the Decatur convention of the Illinois Federation of Labor. The AFL bureaucracy rallied all its forces to beat the Communists there. The struggle was of national significance.

	Delegates from Unions		# of Local Unions	Total Membership
	Party	Non-Party		
WP United Front Conference, May 1, 1922	6	6	8	2,500
FLP Cook County Convention, Oct. 1922	12	10	17	9,000
FLP Cook County Convention, Jan. 1923	19	15	24	12,000
WP United Front Conference, May 1, 1923	22	11	26	17,000
FLP Cook County Convention, June 10, 1923	33	38	45	25,000
National Conference, Chicago, July 3-4-5, 1923	55	45	51	40,000
Affiliated to Federated FLP, July 3 to Oct. 30, 1923			6	2,500

Had there been no July 3 split, the Gompers machine would have had to confront a Communist-progressive bloc strong enough to have defeated or checked it. But as it was, the Communists were almost completely isolated and the Gompers machine, in conjunction with the progressives, rode roughshod over the Communists and turned what should have been a progressive convention into one of the most reactionary conventions in recent years. The climax of the "anti-red" drive came in the spectacular attacks upon the Communists and the expulsion of William F. Dunne at the Portland convention of the AFL.

The Failure of the Federated.

15. Since the July 3 conference the Federated Farmer-Labor Party has proved itself a failure and has discredited the CEC theory which brought it into being. Immediately after the conference, and proceeding upon the assumption that the FFLP was a real mass labor party, the CEC ordered all its connections to secure immediate affiliations to the FFLP. This policy resulted in so many defeats for our militants in the unions that the CEC was compelled to abandon it as a mandatory policy and to adopt, two or three weeks later, the following alternative policies: (1) affiliation with the FFLP, (2) endorsement of the FFLP, (3) sending of delegates to the coming January convention of the FFLP. This second elastic policy has fared little better than the first. In practice it has been proved virtually impossible to even raise the question of the FFLP.

16. The record of our activities in the main labor party centers shows that we have been compelled to abandon the whole FFLP program, although it is still retained in the theory of the majority. The complete domination and control of the FFLP by the Communists could not remain a secret of our own. It gave an excellent weapon into the hands of our enemies and they were not slow to take advantage of it. The combined attack launched against the FFLP by the capitalist press, the labor bureaucracy, the Socialists, and the Farmer-Laborites, has succeeded in branding it before the labor movement as merely another name for the Workers Party. When we fight for it, therefore, our enemies are able to take the issue of the labor party out of our hands and fight the FFLP on the issue of

the Communist International. The result is that labor organizations which are ready for the labor party, but which are not ready openly to join a party definitely labeled "Communist," do not join it. The great bulk of the rank and file delegates who attended the July 3 conference have not been able to affiliate their organizations to the FFLP, or even to endorse or to send delegates to its coming convention. We are told that the organization of anything short of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party on July 3 would have meant a betrayal of the rank and file. But we have seen how, in actual practice, one of the two following results of its formation almost invariably occurred: either the delegates themselves, frightened by the terrific attack and the united front against them, changed their minds about the question, or they were repudiated by their organizations. We captured the delegates for three days, but we did not capture their organizations for the FFLP. The claim that the FFLP is a mass party with approximately 600,000 members has absolutely no foundation in fact.

17. The campaign to affiliate the important organizations represented at the conference met with decisive defeat all along the line. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers withdrew during the conference; likewise large sections of miners. The West Virginia Federation of Labor has since formed a state labor party, but it would not entertain the question of affiliation to or endorsement of the FFLP. In the friendly Detroit Federation of Labor — with the administration supporting us — we were defeated by a vote of 2 to 1. In Buffalo, where our comrades hold leading positions in the local labor party, they cannot afford to even raise the issue of the FFLP, because the issue would certainly split that body. Practically all of the Farmer-Labor Party delegates who came over to us at the conference have been repudiated by their own organizations: this is the case in Ohio, Kentucky, and other places; even the FLP of the state of Washington has not been affiliated to the FFLP. Practically the only organizations to join the FFLP are unions directly under Communist leadership. Vague endorsements and promises to send delegates to the next convention of the FFLP are the best we have been able to do even in the places where we are strongest. None of the important organizations represented at the July 3 conference has joined the FFLP with the single exception of

