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FOR A LABOR PARTY

*Recent Revolutionary Changes
in American Politics*

A STATEMENT
BY THE WORKERS PARTY



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*Communist Party of the United States
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FOR A LABOR PARTY

Recent Revolutionary Changes in American Politics

The Problem

The American Labor Movement is at a turning point. In spite of peaceful tendencies of their leaders, in spite of all unconsciousness on the part of the working masses, the Labor Movement is forced into ever larger struggles. These struggles place the workers in increasing measure not only in opposition to the capitalists, but also in opposition to that Executive Committee of the Capitalist class which is the Government. Each great struggle in its turn from the Steel Strike in 1919 to the Coal, Railroad and Textile Strikes in 1922, dictates to the American workers the same two lessons with ever sharper insistence.

The first of these lessons is:

If the workers wish to win the struggle against capital which is being more and more concentrated, and against the organizations of the employers which are becoming more and more powerful, they must start the big work of amalgamation of the trade unions. They must transform their rusty, old-fashioned craft organizations into modern fighting industrial unions.

The second lesson is:

Every large strike of the workers, with their will or against it—every large fight even if it is for the slightest raise in wages or for the least reduction in hours, becomes, under the present conditions, an act of political significance.

In 1921, the railroad union leaders could retire from the strike with the slogan: "We cannot fight against the Government". In 1922, however, the railroad

workers had to fight not only against the combinations of corporations, but also against a government power which had never before reached such proportions in America. At first to their astonishment, the workers experienced the fact that during and after the war the Democrat, Wilson, suppressed the workers; and then the Republican Harding oppressed them with double power. Then there crystallized the half-conscious idea: the only defense that the workers have is political action independent of the capitalist parties.

The American Labor Movement faces great danger! There are only two forms of actions that can save the American workers:

Amalgamation and a Labor Party.

Amalgamation or annihilation! Formation of a Labor Party or destruction by the juggernaut of the capitalist Government! The workers can choose only between these two dilemmas.

The large masses of the workers are beginning better to understand the situation. Hundreds of thousands of trade unionists have adopted the idea of Amalgamation. The idea of a Labor Party is marching forward to realization. The conference which will take place in Cleveland on Dec. 11 and will be attended by delegates of unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers, presents the whole problem of a Labor Party in its breadth and depth.

The problem of a Labor Party is the central problem confronting the American workers. We must apply ourselves to an analysis of this question with great thoroughness.

CHAPTER I.

THE BANKRUPTCY OF THIRD PARTIES

In spite of the progress that the idea of a Labor Party has made, large masses of workers still regard it with scepticism. They answer every plan for the organization of a Labor Party with a gesture of discouragement. Their typical answer is: "It's not worth while to form a Labor Party, because it would be destroyed in a short time. Every third party in America that has tried to take up the fight against the two big capitalist parties has gone to pieces."

Let us follow the history of the third parties in America.

This history shows that up to the present time all third parties with only one exception have disappeared.

But this history does not show *only* that these parties have gone bankrupt. It shows also many other interesting things. We perceive an astonishing, but still absolute, regularity in the fate of every third party. This regularity consists of the following:

Every third party has been created by economic depression.

Every third party has grown to its maximum power, to a mass movement through a sharpening or a repetition of an economic crisis.

Every third party disappears from the political sphere when the next period of prosperity appears.

Let us take each of the third parties in order. Of course, we shall only consider those which were real mass parties and which acquired national importance. Small, local skirmishes, mere paper formations, insignificant political miscarriages, do not interest us.

The Greenback Party

The first movement for a third party after the Civil War was that of the Greenback Party. It began as a movement of the small business class and farmers, but later joined by masses of workers.

A tremendous economic crisis shook all America in 1873. According to a characterization of Roger W. Babson, there was a "panic which overwhelmed the business in this year." We quote from Babson's book "Business Barometers for Anticipating Conditions." We shall continually quote this counsel of Wall Street as to the economic conditions of these different years. We do so just because he is the adviser of Wall Street and in order that it may be clear that we are not trying to interpret the events of those years for our political purposes.

In 1874, the Greenback Party was formed.

A long industrial depression continued from 1873 to 1880. During this time, the Greenback Party grew into a mass movement. In 1876, it received 81,740 votes; in 1878, it received a million votes.

But economic conditions changed. In 1879 there were signs of improvement. As Babson writes, "During this year, depression passed into prosperity." In 1880, full prosperity had returned. Babson says, "This was the first of a series of four years of marked prosperity." And these four years of prosperity sufficed to destroy the Greenback Party as a mass movement. In 1880 the party received only 308,578 votes; in 1884, only 175,370 votes.

The Knights of Labor

The second example that we shall examine is the Knights of Labor. This organization was apparently only an industrial organization, but in reality it had very marked political tendencies. It existed as an insignificant sect in 1880, but was raised to an important factor by the great economic crisis of the Eighties.

The year 1884 was another year of economic panic.

Babson says, "The unsound conditions of the preceding year were reduced, in this year, to panic conditions." The Knights of Labor grew from an unimportant sect into a powerful organization. In 1884, it had a membership of only 60,811. As Commons writes in his big work "History of Labor in America", this organization in 1884 was a "mere framework for future building." But the industrial crisis began to fill up this framework. Commons writes: American labor movements have never experienced such a rush of organization as the one in the latter part of 1885 and during 1886. In a remarkably short time—in a few months—over 600,000 people living practically in every State in the Union united in one organization. The Knights grew from 989 local assemblies with 104,066 members in good standing in July, 1885, to 5,892 assemblies with 702,924 members in July, 1886."

After the years of depression, prosperity appeared once more in 1887. Babson writes: "This year ushered in a new period of prosperity." The Knights of Labor, therefore, disintegrated. Commons draws this picture: "At the end of 1887 the disintegration in the Knights of Labor had reached an advanced stage. The tide of the uprising, which in half a year had carried the Order from 150,000 to over 700,000 members, began to ebb before the beginning of 1887 and the membership had diminished to 510,451 by July 1."

As prosperity grew, the membership of the Knights of Labor rapidly melted away. Babson writes that "Prosperity made rapid progress in 1888"—and we note that the membership in the Knights of Labor sank to 259,578. Of 1889, he says: "This was a year of prosperity"—and the membership of the Knights of Labor dropped to 220,607.

The People's Party

The next political mass movement to arise was that of the People's Party.

In 1890, as Babson writes, "sound prosperity changed to an uncertain prosperity." In that year,

the first sprouts of the People's Party appeared. In 1891, according to Babson: "Confidence was not fully restored." In 1892, "the prosperity of this year, so called, was largely due to artificial causes." In 1892, the People's Party was formed and received 1,055,424 votes.

In 1893 the big panic occurred. As Babson writes: "Questionable prosperity passed readily into panic." In the year 1894, he says "the inevitable period of depression following severe panics began in earnest." Owing to the discontent of the petty bourgeoisie and the farmers, the People's Party grew into a mass party. It reached the height of its development in 1894 when it received 1,564,318 votes.

But the first economic prosperity put an end to its political career. The first breath of economic improvement destroyed its independence as a political party. In 1896, it combined with the Democratic Party, forming the left wing of that Party. In 1900, however, when, as Babson writes, "Prosperity was in full swing" it disappeared even as the left wing of the Democratic Party and there was nothing left to disturb the policies of the big old parties.