the Los Angeles Labor Party, and the affiliation there represents a real danger to us. It exposes our comrades to the next onslaught of the Gompers machine, in such a way that they will not be able to fight upon the issue of the labor party which would unite the rank and file behind them, but on the issue of the FFLP, which will divide the rank and file. Our single victory thus paves the way to a future defeat.

18. The places where the labor party sentiment is most developed and has taken organized form are precisely the places where the FFLP has the least possibility to gain affiliations. This is strikingly illustrated by the case of Minnesota. In the Farmer-Labor Federation convention there, our comrades, notwithstanding their strong position, won by their careful and systematic work, could not even mention the question of affiliation to or endorsement of the FFLP, and the mild proposal to send delegates to the January convention had to be withdrawn without being put to a vote, so strong was the prejudice against the FFLP. Farmer-Labor parties are now being formed in California, Utah and Montana, but the non-Communist elements participating in their organization will not go along with the FFLP and an attempt to force affiliation means a split. The CEC does not dare now to propose a fight to affiliate any of these local or state mass labor parties to the Federated unless it is ready to say openly that it wants to split these parties. The splitting of the labor party forces throughout the country and the isolation of the Communists, as in Chicago, is prevented only because the majority, while stubbornly clinging to its exploded theory of organizing the FFLP as a mass labor party, does not attempt to apply it concretely in the real centers of the labor party movement. The "elastic tactics" of the CEC majority have meant the practical abandonment of their theory in every case of real importance. In the face of this record of failure with the FFLP, the August Theses of the CEC majority appear ridiculous and show complete inability to estimate the situation when it says: "In a whole series of cities and states we can immediately organize the FFLP." Equally absurd is the attempt to establish an "alibi" with the charge of sabotage within the party.

19. Driven out of the main centers of the labor party movement, the majority theory is now trying to find a footing for the FFLP as a mass party by organizing branches in "unoccupied territory"; and it claims a

victory for the theory for a special Communist labor party in New York City, where we have organized a group of Communist-controlled unions as a branch of the FFLP in opposition to the American Labor Party. But this tactic will not stand analysis. The FFLP is a positive handicap to our work even in this restricted field. In New York City there is not a natural labor party movement springing up from the trade unions. The American Labor Party of New York City was merely an attempt of the Socialist Party to appropriate the labor party idea and to adapt it to its own special interests; it is based upon the conception of a special labor party organized around a particular group, being a collection of SP-controlled unions and SP branches, with the latter dominating absolutely. We very properly attacked the American Labor Party at its conception as a caricature of the bona fide labor party movement. The organization of the FFLP in New York City is merely an imitation of the Socialist Party tactic, but it is not the best way to fight the SP in New York City. As a fighting measure against the Socialists to force the admission of the WP into the Labor Party, it is proper in the case of New York City to organize our trade union forces into a local labor party. The slogan by which we fight the SP in New York City should be: "Unity of both labor parties into one organization." This fight can be more effective if our labor party there is not a branch of the FFLP, but a separate unaffiliated local party. If we lay aside the issue of national affiliation entirely for the time being, the slogan of unity will be a powerful weapon in our hands and we can eventually succeed with it. The SP theory of special labor parties controlled by the various political groups is a theory which is incorporated in the August Theses of the CEC majority.

20. As for the "unoccupied territory," here too the FFLP is a source of weakness rather than of strength. In such places as Washington County, Pennsylvania, where we have organized a branch of the FFLP, we are laying the young movement open to attacks from the reactionaries on grounds most favorable to them. They will be able to attack the newly formed party, not on the broad issue of the labor party, where we can well afford to meet them, but on the narrow issue of the FFLP being a Communist party. It can be put down for a certainty, on the basis of abundant experience already accumulated, that many unions,

which join the party before the fight develops because they really stand for a labor party, will weaken under this attack and either withdraw or develop a split. Where it is possible to organize a branch of the FFLP, it is possible in almost every case to organize a much larger body of workers into an unaffiliated local or state party in which our influence and control would be strong and of much more value to us. The same forces that drove the FFLP from the organized centers of the labor party movement will also inevitably drive it from the unorganized fields which the majority of the CEC now want it to invade. The place for the FFLP is neither here nor there.

FFLP as Liability to the WP.

21. Besides being a failure as a mass party, the FFLP is a positive handicap, as at present conceived, to all phases of the WP work for the labor party. For one thing it is a heavy drain on the funds and energies of the WP and exercises a distinct liquidation tendency upon the latter. Practically all the work done for it has to be done by our members at the expense of the WP. Our trained workers are very few, and our financial resources are already strained to the breaking point. They should both be conserved for the most vital propaganda and agitational activity of the WP, and we should aim to put upon the broader movement the task of finding most of the administrative forces and their upkeep. Every man taken from party work for the FFLP diminishes the forces of the WP. The funds we have been already obliged to contribute necessitate the neglect of party undertakings. We cannot go ahead on this basis. With our small party and limited resources, such small items as the foregoing become very important. We can do some of the work to make the labor party, but we cannot do all of it. We can donate our share of the funds, but we cannot subsidize the whole enterprise. In most of its present functions, the FFLP is a rival of the WP. The identity of the WP in the labor party movement is submerged in the FFLP, and to the extent that the FFLP is pushed into the foreground, the WP has to be pushed into the background. The sending of a trained party worker into Oklahoma, for example, to organize the FFLP before the WP is organized there, means that all our potential forces there will be diverted from our proper task

of first founding the WP. We hold that our most important revolutionary task is the building of a mass Communist party, based upon individual membership, which is the WP. The building of a labor party not only must not interfere with, but must directly assist, this process. The August Theses of the majority point out that a Communist party based on individual membership is far superior to a party based on the loose affiliation of trade unions, yet this same thesis and the practice of the CEC contradictorily tends to sabotage the WP, the real Communist party based upon individual membership, for the sake of their proposed mass Communist Party based upon loosely affiliated trade unions.

22. A further disadvantage of the FFLP to the WP is that the former prevents the latter from getting proper credit for our work in the establishment of the labor party movement. In almost all the local and state parties springing up throughout the country, the Communists are actually doing the bulk of the organization work and acting as the driving force. But our party is getting little or no credit for it with the masses, and it does not stand out as the leader. The result is a great loss of prestige for us, which is an essential element for the building of our party. The reason for this failure to get credit for the work we are doing is that nationally we stand committed to the FFLP, whereas the local and state parties that we are organizing are unaffiliated to the FFLP and their failure to affiliate gives all the appearance of being a defeat for us. In the eyes of the masses the FFLP stands for the split idea. Its existence as a separate party brings upon us all the hostile criticism that naturally is directed against the split policy in a situation that so clearly demands the united front policy. Thus we are in the anomalous position of actually building the labor party throughout the country, while our enemies are able to point to the FFLP which is our special charge, and accuse us of being a stumbling block in the way of the formation of the labor party.

23. The August Theses make the argument that the FFLP can be developed into a mass Communist party. There is no foundation for such an assertion. The conditions for the building of a mass Communist party are the existence of a closely knit Communist nucleus operating within the broadest mass organizations of the workers, permeating them with its

doctrines and sweeping the most advanced of them into its ranks. The WP is such a Communist nucleus, and the naturally developing labor party movement is such a mass organization. By working within this mass organization and pushing it forward, the WP is bound to expand and extend its influence. The organization of the FFLP does not facilitate this development, but interferes with it. Wherever it takes organizational form it separates the Communists and their closest sympathizers from the main body of the movement and creates the conditions for a sectarian Communist party controlling a sectarian labor party. The argument that the FFLP will become a mass Communist party is an abandonment of the theory expounded in the same theses, that it will become a mass labor party. It can be neither the one nor the other.