The Progressive Party

The fourth big example is that of the Progressive Party.

In 1907 there was an economic crisis. According to Babson: "In this year prosperity, carried to an extreme point, collapsed in panic." In the year 1908 says Babson, depression "extended from the stock market to other lines of business." The political consequences were the following:

DeWitt, in his book, "The Progressive Movement", writes: "It was the tariff session of 1909, however, which more than any other single factor, drew the line sharper between progressives and reactionaries and defined the progressive movement for the country."

At that time, "a few progressive senators and

members of the House of Representatives" organized the National Progressive Republican League. The next year, in 1910, a similar phenomenon touched the Democratic Party when "thirty-five progressive Democrats formulated a constitution and organized a Democratic Federation."

Economic conditions became worse and worse. After slight fluctuations, says Babson, writing of the year 1911. "Mercantile conditions continued to decline..... Investment conditions during 1911 were very unsatisfactory. Dullness was at times exceedingly marked." In 1912 the Progressive Party was formed out of a split in the Republican Party. It at once became a mass party. Altogether this year revealed the general stormy advance of farmers, petty bourgeoisie and workers. The Socialist Party received nearly 1,000,000 votes. The Progressive Party received more than 4,000,000 votes. The radical left wing won in the Democratic Party convention and elected Wilson president. Then came the World War. There was an economic depression in 1914. But then came the "war-baby" prosperity of 1916. In the elections of 1916, there were no traces of the Progressive Party.

An Exception

It might be thought, therefore, that the inevitable fate of every "third party" is to disappear from American life. It appears that the economic crisis gives birth to the third party; the discontent of the farmers, the petty business class and the workers makes it a mass party and prosperity plunges it into annihilation.

How is this to be explained? Is there really no exception to this iron law?

Let us examine the causes. It is merely begging the question for anyone to say that the third party disappears because the other two big parties are too strong. In other words, the third parties merely are too weak. That is just the question: why are they too weak?

We must delve deeper if we wish to find the causes. The third parties were necessarily destroyed by the following causes:

1. In face of the growing power of capitalism they quite rightly represented the mass discontent, but they did not represent economic progress.

2. They were never the parties of the big bourgeoisie or of the workers but of the strata between the two, the petty bourgeois elements. For that they always bore the stamp of vacillation and ambiguity.

3. Their programs either recommended utopian magic or were mixtures of the worst confusions.

4. They were only temporary political organizations and had no economic organizational basis.

5. The capitalists could at the given moment disarm them. This the capitalists could do either by taking the lead of the movement or by buying off the leaders of the movement, or else by expropriating the main points of their program.

All in all, these are the main reasons for the decay of every third party. But the examples we have given are not all! There has been one exception to the rule and that exception is the Republican Party.

Republican Party began as a Third Party

The present Republican Party was formed in 1856. The date of its birth was determined by the short economic crisis of 1854 and 1855. This period was described by Commons as follows:

"The era of speculation, which culminated in the crisis of 1857, produced a temporary reaction in the Winter of 1854-1855 and brought about a depression which though not as severe as that of 1857....."

In the elections of 1856, the Republican Party was not yet successful. After its failure there was no economic prosperity, however, but a very severe crisis in 1857. This economic crisis strengthened the new-born Republican party to such a degree that it succeeded to power in 1860.

This is the first and, as yet, the last instance in which a third party has been able to beat the old parties.

Why did the Republican Party win, in spite of the fact that it was a third party? It won because this party, contrary to all other third parties, did not represent the economically hopeless petty bourgeoisie but the economically progressive capitalist elements of the Northern States at the time. It won because the main point of its program—the emancipation of the slaves—was a social necessity, and no quackery, like the silver plank of the Greenback Party. It won, finally, because it had a powerful economic backbone in the capitalists of the North-East who were becoming ever richer and better organized.

The example of the Republican Party demonstrates that a Third Party can win provided that the economic and social conditions make it possible.

CHAPTER II.

CAN A LABOR PARTY GROW?

Whether a Labor Party can grow or not, is a question that cannot be settled merely by stating that a third party cannot grow. On the contrary, we must examine the concrete conditions and fundamental characteristics of its formation.

By applying this method, we shall find that if a Labor Party becomes a real Labor Party, it will grow and has every prospect of gaining power.

We understand, of course, by a Labor Party no renaming of bankrupt, disintegrated parties, nor a quiet refuge for effete politicians, but a big, mass organization formed by organized labor.

A Labor Party will grow because it will be a party of the working class, and will not represent the hopeless small-business class which is being driven more and more into the background by the trend of economic development, and which can have no future in view of the social development.

Just as in 1860, the Republican Party could grow because it represented a class that had a destiny, the big industrial bourgeoisie, which was the motor of the development of that period, — so too, a Labor Party can grow because it will represent the industrial working class which is the motor of the development of to-day.

A Labor Party will grow and prosper because it will not reflect social quackery as the Greenback Party did; it will not adopt a retrogressive program, as did the Progressive Party, which started out on a campaign of "trust-busting"; it will not, as any present-day bourgeois radical party must, represent only a

return to the impossible — an “unscrambling of the eggs”. A Labor Party, on the contrary, can speak with full power in accord with future social development, since the necessities of economic development are identical with working class interest.

The Farmers

A Labor Party will grow provided it attempts not to be a party for and of everybody, but to be a class party—of the working class. This should not mean that the Labor Party shall fail to include the working farmers—that is, the tenant farmers and the small farm owners. Such omission would be a mistake of the greatest magnitude, from the standpoint of the future of the working class. One of the most important conditions for the victory of a Labor Party is that it develop the collaboration of the farmers and workers, which has become traditional in America. America is a favorable exception in this respect. Of European countries such collaboration takes place only in Soviet Russia. In all former third parties (Greenback Party, People's Party, Farmer Labor Party), the political leadership was in the hands of the farmers, the workers being merely an unconscious appendage. If a Labor Party is to be born and to grow, the relation must be reversed. As a matter of fact, we see that the initiative is already being taken by the workers.

The Basis of Growth

That a Labor Party can grow in America is established by the fact that America has changed from an agricultural to an industrial country. Big industry has increased the number of industrial workers to a tremendous degree. The fact that industrial life has become more and more concentrated has imparted greater importance to the working class than ever before experienced in America.

There are nearly 6,000,000 organized workers in the United States. This powerful organized mass will

create as sound a basis for a Labor Party as the capitalists of the Northern States created for the Republican Party in the Fifties. A Labor Party will grow because of its being formed by the organized workers. A Labor Party would deserve that name only if it were formed by the trade unions! A Labor Party of any other form would be a mere caricature, a political swindle, and a miscarriage.

A Labor Party should be launched only if it is created by the trade unions. Without the trade unions it would have no permanent organizational basis. Without the trade unions, it would not be able to compete with the machinery of the old capitalist parties. The Socialist Party failed to gain any power in the United States for the reason that it had no roots in the organized labor movement. If the trade unions are not the backbone of the Labor Party, the Labor Party will be swept out of existence by the first sign of prosperity, as it was the fate of the other third parties to be.

If the trade unions form a Labor Party, it is the surest guarantee that the Labor Party will survive the first prosperity and will not be destroyed by the fact that it may not succeed to power on the first or second attempt.

Trade Unions and Labor Party

We must note that the history of the trade unions shows that the line of development of the trade unions is just the reverse of that of the third parties. The oppositional third parties were developed by economic crisis and destroyed by economic prosperity. The trade unions, on the contrary, gained strength through economic prosperity and lost power during economic crises.

The whole development of the American Federation of Labor confirms the truth of this law without exception. The American Federation of Labor formed in 1881, that is to say, in a year of prosperity. During the years of depression of the Eighties

grew but little. In 1889, a year of prosperity, it attained a membership of 200,000. In the long period of economic depression which dominated the Nineties, it did not grow at all. In 1897, it had hardly more than 250,000 members. In 1898, economic prosperity set in and continued till 1903, by which time the A. F. of L. had more than 1,700,000 members in its ranks. The crisis of 1903 pushed it back, its membership decreasing up to 1906 to less than 1,450,000. Prosperity beginning again in 1905, the number of members increased; in 1908 the A. F. of L. had nearly 1,600,000 members. The number of members was again affected by the panic of 1908, so that in 1909, it contained only 1,450,000 members. In 1910, business prosperity entered again and the membership of the A. F. of L. grew to more than 2,000,000 in 1914.

In 1914, as Babson says, "The decline of 1913 quickly developed into depression." This was also to be seen in the number of members enrolled in the A. F. of L. Its membership decreased in 1915 to less than 1,950,000. Then came the years of the World War with economic development unparalleled in the history of the country. In these years of "phenomenal expansion" (Babson) the trade unions kept pace with the prosperity and manifested a phenomenal expansion. The membership of the A. F. of L. doubled between 1915 and 1920. It reached a total of 4,078,740.

Then came the depression in the middle of 1920, which reduced the membership and left only 3,906,528 in the organization in 1921. In 1922, the A. F. of L. has only 3,200,000 members.

If the trade unions form the basis of a Labor Party, they will give the best guarantee that the party will be powerful enough to resist any change in economic conditions. Economic crises will diminish the strength of the trade unions, but they will increase the discontent of the masses and thus swell the sails of the Labor Party. Economic prosperity, on the other hand, will reduce the political energy of the masses, but will give new strength, greater fighting

power, broader material possibilities to the trade unions, and thus will assure that prosperity will not annihilate the Labor Party.

The present time is the most favorable from every standpoint for the formation of a Labor Party.

The tremendous economic crisis of 1920, with all its sufferings and misery has not been forgotten by the workers. The American working class has never passed thru such a fearful crisis. This crisis has driven the workers with great momentum to the idea of political action. On the other hand, the economic conditions have improved somewhat during the last few months. The number of members in the trade unions is begining to grow. The workers no longer tolerate the capitalist offensive without defending themselves. This transitional period is the best time for the formation of a Labor Party.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT POWER

We have demonstrated that a third party need not necessarily be a party of decay, and we have demonstrated that a Labor Party can grow. Now we shall proceed a step farther. We shall show the reasons why an independent mass Labor Party could not have developed previously to this time; and shall prove that these causes have disappeared, or are about to vanish.

We shall examine two categories of reasons:

The one is, the role of centralized government power.

The second, the structure of the working class itself.

The whole history of America shows that there has never been in this country a centralized government power as they understand it in Europe. The United States has never been such a centralized country as are the big countries of Europe, such as Germany, England or France. The forty-eight States composing the United States, according to the original conception, are separate sovereign states. They only settled their mutual business through the Federal Government, which was first conceived, not as a state, but as a federation of states. The administration of public business, the greater part of the judiciary, the police, the militia, the educational work, the major part of legislation, remained in the hands of the separate States, and did not come within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government.

The development of the United States has been quite different from that of Europe, in that there has been no standing army composed of the masses, no leading stratum of bureaucrats becoming more and

more powerful, also more compact as a bureaucracy through inheritance. America differed from European countries in that the governmental power did not interfere in the individual life of every citizen, in every detail of economic life of the whole country.

Important historical conditions have determined that the centralized State power did not develop in America as it did in the European countries. In Europe, the joint struggle of the bourgeoisie and royalty against Feudalism created the centralized State power with its mass army and its appointed bureaucratic hierarchy. There has been no feudalism in America in the European form.

War of Independence: Beginning of Centralization

The American Government has passed through three fundamental political crises in its history.

The first crisis was the crisis at the birth of the American Government. The social content of the American Revolution and the War of Independence against England was the struggle for the independence of the young American capitalist class against the colonizing British capitalism.

The political form of this struggle took on the slogan, externally, of the republic against monarchy. Internally, however, there arose a violent struggle over the question as to whether the form of government of the new State should be "federal" or "national." In other words, the question was whether it was to be uniform and centralized or loose and decentralized.

The American capitalist class, led by Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury under Washington, was organized in the Federal Party, and stood for the centralized form of government. The farmers and petty bourgeois united with the big landowners of the Southern States, and, under the leadership of Jefferson, Secretary of State under Washington, fought in the old Republican Party for local autonomy of the separate States.

During the progress of the war against England, and as long as it was necessary to have centralized power, the Federalist Party was victorious. Hamilton succeeded in building the "Bank of the United States," in opposition to the many local banks. He succeeded in putting through the naturalization laws against foreigners. He succeeded in enlarging the number of officials employed by the Federal government. He instituted a military program and created a navy. In 1801, the "new revolution" started. The Republicans, the decentralizers of that time, won: Jefferson was inaugurated as president. He immediately reduced the number of government employees by half. He removed the internal taxes. He immediately reduced the army and stopped the building of the navy.

The first crisis of centralized government power ended with an almost complete debacle of the idea of centralization.

Civil War Centralization

The second crisis of centralized State power was brought about, also, by a war situation—the Civil War.

The social content of the big Civil War of the Sixties was the struggle of the rising capitalist class of the Northern States against the slave-owning large landowners of the South. The political form of this struggle was again the fight between centralized State power and local autonomy, between "Federalists" and "Confederates." The new Republican Party of the Northern capitalists (in opposition to the old Republicans Party of Jefferson) represented the idea of centralization, of National government; the Southern landowners represented the idea of decentralization. The war, as a matter of course, again strengthened the centralized government. Large armies were formed, a large navy created. After the full victory of the Northern capitalist class, an open military dictatorship reigned for a long period over the reactionary Southern States.

A law was enacted in 1867 to establish "efficient government" in the rebellious states. But as the "reconstruction days" passed, the centralized government gradually lost its power; and the presidential election of 1876 together with the "compromise" of 1877 restored the local governments of the separate States.

The World War: The Great Centralization

The third crisis of centralized government was produced by the The World War.