Conflict Between Theory and Practice.

24. In addition to the conflicting theories within the August Theses of the CEC majority, there is a flat contradiction between the labor party theory and practice followed since July 3. The theory of the majority that the Communists alone, in the present stage of the class struggle in America, can and should organize and control a mass labor party of their own — the theory that is crystallized in the FFLP — is the theory of splitting with the progressives in the labor party movement, a split which would inevitably spread to all phases of our activities in the labor movement. But this splitting theory runs so counter to the crying needs of the present situation that the CEC does not dare apply it in practice. Due, however, to its theoretical confusion, the whole time and effort of the CEC has to be devoted from week to week in the various labor party developments to the effort to twist the prevailing splitting theory into realistic practical applications of the united front principle. The whole committee is thus paralyzed between the tendency, inherent in the theory of the majority, to extend the split in the labor party movement, and the conscious struggle of the opposition to prevent it. The outcome is that the splitting theory is not being put into practice in spite of the theory to the contrary. This basic conflict between the practice and theory of the CEC is destroying the morale of the party and its capacity for straight thinking. The comrades in Minnesota, for example, are told that

they are following the theory behind the organization of the FFLP, when it is obvious that the instructions given to them by the CEC amount to a complete repudiation of that theory insofar as the Minnesota situation is concerned. The adoption of the CEC theory, which is fundamentally a theory of splitting, to the requirements of the concrete situations, where we do not dare to put it into practice for fear of outlawing our comrades in the labor movement and destroying their influence — and where, therefore, the majority is compelled to accept the program of the opposition — necessitates so much sophistry and self-deception that a general state of confusion prevails throughout the party. An even worse feature of this confusion between theory and practice is that the CEC is constantly confronted with practical situations which it must conform to in spite of its contrary theory, and to adopt makeshift solutions. The effect of this is to entirely deprive the party of the initiative which comes from a correct theoretical grasp of the problems and which would provide a uniform policy in regard to them. A correct theory must give us the initiative and leadership in the labor party movement, while the present confusion compels us to follow after and fit into the developing movement. The sum and substance of the practice of the CEC since the July 3 conference is a retreat from the split policy set up by its theory, to a begrudging and ill-understood practice of the united front principle. The only remedy is the complete rejection of the disastrous split theory, and the unification of our theory and practice by the adoption of a clear-cut united front policy.

Preventing the Spread of the Split.

25. The CEC majority claims that the split between the Communists and progressives has already taken place throughout the country and that we proceed upon that basis. But this is not the case. It is true that the split of July 3 has taken full effect in Chicago and the state of Illinois, but it has not yet spread to other important centers. The reason for this is that the Farmer-Labor Party, as a tightly knit organization, was restricted pretty much to the state of Illinois, and for the split to take place elsewhere it was necessary that the issue of the FFLP should be pressed in those centers. This the CEC has not ventured to do. Had the

FLP been a really national party the Communists would have been isolated all over the country as they now are in Chicago. The splendid position we have gained in Minnesota is clearly the result of the united front policy we have followed there of working within the broad labor party movement and not as a separate party. This policy in Minnesota produced three good results:

(1) It has the effect of uniting and strengthening the labor party against its enemies; it was demonstrated that even a small group of Communists can play a very important role in steering the labor party along the right course and protecting it against disintegration.

(2) Our policy enabled the Communists to penetrate deeply into the movement and entrench themselves in strategic positions from which it will be difficult to dislodge them; the prestige of the WP rose greatly and many valuable new members were added to our ranks.