The World War increased the power of the Federal Government tremendously it centralized it to an unheard-of degree. There was no department of administration where the control of the National Government was not raised. The President above all, was given almost unlimited power. The entire industrial life, ship-building, manufacture of munitions, coal mining, the production of all kinds of raw material, were put under the control of the Federal Government. The railroads, the telephone and telegraph were put under direct National Government administration. Compulsory labor under National Government direction was introduced in the war industries. The Espionage Act killed off all adverse criticism of the policy of the Government. Freedom of the press, freedom of speech and of assemblage were abolished. Not only was a national censorship inaugurated, but also mailing rights were put under a stringent political limitation. The persons and property of foreigners were placed under a control which meant that millions of immigrant workers were virtually outlawed. The rights of the separate States were subordinated to the desires of the Federal Government. A gigantic army was formed by compulsory service. Another tremendous army of the civil service was created. All so-called rights guaranteed by the American Constitution were simply annihilated during the war.

Acquiring a Bureaucracy

By means of the World War, the Centralized Government acquired power unequalled, either in the War of Independence or in the Civil War.

This centralization of government during the World War was only the summit of the development of the last decades. The higher capitalism developed, the more centralized the form of government became. Railroad lines did not respect State lines. The regulation of the railway system had to be carried out by the Federal Government.

In 1887, the Interstate Commerce Commission was formed. The Trusts paid still less attention to the State lines; they grew into nation-wide enterprises and became problems of the Federal Government. In 1890 the Sherman Anti-Trust Law was enacted. In 1906 the Hepburn Railway Act was passed. In 1914 the Clayton Act was passed. The Ech-Cummins Act became a law in 1920.

More and more departments of activity came under the control of the National Government. Several new departments were created: In 1889 the Department of Agriculture; in 1903 the Department of Commerce and Labor; in 1913 this latter department was divided into the Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor. The Federal Government enlarged the sphere of its postal system, and its power of taxation. The following are a few figures indicating the growth in the number of government employees: the number of Civil Service employees in 1884 was 13,780; in 1912, 278,000. Not only has the number of employees grown, but also the composition of this army of employees has greatly changed. The number of those subject to civil-service examination has steadily grown. The proportion, that is to say, of those not affected by the change of administration, has continually grown. In 1916 the number of Civil Service employees had reached the figure of 439,798. At the peak of the war, in 1918, the number increased to 917,760.

This Government examined corps of employees, not

affected by the change of administration, and which is continually growing, has become a government bureaucracy in the European sense of the word.

In the years since the War, there has arisen a necessity of reducing the gigantic structure of government power. But its nature remained. The number of Civil Service employees in 1921 was still 597,482. The Government returned the railroads to their private owners, but retained the power of control through the Railway Labor Board. The famous old American rights are as much absent now as they were during the War. The Federal Government dictates even today in the question of coal. In all the struggles between Capital and Labor, the Federal Government assumes the role of arbiter. The force of the Government which was utilized against the coal and railroad strikes, with its deep and nation-wide interference, which is unparalleled in the history of the United States, is a tremendous and fearful sign of the growth of centralized government power. The Daugherty Injunction, the use of troops in fifteen States, the brutal persecution of struggling workers in all of the forty-eight States, was so blatant and clear, that the whole country could see and understand that the American Government, in its third crisis, and grown into a mammoth monster of centralization, similar to that of the old European governments.

A centralized government, which interferes in the daily affairs of the working class, is the basic condition for the contention that politics will attract the passionate interests of the masses, not merely temporarily, but permanently. The American working class has experienced sudden political exaltations before. The American workers have already had local political organizations. They have shown a splendid militant spirit against individual capitalists or capitalist groups. But they have never formed movements of a national scope, against the centralized government representing the whole capitalist society. The workers could not form such movements, simply because there was no centralized government that the

workers had to feel daily in every detail of their lives. The American labor movement could not organize a political struggle on a national scale against the central government for securing political power, as the workers in the countries of Europe do. They could not do so because there has been no permanent centralized government in the United States.

The historical innovation is that a centralized government has developed in America through the war, and for the purpose of suppressing the working class. This has given the fundamental condition for the formation of a nation-wide political mass party—the birth of a Labor Party.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIFORM WORKING CLASS

The existence of a centralized government is not the sole condition for the formation of a mass party of the workers on a nation-wide scale. There is another condition, and that is the existence of a uniform working class.

The history of the Labor Movement shows that up to the time of the World War—even if there have been tendencies toward producing a uniform working class—the American working class has not been homogeneous. But the World War and the years after the War produced not only the centralized government but also another new historical fact—a uniform working class.

A completely uniform working class is to be found nowhere. There are divers categories and strata in the working class all over the world. Skilled and unskilled workers, urban and rural elements, workers in big industrial plants and in small shops, workers born in the country and those who have lived long in the cities: all these differences, and often their corresponding antagonisms, are to be found in all countries of Europe. In the course of historical development, however, these differences have been composed, these antagonisms have been lessened, so that the total interests of the working class as a class could crystallise above the separate interests of the different strata and categories.

A class conscious political party has as its aim to stand above the special interests of the divers working class divisions, and to represent and express the total interests of the working class as a whole. If the working class was a completely homogeneous mass,

a political party would not be necessary. For then it would not be necessary to search out and to organize the common class interests. Also, on the other hand, as long as there are unbridgeable differences between the various strata of the working class, there can be no political party as a mass party, for there is no recognized total interest that it can represent.

Causes of Non-Solidarity

It would lead us too far to go into the details of the reasons why there have grown up such differences between the various strata of the American labor movement. There have been two main differences driving a wedge between the strata of the American labor movement for decades.

One of them is the antagonism between the skilled and unskilled workers.

The other is the antagonism between the American, English-speaking, and the foreign-speaking workers.

The friction and conflicts between the skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled workers fill decades of the history of the American labor movement. One of the main reasons for dual unionism is this difference. The great work of Commons on the history of the American labor movement shows this struggle:

“During 1886 the combined membership of labor organizations was exceptionally strong and for the first time came near the million mark. The Knights of Labor had a membership of 700,000 and the trade unions at least 250,000, the former composed largely of the unskilled and the latter of the skilled. Still, the leaders of the Knights realized that mere numbers were not sufficient to defeat the employers and that control over the skilled, and consequently the more strategic occupations, was required before the unskilled and semi-skilled could expect to march to victory. Hence, parallel to the tremendous growth of the Knights in 1886, there was a constantly growing effort to absorb the existing trade unions for the purpose of making them subservient to the interests of

the less skilled elements. It was mainly this that produced the bitter conflict between the Knights and the trade unions during 1886 and 1887. Neither the jealousy aroused by the success of the unions nor the opposite aims of labour solidarity and trade separatism gives an adequate explanation of this conflict. The one, of course, aggravated the situation by introducing a feeling of personal bitterness, and the other furnished an appealing argument to each side. But the struggle was one between groups within the working class, in which the small but more skilled group fought for independence of the larger but weaker group of the unskilled and semi-skilled. The skilled men stood for the right to use their advantage of skill and efficient organization in order to wrest the maximum amount of concessions for themselves. The Knights of Labor endeavoured to annex the skilled men in order that the advantage of their exceptional fighting strength might lift up the unskilled and semi-skilled. From the viewpoint of a struggle between principles, this was indeed a clash between the principle of solidarity of labour and that of trade separatism, but, in reality, each of the principles reflected only the special interest of a certain portion of the working class. Just as the trade unions, when they fought for trade autonomy, really refused to consider the unskilled men, so the Knights of Labour were insensible to the fact that their scheme would retard the progress of the skilled trades."