The third result of our tactic in Minnesota was to bind the progressive elements closer to us, and to bring them nearer to the left position; Mahoney and Cramer, for example, who stood far apart from us only a few months ago, are working hand in hand with us today. The *Minneapolis Labor Review* and the *Minnesota Labor Advocate* are outspokenly defending the Communists against the attacks of the Gompers machine. The wavering of Cramer a few months ago was sufficient for the theses of the majority of the CEC to say he had gone to the right and united with Gompers and to accept this as a working basis. There is no doubt that we could have made a complete split with him and other progressives there, just as we did in Chicago, if we had not used the most careful tactics to avoid it. The results in Minnesota strengthened our position while the results in Chicago weakened it, because in the former case we used the united front tactic and in the latter the splitting theory of the majority of the CEC.

26. It was possible to avoid the split in Minnesota only because we did not raise the issue of the FFLP. The same thing is true of practically every other labor party center. We have had to choose in each case between the unity of the labor party forces on the one hand, and the organization of the sectarian FFLP, carrying with it our isolation, on the other. Fortunately

in most cases, so far, the CEC has been constrained to violate its theory and sacrifice the FFLP. But this has put us in the anomalous position of claiming to have a national labor party without trying to give it an organizational base in the main labor party centers where the movement is best developed. Such a position is untenable. The FFLP cannot be a real party unless it gains the affiliation of local and state parties, and it cannot fight for this affiliation without breaking our alliance with the progressive elements and thus splitting the labor party movement. The continuance of our efforts to organize the FFLP as a separate labor party renders our whole position unstable. It holds the constant menace of a needless and disastrous split between the Communists and the progressives in their fight against the Gompers machine. This standing threat of a split weakens the influence of our militants everywhere in the labor party movement and demoralizes the movement itself.

27. To spread the Chicago split throughout the country would be the greatest disaster to our party. The class struggle in America has not developed to the point, and the issues are not of such a nature, that the Communists must fight alone against the entire field. We can profitably leave that conception to the SLP. Gompers' tactic is to isolate the Communists, to have them standing alone, in order that he may expel them from the labor movement before they get a strong footing there. Our Communist forces are as yet but few and scattered. The period of "collecting the Communist forces" is not finished in America; it is only beginning. Our members in the trade unions have had but little experience in realistic trade union work, and they are only now beginning to establish themselves in the labor movement. In the face of the tremendous offensive of Gompers against us, and with our forces so weak and inexperienced, it would be little less than criminal folly for us deliberately to break the alliance with the progressive trade unionists who are inclined to stand with us in the immediate fight for the issues which we ourselves proclaim. Under the very best conditions we are in a position where the most careful strategy is necessary. The split with the progressives would play right into the hands of Gompers. Not only would it compromise the labor party fight, but it would lead to the wholesale expulsion of the Communists from the trade unions, and shatter the left wing move-

ment in the trade unions which only now, for the first time in the history of America, is taking an organized and conscious form. For us it is a life and death question to organize as wide a bloc as possible in the trade unions for the fight against the Gompers machine. The CEC opposition will fight against the needless split with the progressives and against any policy that leads to it at this time, with all its power. The FFLP as now conceived represents a theory that makes for this split, and that is one of the many reasons why we must give up the idea of attempting to organize it as a separate labor party.

The Labor Party Movement in America.

28. The attempt to transfer European labor party analogies to America is bound to lead us astray for the simple reason that there is no real analogy. The labor party movement in America, rising out of conditions that have no counterpart anywhere else in the world, is developing along lines marked out for it by the peculiar American situation. The course of its own natural development is indicted by the experience so far. This experience completely blasts the Socialist Party theory that the labor party will be organized from the top by the labor bureaucracy. And it likewise disposes of the made-to-order theory that it can be artificially imposed from the top by a prematurely formed national organization under the control of the Communists. The existence at the present time of "our own" labor party — the FFLP — does not arise out of the normal course of events; it is the result of our own misconceptions and foolish maneuverings.