But the differences between the American worker and the immigrant worker represented a far deeper and more intense conflict. Europe furnished hundreds of thousands of emigrants to America and these workers always helped to reduce wages and break strikes. The first period of immigration, the so-called "old immigration", brought about great conflicts. But as the old immigration came from Western Europe, from Scandinavia and Germany, and as it was composed partly of handicraftsmen and industrial workers, these immigrants were quickly assimilated by the American working mass.

This old immigration would have presented no insurmountable barrier to the formation of a uniform working class in America. But then came the new immigrant wave from Eastern and Southern Europe (Russia, Austria, Italy, Hungary and the Balkans), and deepened the conflict between the American and the foreign workers. British, German and Swedish manual workers quickly became Americanized as far as the standard of living and wages were concerned. The agricultural elements of the old immigration did not remain in the Eastern states, nor did they settle in the cities. They migrated to the West and became farmers. With the new immigration it was quite different. The new immigration consisted largely of farmers and farm hands. These agricultural elements remained, for the greater part, in the East, settled in the cities and became industrial workers. In 1850-1860 only 36.9% of the immigrants stopped in the North-Atlantic States. Between 1890-1900, 80.1% settled in the North-Atlantic States. The peasants and farm hands from Russia, Poland, Hungary, Italy and the South Slavic countries remained foreigners, both as regards language and mode of living, within the United States. The peasants and farm hands coming from the backward villages of Europe and seeing a big city for the first time, becoming an industrial worker or a miner, represent an entirely different social stratum from the old urban labor aristocrat proud of his skill.

A few examples will reveal how difficult it was for the new immigrants to be Americanized. The old immigrants were able to read and write. Only 2% of the immigrant Germans were illiterate. The new immigrants were illiterate. 91% of the immigrants from Hungary could neither read nor write. The old immigrants learned English; 96.9% of the immigrants from Norway learned to speak English. The new immigrants do not learn English. Only 43% of the immigrants from Poland learned to speak English. The old immigrants became citizens of the United States. 84.6% of the immigrants from Sweden became citiz-

ens. The new immigrants do not become naturalized. Before the War, only 8.3% of the Russian immigrants became citizens. The old immigrants who settled in the cities, spread out in all sections. The new immigrants who stop in the cities, collect in national ghettos.

Each new million wave of immigration increased the tide of unorganized workers making few demands in competition with the American workers. A conflict arose on the one hand between the American and the foreign-born, and on the other hand between the organized and the unorganized workers. And these conflicts have quite naturally increased the friction between the skilled and the unskilled workers. A whole social hierarchy was formed inside the working class. At the top of this social pyramid was the American skilled worker; in the middle were the old immigration and the semi-skilled. At the bottom, the new immigration spread out in the mining, iron and steel industries, in the form of great unskilled masses, doing every kind of hard, dirty, dangerous and badly paid work.

We cannot understand the role or history of the Knights of Labor or the Western Federation of Miners, or the I. W. W., nor can we understand the question of dual unionism, the old curse and cancer of the American labor movement, unless we investigate and comprehend the differences within the structure of the American working class.

These structural differences in the American working class explain, above all, why the skilled labor aristocracy, with its guild-like isolation, descended to systematic alliance with the bourgeoisie and even to intellectual identity with them. On the other hand, the same structural differences explain why every revolutionary political party that arose in the American labor movement was a party of the foreign-born workers. This applies both to the old Socialist Party and to the new Communist Party. It is a fact in all countries that the workers in the big factories of the

big industries and in the large cities, are the first to think in anti-capitalistic terms. They do so, not only because they are the most exploited and oppressed section of the workers, but also because the big factories of big industry and the concentrated masses in the large cities are the hot-bed of collectivist thought. The majority of the workers in the large factories of big industry and in the large cities are foreign-born.

The three most striking phenomena, dual unionism, a labor aristocracy which thinks in terms of capitalism, and the fact that the revolutionary movement is regarded as a foreign product, may be explained by the great differences between the various strata in the working class. And these internal differences also explain why a mass party could not be formed in the past, a mass party having a nation-wide scope and representing the total interests of the working class as against the varied interests of the different working class strata.

The Change

The World War, however, and the years after the war produced a mighty change in the structure of the working class in America, a change going to the very depths. The conflicts within the American working class have in part already disappeared, and those remaining are now diminishing. This tendency was to be noted to a certain degree even before the World War, but the World War gave it a great impetus and the process is not yet ended.

The differences between skilled and unskilled workers have been to a great extent eliminated. During the War, the great demand for unskilled labor in the war industries raised the wages of common labor to an unprecedented level. At the same time the wages of the most aristocratic and most skilled workers were raised in far smaller proportion. As compared with the big increases in the wages of the steel and iron workers, miners and shipyard workers, the wage rises for the skilled crafts, such as the printing and build-

ing trades, were small. Of course, the standard of living of the unskilled workers rose with the increase in wages. The labor aristocracy, which received smaller increases in wages, could not keep up with the rising cost of living. Thus the War leveled to a great degree the big differences in the standard of living between the categories of labor.

Before the war, but especially during the war, the unorganized foreign-born workers began to organize into trade unions. The Steel Strike in 1919 revealed the first broad, organized, struggle of foreign-born trade union masses. Before the Interchurch Investigation Committee, William Z. Foster stated the following about the foreign-born workers who participated in the strike (The Interchurch World Movement Report on the Steel Strike of 1919):

"They are really a new factor in American trade unionism. They are just learning unionism since the war started. They are just breaking into it."

As the strike leader, Foster, says in his book on the Steel Strike, the foreign worker fought better than the American worker. "But if the Americans and skilled workers generally proved indifferent union men in the steel campaign, the foreign, unskilled workers covered themselves with glory. Throughout the whole affair they showed an understanding, discipline, courage and tenacity of purpose that compared favorably with that shown in any organized effort put forth by working men on this continent. Beyond question they displayed trade union qualities of the very highest type. Their solidarity was unbreakable; their fighting spirit invincible. They nobly struggled onward in the face of difficulties that would try the stoutest hearts. They proved themselves altogether worthy of the best American labor traditions."

The unskilled foreign worker covered the long way from strikebreaker to organized worker. We see the same thing in 1922 in mass form in the coal strike. The relation of the skilled American workers to the unskilled foreign worker has today become that, not

of an organized striking worker to an unorganized strikebreaking worker, but that of workers fighting shoulder to shoulder. And thus a big conflict within the American labor movement is in the process of elimination.

During the War, immigration practically ceased. From 1900 to 1910 no less than 8,795,886 immigrants had streamed into America. In 1914, 1,403,081 immigrants landed on American shores. These tremendous foreign masses which have been almost completely transformed into industrial workers in the United States, flooded the American working class with constantly renewed waves of foreigners. They increased the differences inside the working class.