29. The basic labor party movement in America as it has developed thus far reveals the following characteristics: (1) it is organizing from the bottom on a local and state basis; (2) it is a real mass movement of the rank and file and not simply the artificial creation of politicians; (3) it is almost uniformly a combination of city workers and farmers, with a sprinkling of the middle class elements who invariably attach themselves to all such movements.

30. The labor party movement in America is a united front movement and we must return to that platform. We dispute the contention of the CEC majority that the normal development of the labor party movement is the growth of a number of competing

labor parties under the control of rival political groups. We must abandon the idea of trying to maintain a labor party of our own which is definitely labeled as a Communist organization, and become again the champions of the mass labor party, the united front labor party. The genuine labor party, as we see it developing in the various centers, is based on the trade unions, workers' political parties, and farmers' organizations. It is essentially a mass party, and a strong class sentiment among the rank and file workers in the given city or state is a necessary condition precedent to its formation. The attempt to mechanically measure the possibilities of local organization by an arbitrary ratio of ten workers to one member of the WP puts the whole question of the labor party upon an artificial basis and disregards entirely the essentially united front character of the labor party. The organization of premature and artificial labor parties, as the theses of the majority virtually propose, makes a caricature out of the very idea of the labor party and runs the danger of discrediting it. The Workers Party cannot assume the responsibility for such undertakings without injuring its standing in the eyes of the workers. As against the theory of conflicting labor parties controlled by the rival political groups, we advocate the mass labor party organized on a united front basis.

31. One of the fundamental errors of the CEC majority is their confusion in the use of the term "left wing," which occurs all through their conception. On the one hand, they state that only the "left wing" elements will comprise the labor party at its inception, which is correct if we bear in mind that these elements represent a broad "left wing" from the standpoint of the labor movement as a whole. On the other hand, they consider the FFLP as synonymous with this broad "left wing," which is incorrect, as the FFLP is only the revolutionary section of that left wing. In other words, the organizational basis of the "left wing" which goes to make up the labor party is much wider than the "left wing" which is found in the FFLP. The former is composed of workingmen and farmers from the mildest progressives to the most advanced revolutionaries, while the latter consists almost entirely of revolutionary elements. The one is a united front organization and the other is a revolutionary group. A striking illustration of the fact that the "left wing" which naturally makes up the labor party movement is much

broader than the "left wing" which comprises the FFLP is to be found in Minnesota. There the Farmer-Labor Federation is so much more conservative than the FFLP that it will not even affiliate with the latter. The same condition prevails in West Virginia and other centers. The policy of trying to build the labor party on the basis of the narrow "left wing," which is found in the FFLP, instead of the broad "left wing" which is always found in the labor party movement wherever it has taken an organized mass character, is a sectarian policy that leads directly to the isolation of the Communists. To speak of the broad movement of workers and exploited farmers which stands for the class party as the "left wing" and then to use the same term interchangeably, as the CEC majority constantly does, to describe the forces of the FFLP, is to presuppose an identity between the two which does not exist.

32. Our position is not based on the assumption that the entire labor movement must join the labor party at once, or that even a majority is necessary. But we hold that wherever it is formed, it must unite the labor party forces and have a genuine mass character. We want it to be organized upon as broad a base as possible with as large a mass of workers as can be gotten together upon the issue of a labor party, and not merely those who can be organized on the issue of Communism which is raised by the FFLP. Our militants should endeavor to take a leading part in all these mass parties, entrench themselves in strategic positions and lead the workers by degrees to the platform of Communism.

33. Neither do we expect the reactionary leaders to form the labor party. It has to be done by a bloc of the radical and progressive workers in which the Communists are the driving force. It is essentially a rank and file movement and our aim should be to gradually extend the Communist influence and leadership in it, and at the same time to preserve its mass character. Communists in America, at this stage of development, thrive best within a broader mass movement and especially within a mass labor party. It is foolish for us to form a little labor party of our own in order to be the leaders of it.

34. Important as the revolt of the bankrupt farmers is in the present political situation, and necessary as it is that a close alliance be cemented between the exploited farmers and the industrial workers, there is a

great danger in the tendency, displayed by the CEC majority, to base their labor party policy upon the farmers' revolt, and to relegate the role of the industrial workers to second place. In Oklahoma, for example, it disregarded the organized workers and based its decision to organize the FFLP there upon fragmentary information of the farmers' unrest; whereas further investigation, urged by the opposition, has shown that even in this agricultural state the organized workers in the State Federation of Labor are now making the most significant move for independent working class political action, by taking the initiative in a statewide conference of all labor party forces. A similar tendency is manifested in the consideration of the labor party problem in other states. It is a fundamental of a sound labor party policy that the organized industrial workers, particularly in our present historical stage, shall occupy the leading position and be the organizational and ideological basis for the labor party. We must keep our eye on Pittsburgh as well as Fargo.

35. It is incorrect to raise the question of a conflict of interest between the Workers Party and the labor party as such, as the CEC majority does. At the present stage of class development in America the formation of a mass labor party represents a revolutionary advance on the part of the working class. The breaking away from the capitalist parties and the entrance into politics under their own standard signifies nothing less than the awakening of class consciousness on the part of the workers. It represents their conscious entry into political life and consequently increases their receptivity to Communist propaganda and agitation. Above all it offers to the Communists a tremendous opportunity to entrench themselves among the masses and to seize positions of leadership. The experiences in Buffalo, Los Angeles, Minnesota and elsewhere demonstrate that the mass labor party provides the very best field for the operations of the Communists. In Minnesota the organization of the Farmer-Labor Federation gave the Workers Party the opportunity for the greatest advances in its history in that section, despite the fact that it has not yet been admitted to the Federation as an organization. The formation of the labor party means political activity for the workers. In Minnesota we have seen that this political activity gave the Communists the opportunity to penetrate deeply into the labor movement in a very short time, and

there cannot be a doubt that if the comrades in Minnesota continue their present realistic work and are guided by a sound united front policy, they will in good time succeed in permeating the entire movement with the ideas of Communism. The Workers Party will not only gain admittance to the Farmer-Labor Federation, but it will become the leader of it. The labor party movement is not a danger in itself to the Communist movement, but a tremendous opportunity for it. The danger lies only in our adopting a wrong policy towards it.

36. The labor party sentiment is at once the most healthy current in the American labor movement, and the most dynamic issue in the hands of the Communists. It is the issue by which the Gompers machine can be smashed and the ground broken for the leadership of the Communists. It is the greatest folly for us to caricature this basic issue and reduce it to a sectarian or factional basis. When we set up our own labor party we lose the main issue entirely. Our enemies are able to wave the red flag and scare the mass of immature rank and file workers away from us. The working masses are not yet ready to rally to the standard of Communism openly displayed in definitely labeled Communist organizations, but ample experience proves that they will accept Communist leadership in mass labor parties. Under the slogan of the labor party we can organize them and lead them into conflicts which will inevitably sharpen their understanding and draw them closer to a consciously revolutionary attitude.

37. The CEC majority falsely put the question this way, "Shall we assume leadership?" and try to make it appear that the opposition is based upon defeatism and lack of confidence in the party. This is nonsense. The real question is, "How shall we assume leadership?" There is only one way to gain the leadership of the masses, and that is to push ourselves and our doctrines deeply into their ranks. We can lead large masses now, but we cannot do it by setting up our own organization and calling them into it. Such a procedure presupposes a highly developed consciousness among the masses that does not yet exist. The setting up of a separate labor party organization, such as the FFLP, known to all the world as the special party of the Communists, breaks our connections with the half-awakened masses and defeats our efforts for leadership. What

the CEC opposition wants is not simply leadership of our own organizations, but leadership of the masses. And since the masses will not come to us and join our labor party, our policy is to go to them and join forces with them in a broad labor party and gain leadership of it. The question of Communist contact with the masses of workers is inseparable from the question of Communist leadership. The road to leadership does not lead through the swamp of isolation.