The War practically stopped immigration to America. In 1918 the surplus was only 18,000; in 1919 only 20,000. In 1920, the number of immigrants was 621,576 and the number of emigrants 428,062. The present Immigration Law limits the number of immigrants to 360,000. In the fiscal year of 1921-1922, the net in immigration was 110,844. The composition, however, is such, that the emigrants are mainly men, while the immigrants are women and children belonging to families here. The National Industrial Conference Board says: "There was a net increase of 7,642 of the professional class, 33,630 skilled workers, 39,309 servants, and 76,106 of no occupation, including women and children, while there is a net loss of 67,332 classed as laborers. Including only those classes of skilled and miscellaneous workers who have a direct relation to the labor supply of American manufacturing industry, the immigration for the first fiscal year of the new law's operation represents a net loss of 30,883 workers."

It is apparent, therefore, that no increase is now being made in the American working class from abroad. Hence not only is there no new infusion of strange elements but the foreign-born workers living

in the United States have for this very reason been more easily assimilated.

The mass naturalization which took place during the War, half spontaneously and half under compulsion, has helped considerably to lessen the differences between the workers born in America and the workers immigrating to America.

The capitalist offensive against the trade unions after the war also aided in leveling the working class. The open shop movement of the capitalists, the brutal attack of the Government on the privileges of the trade unions, loosened the relation of the trade-unions to the bourgeoisie and to the capitalist Government. At the same time, this attack brought the freshly persecuted American workers closer to the foreign workers who had long suffered persecution.

The wage cuts which resulted from the economic crisis of 1920 show that the wages of the skilled workers were reduced in relatively higher proportion than the wages of the unskilled workers. This factor has also helped in leveling the standard of living of the skilled and unskilled workers.

All these deep changes in the structure of the American working class which were produced during the last years, continue to exist today. This process is not yet finished. But the changes have already brought the different categories of workers so close to one another that for the first time, we can speak of a solidarity of the laboring masses extending over the entire working class.

Only the great leveling of the different categories of workers could have made possible such tremendous struggles as the coal and railroad strikes, which at one time took into action more than a million workers. Only this leveling could have made possible the fact that several hundred trade unions adopted resolutions in favor of a General Strike. Nothing else could make it possible for the idea of amalgamation to penetrate the consciousness of 2,000,000 organized workers. The approach of the various strata of the working class to

one another, the fact that the working class is becoming more and more homogeneous, has produced for the first time in the history of America, the historical basis for a political mass party representing the interests of the entire working class.

CHAPTER V.

DISINTEGRATION OF THE OLD PARTIES

The gigantic accumulation and concentration of capital, the constantly growing power of big industry, banks and railroads, has crushed the petty bourgeoisie more and more, impoverished the farmers and made them discontented, and has forced the formation of a uniform and more class conscious working class.

This development, of necessity, drove a wedge into both the Republican and Democratic parties. The more intense and differentiated the conflicts between the different classes became the more impossible it became that inside the same party—this applies to both parties—there should be room for the interests of capitalists, farmers and workers. And this condition continues to-day. Even before the War, we perceive the insurrection of the farmers and the workers against the framework of the old parties. The War interrupted this process, but the big political and economic crisis called forth by the War renewed and intensified to the highest degree the disorganizing process going on inside the old parties.

Violent and ever sharpening factional conflicts have taken place both in the Republican party and in the Democratic Party. In both parties, the factions of the petty bourgeoisie and farmers are trying to take the control from the representatives of the big capitalists. By boring from within, the insurgent faction is trying to get hold of the old party machinery. In 1910, the Progressive Democratic Federation, which was formed at that time, announced quite openly that its aim was to get into control of the organization of the Democratic Party.

In the Republican Party the La Follette group employed the same tactics. By boring from within, these "radical" bourgeois factions have had local and partial successes. But it is not at all probable that they will secure control of the old party machinery. It is more probable that the general staff of these parties, which is made up of bourgeois and business politicians, will prevent the final victory of the "radical" petty bourgeois and farm elements. On the contrary, signs are growing that the conflicts between the factions will lead to a split in both parties. Today there is frequent collaboration between the conservative Republican and conservative Democratic wings, on the one hand, and between the radical Republican and radical Democratic wings, on the other hand. Not only has the class struggle between the petty bourgeoisie and the capitalists broken down the old party lines in Congress (voting on the tariff and bonus questions), but it happens that a conservative Republican votes for a conservative Democrat in order to prevent the election of a radical Republican.

It is not only amusing but also characteristic of the present political situation, to read what President Harding's father says about radical Republicans: "With fellows like Borah and La Follette to deal with, my boy has enough Bolsheviks to trouble him in the Senate now without sending any more down to Washington."

In Wisconsin, South Dakota, Iowa, North Dakota, Nebraska, Maryland, Oklahoma, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Idaho, there are splits or half splits in the Republican and Democratic parties on the question of "conservatism vs. radicalism." The most characteristic feature of the situation, which also shows the keenness of the struggle, is the fact that not only the radical factions of the two parties, but also the conservative factions of both parties, are considering the matter of coalition. The conservative elements in both parties fear the victory of the opposition which is applying the method of boring from within and for that reason they want to unite the bourgeois elements

in both old parties against the radicalism of the farmers. Frank A. Munsey expressed this idea most effectively when he spoke at the recent Bankers Convention.

"In the early days of the Republic they (the Republican and Democratic parties) represented distinct and positive ideas. But with these great fundamental ideas converted into history there are no longer any big outstanding issues between them that have any place in our politics. There are, to be sure, many small points on which the Republican and Democratic parties differ today. It is their business to differ, to create differences, to work up issues, without which they would cease to exist as political parties. It is the business of each party to oppose and to fight the acts and proposals of the other party. . . . While this political jockeying has been going on since the great old issues disappeared, a new issue has developed that now divides all America into two political camps, as yet without political names. They are the radical camp and the conservative camp, and within each camp there is a wide range of thought and feeling. Some day, and not a very distant day at that these two groups will evolve into organized political parties with names that signify what they stand for. The salvation of our present situation would be a liberal conservative party, numerically strong enough to hold the balance of power against the radical forces. . . . Reconsecrated to liberal conservatism—liberal conservatism, in fact—our politics would be in much better shape than they are today, in much better shape than they have been since finishing the work for which the two old parties were originally formed. With radicalism the issue, with a radical party on the one hand and a liberal conservative party on the other, there would no longer be occasion in Congress and our State Legislatures for jockeying for issues."

Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University said: "The radical and the destructionist is entitled to his opinions and to do what he properly can to secure

their approval by steadily increasing numbers of his fellow citizens. But he is not entitled to do all this under false pretenses, and while wearing a false uniform. So long as present party conditions continue, destructive radicalism will gain increasing influence in this country, and will do increasing damage, just because it is in a position shrewdly to use one reluctant party organization against the other, and to play them off against each other, to the great entertainment, you may be sure, of Beelzebub and all his admirers.

"The overwhelming majority of Republicans and the overwhelming majority of Democrats, who are in substantial agreement on all fundamentals, should speedily find ways to take such steps as may be necessary to form a Democrat-Republican Party (to revive a name that was in use in this country a century ago,) which would represent the predominant realism of our people. Over against such a progressive liberal party there would naturally be organized a distinctly radical party, to which should go those who now call themselves Democrats or Republicans, but who are, in reality, neither."