38. The probable organization of a "third party" by such bourgeois politicians as LaFollette or Henry Ford presents a danger to the immature labor party movement; it is obvious that an effort would be made, with the assistance of labor politicians, to sweep large sections of the Farmer-Labor Party movement into the "third party." We must fight resolutely against this all-class third party tendency and insist upon a genuine class party of workers and exploited farmers. While we are bound to favor the formation of a "third party" as the result of a split in the ranks of the capitalist parties, our main task is to prevent the stultification of the Farmer-Labor movement to such an end. This fight can be made successfully only on the condition that we and our closest sympathizers are not isolated in a separate party of our own, but that we have attached ourselves inseparably to the mass movement. The separate existence of a small labor party under the direct control of the Communists jeopardizes the main labor party movement by separating it from the one element, the Communists, that can safeguard it from the machinations of traitorous politicians.

39. The healthy impulse behind the labor party movement is manifested by the large number of local and state labor parties springing up on every side. We should foster this development in every way. Wherever there is a genuine sentiment for the labor party idea the Communists must attempt to give it an organized form. While always propagandizing the necessity of a national labor party, the formation of local and state parties should not wait for the unification of existing organized movements on a national scale. They should be organized at once wherever possible. The opposition repudiates as ridiculous the charge of the CEC majority that we advocate mere propaganda "for the labor party, and not its actual organization."

40. The next necessary great step in the development of the labor party is the unification of the

movement into a genuine national organization on a mass basis. All efforts must be put forward for the establishment of this national organization for the next presidential campaign. The participation of the main body of the existing state and local parties is a necessary condition for the building of a real mass organization. Because of its known control by the Communists, the FFLP cannot serve for this purpose. It must be our policy to support and foster bona fide plans for national crystallization, as, for example, the one proposed by the Minnesota party. We should participate wholeheartedly in this effort of the Minnesota party, or in any others of a similar character if this one is a failure. As soon as the national labor party movement takes organized form of a genuine mass character, we should merge all our labor party forces in it, and, if necessary, accept minority representation in its directing bodies for the time being. When such national conferences are held, our policy should be to fight for: (a) the establishment of a closely knit national labor party to include the WP and the FFLP, and (b) that the newly established united front national labor party should set up united front party branches in all states and cities, to which the WP should be affiliated. Our aim should be to get the practical control in building these united front parties, national and local.

Immediate Program.

Our conception of the FFLP is that of a means to organize the labor party and to unite the left wing forces within that party. To carry out this policy the following shall be its function and method of operation:

(a) The FFLP should not be a separate labor party, rival to other labor parties, but an organizing and propaganda instrument for the building of a united front labor party. It is not necessary to liquidate the FFLP but to transform its functions.

(b) The FFLP, to unite the left wing forces, shall carry on a campaign for the direct affiliation to itself of all trade unions, farmers' associations, workers' political parties, and other organizations except mass labor parties, in harmony with its program of organizing the labor party movement.

(c) The FFLP shall carry on a militant campaign everywhere for the organization of local and state mass labor parties. While not accepting the affiliation of these labor parties officially, the FFLP shall maintain the closest possible connection with and control of them, thus uniting the whole into a coordinated national movement under its direction.

(d) The FFLP shall agitate and move for the organization of an official national mass labor party at the earliest possible opportunity. When such a national movement develops upon a genuine basis the FFLP shall merge into it all its official and unofficial connections and groups.

(e) In the national mass labor party the FFLP shall serve as a left-bloc medium to unite all the left wing forces against the reformists and reactionaries in order to revolutionize the mass movement.

(f) Our aim shall be to gradually transform, as quickly as possible, this control and leadership of the left wing forces in the national mass movement by the FFLP into direct and acknowledged leadership and control of these forces by the Workers Party itself.

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