Not only the Republican spokesmen, but also the former Democratic Secretary of War, Lindley M. Garretson, stated in a speech in Denver that he can find no question in which the two parties would differ materially, and continued:

"There is, however, a very decided difference of opinion among American people regarding our Constitution. While I class myself as a conservative, I have no quarrel with that large and growing body of Americans who feel that this country has outgrown its Constitution, and that the time for change in our form of Government is here. They have a legitimate right to work for the carrying out of their opinions, provided lawful measures are used. A new political alignment is imminent in America—the conservatives of both parties against the radicals."

Sectional Differences Disappear

In addition to the issue between the conservatives and radicals, there is another factor working for the disintegration of the large, old parties. The old parties have developed historically in such a manner that they principally represent regional interests of certain districts. That was comprehensible and necessary at that time when each region was very uniform within itself. The South was made up of planters, the North of capitalists, and the West of farmers.

But the immense capitalist development of the last decades has transported big capitalism to every part of the country and has everywhere altered the class interests. From a social point of view, the interests of the single regions do not govern, today, in American society, but the interests of those classes which have been formed without regard to regions, on a nation-wide scale.

While the government developed in America to national centralization; while the capitalist class developed on a national scale; while a uniform working class grew up on a national scale—the machinery of the two old political parties, in accordance with old traditions, has continued on a sectional and not on a national basis.

For a long time, the old political parties were true expressions of reality. The old reality was that America was the land of loosely joined States; of regions representing, as a whole, uniform interests; of classes differing but slightly from one another.

The new reality, however, is entirely different: New America is a homogeneous country, with a uniform centralized government, with sectionalism being forced more and more in the background, and with class antagonisms becoming ever more differentiated. The old political parties do not express this new reality, and for that reason their frameworks are being destroyed by the new reality.

All the indications are that in the next few years, the political physiognomy will be as follows in Amer-

ica: Above the ruins of the Republican and the Democratic parties there will appear three new parties—the conservatives, party of the big bourgeoisie, the “progressive” party of the small business class and wealthy farmers, and the political mass party of the workers and the exploited farmers—the Labor Party.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OFFENSIVE OF CAPITAL AND THE NON PARTISAN POLICY OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

The economic crisis which started in the middle of 1920 witnessed the offensive of the capitalists against the whole labor movement.

Wage reductions, increases in hours, the worst unemployment that America has experienced. Attempts to smash the trade union movement. The concentration of the net of open and secret employers' associations. The growth of the open shop movement. The forcible extension of company unions. Persecutions of the foreign-born in every form. These are the principal milestones on the highway of the capitalist offensive.

In their defensive struggles—we shall only mention the outstanding strikes, the 600,000 miners, 400,000 railroad workers, 100,000 textile workers—the workers could not resist the attacks of the capitalists with sufficient power. A splendid militant spirit pervaded the workers. But the ossified, old, bureaucratic leaders, the "25,000 dollar a year labor leaders", as Wm. Z. Foster characterized them, fled in terror from any kind of fight. They did so partly because they are utterly unfit for leading any fight, partly because they sold out to the capitalists directly, or to the capitalist government.

Not alone are the leaders unfit for conducting the fight, but the form in which trade unionism has stagnated is unsuited for the struggle. In place of the petrified old bureaucratic leadership in the trade unions, the workers must develop new leaders. In place of the complete isolation or loose federation of

the different crafts, there must be inaugurated the complete amalgamation.

The last struggles have revealed terrifying examples of organizational laxity. The bituminous miners had already come to terms with the bosses, while the anthracite miners were still on strike. While seven railroad craft unions conducted a desperate fight for their very lives, the nine other railroad craft unions remained at the service of the employers, witnessing with criminal indifference the fate of their fighting fellow workers. The organization of the miners did not cooperate with the organizations of the railroad workers. The American Federation of Labor as a whole did nothing to help the hundreds of thousands who were in the struggle, except to give them empty phrases of sympathy.

More than a million workers were in the struggle! Hundreds of thousands of skilled and unskilled workers, American and foreign workers, old organized workers, and workers up to that time unorganized, stood in the line of battle. Capitalism helps in producing uniformity in the American working class! But the backward form of organization of the American trade unions, and the reactionary attitude of the labor leaders, obstructed the realization of organizational unity.

During this time, the mighty executive committee of the American capitalists—the Government—came to the help of the capitalists with its entire force. The President, administration, Congress and the courts, as a unit did nothing but suppress the working class.

Scores of injunctions against the struggling workers were issued. Armed force was used against the striking workers in no less than fifteen states. A plan had been publicly made to entrust General Pershing with the "military settlement of the strike." In the Coronado decision, the Supreme Court had already strangled the workers. But every other arbitrary act of the administration and the courts was exceeded by the Daugherty injunction. Government by injunction, de-

notes the complete suppression, not only of the rights of free speech, free press and assemblage, but of the most elementary rights of the workers to have contact with one another.

The government of the capitalists intends to go further. By legislation, the railroad workers and miners are to be deprived of the right to strike. The right of picketing has practically been taken away. The capitalist government intends to abolish defense against scabbing from the world by the terrifying spectacle of the trial of the 450 miners in Herrin. The official slogan of the government is: the militant workers must be persecuted even if the famous rights of the American Constitution be thereby destroyed. The infamous raid on the Communists in Bridgeman, Michigan, the raid on the Trade Union Educational League in Chicago, the attack on several hundred members of the I. W. W. in Portland, Ore., the daily threats by Daugherty and Burns against the "Reds", with everything from a Communist Convention or the living wage to a speech by a reformist United States Senator being classed as "Red", demonstrates that the government is prepared to demolish the trade union movement. Exceptional laws are to be enacted to shackle the foreign workers, who are the workers in the great basic industries. The government is to be given the right of compulsory arbitration in all industrial struggles, in the name of "industrial peace."

The machinery of the Department of Justice is constantly expanding. Its budget is growing. Its apparatus, which resembles that of secret criminal organizations, lends its hand to every act against the workers, with the use of spies, stool pigeons and agents provocateur. The secret spy organizations were increased to tremendous proportions by the War and were made a harrassing power in the life of every citizen. This was established by the "Interchurch Investigation Committee," in the following manner:

"During the War a number of able patriotic American citizens, lawyers, etc., as officers in the army or as Federal officials under the Department of Justice,

became acquainted with this wide-spread intimate connection between 'undercover' systems and Federal authorities and became seriously disquieted partly because of the possibility that, in such a system, governmental power might be put at the mercy of mercenary and interested men, or might lead to the flagrant misuse of such influence in behalf of private ends. Since the armistice several of these ex-officials have publicly criticized the whole system, without visible reform resulting. During the steel strike the same system, a year after the armistice, was worked hard. The undoubted existence of a fractional percentage of 'alien radicals' was capitalized, with Government assistance, in order to disorganize bodies of strikers whose loyalty was of unquestionable legal standing."

Secretary of War Weeks, in a speech before the Army and Navy Club on October 23rd, declared it as a part of the Government War program, not only to increase the size of the standing army, but to compel every man between 18 and 50 to have military training.

While the capitalist Government is equipping itself with poison gases, tanks and dreadnaughts, with the most modern weapons of war, for the class struggle against the workers, the petrified Mr. Gompers intends to conduct the defense of the workers with bean-shooters, arrows and canoes, with impotent weapons of the Non-Partisan Policy of the American Federation of Labor.

The Gompers bureaucracy has stuck fast to the Non-Partisan Policy for more than a decade, in spite of the fact that this policy has brought failure after failure, and today is absolutely bankrupt.

The Constitution of the A. F. of L. States: "Party politics, whether they be Democratic, Republican, Socialist, Populist, prohibitionist or any other, shall have no place in the convention of the A. F. of L." But this anti-political Constitution of the A. F. of L. did not prevent the Gompers clique from handing over the whole of the organized labor movement, as far as

its loose struture would permit, either to the Democrats in national elections, or to the Republicans in local campaigns. The A. F. of L. administration always opposed independent working class political action by using the slogan that political agitation would destroy the unity of the working class. The truth, however, is that the administration of the A. F. of L. always broke up the unity of the workers by simply giving to the capitalist parties the major part of the political power of the workers.

The anti-political policy was merely in the Constitution of the A. F. of L., and in 1906, the A. F. of L. began "practical" politics.

In that year, the A. F. of L. formed its notorious "non-partisan policy," and issued the watchword: "Reward our friends and punish our enemies." In other words, the workers had handed over to the capitalists the task of representing politically the whole labor movement. The "friends" and "enemies" were selected from among the capitalist parties which were saturated, to their marrow, with capitalist interests. And the method of selecting them was that a politician would make a promise, which he generally broke after election. The Gompers administration adhered, with stringent conservation, to this policy of treason to the workers, in spite of the fact that it could book only two results: first, it corrupted the workers by filling them with capitalist ideas and preventing the formation of class-consciousness in the workers; second, in daily practice it betrayed the interests of the workers to the fraud of the capitalist parties and the arbitrariness of the government.

In 1918 Gompers said: "The A. F. of L. carried on in 1906 its non-partisan political campaign with striking success." What does this "striknig success" consist of? The meeting of the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. on December 8, 1919, stated the following about this "success:"

"Whereas, a most bitter and unwarranted propaganda is in progress in Congress for the purpose

of misrepresenting the Trade Union movement, and its hopes and desires; and

"Whereas, this propaganda is for the purpose of preparing the people for reactionary legislation, that will not only enslave the workers, but will endanger the constitutional rights of the great mass of the people, etc."

From 1906 to 1920 the A. F. of L. continued, with stubborn and naive persistency, the bourgeois policy of "rewarding the friends and punishing the enemies of labor." The results were, as stated by the A. F. of L. on February 12, 1920: "Scorned by Congress, ridiculed and misrepresented by many members of both Houses, the American labor movement finds it necessary to apply vigorously its long and well established non-partisan policy."

Congress "scorned" the workers! The members of both Houses "ridiculed and misrepresented" the workers! Organized labor has no representation in politics! Nevertheless, the old miserable stuttering is continued! We "reward" our friends, we "punish" our enemies! And what was the result of the elections of 1920 with this 'long and well established non-partisan policy?' Was an end put to the "scorn" and "misrepresentation" which the capitalist congressional politicians heaped upon the workers? Were the enemies of labor punished? Were the friends of labor elected to Congress?

The report at the annual convention of the A. F. of L. in 1921 gives us an answer to these questions. The convention declared that the results of the non-partisan political campaign are in doubt since "it is difficult to appraise accurately the temperament and attitude of many of the men elected to both the House and Senate." From 1906 to 1920, the policy of "rewarding the friends and punishing the enemies" of labor within the capitalist parties has had the glorious result that the A. F. of L. must complain that it cannot distinguish between its friends and its enemies.

But that did not prevent Gompers from shamelessly issuing the same fraudulent slogan in 1922. At its

meeting in September 1922 the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. proclaimed the continuation of the non-partisan policy, the punishing of the capitalist enemies and the rewarding of the same capitalist friends.

Notwithstanding the tremendous efforts of the Gompers clique, ever larger masses of workers recognize the bankruptcy of this policy, and with increasing insistence demand an independent labor political party. In 1918 the California Federation of Labor and the Chicago Federation of Labor adopted resolutions on the necessity of a Labor Party. In 1919 the Illinois and the Pennsylvania State Federations of Labor demanded a national Labor Party. In the same year the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers accepted the stand in favor of a Labor Party. In 1920 the State Federations of Labor of Michigan and Indiana recognized the necessity of a Labor Party. In 1921 the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor endorsed a Labor Party and the United Mine Workers of America denounced the non-partisan policy of Gompers, declaring for an independent Labor Party and calling upon the A. F. of L. to act.

On February 20 and 21, 1922, on the call of sixteen railway crafts unions, the Conference for Progressive Political Action was called to order. Immense labor organization sent their representatives to this conference. Eighteen international unions belonging to the A. F. of L. had delegates. Among these were eleven of the railroad craft unions and the United Mine Workers. In addition, seven unions outside the A. F. of L. had delegates, among them being the railway organizations and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Large farmer associations were represented.

In spite of its historical significance this Conference came to no definite conclusions. A Labor Party was not organized.

Since that time, the movement has not stood still. A number of important labor organizations have ac-

cepted the idea of the formation of a Labor Party. Among them was the International Typographical Union. The most important fact is that on December 11, 1922 there will meet in Cleveland the Conference of the large unions opposed to the non-partisan policy of the president of the A. F. of L.

The Conference in February stated in its manifesto: "The Conference agrees that the time is ripe for progressive political action, but that the organization of a new party should await developments."

It is our opinion that it was a mistake to advocate a policy of postponement, and we believe also that it was a mistake that Hillquit's jesuitism was allowed to prevent the adoption of a political program. It was also a big mistake that the most conscious and militant element of the working class, the Workers Party, was not represented at the conference.

But we shall not dwell critically on the past. We wish to present a program for the future.

The December Conference owes it to the American Labor movement to create a big independent political party of the workers, the Labor Party.

If this Labor Party is to grow, it must be built on the trade unions.

If the new Labor Party is not to sink into a swamp without any principles, it must admit the left wing of the working class, the Communistic Workers Party and the Proletarian Party.

The Labor Party must adopt a class-conscious program. A program not considering the interests of the capitalists, but only the interests of the workers. A program clearly seeing the goal: the abolition of wage slavery the establishment of a workers' republic and a collectivist system of production. Sooner or later, a Labor Party will inevitably adopt such a program. It should do so at the moment of its birth.

The Labor Party must be the class party of the working class, but it must admit the discontented masses of the poor and the tenant farmers. The political organization of the workers and the farmers is

one of the surest guarantees for the victory of the working class, but only if the political leadership is in the hands of the workers.

A Labor Party only deserves the name of the party of the working class if it is built in this form. And this Labor Party must be born if the American labor movement does not wish to be annihilated.

Against the united offensive of the organized capitalists and the government power, the workers must transform the trade unions into fighting weapons and create their own independent political party.

Amalgamation, or annihilation!

An independent Labor Party, or the military dictatorship of the capitalists!

The workers of America stand before this decision, and only those who willingly betray, as the hirelings of the bourgeoisie, or else cowardly, broken-down, senile leaders with no vision, can advise the workers to go the way of suicide and to weld their own chains.

The workers are forced to fight for their own existence and for the future of all society.

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