

Three Lessons—New York, Albany, Chicago

By JOHN PEPPER

The First Lesson

These three cities symbolize three stations of the Labor Party movement and show the application of three different tactics.

New York is the seat of the American Labor Party. The American Labor Party, founded by the Socialist Party and called "American," most likely because it is not a national organization, only a local city group. In the creation of this remarkable "American" local organization, the Socialist Party was aided by the Farmer-Labor Party of New York and a few Jewish trade unions. The Farmer-Labor Party of New York is another marvelous creature, it is not a party, but has a similar organization in New York, and is in contact with the national organization of the old Farmer-Labor Party. It did not even send delegates to the July 3rd Convention at Chicago.

The role of the laboring masses is performed in this "Party" by De Hunt, the journalists, and the leaders of the trade unions for the masses by Lefkowitz, the teacher. The American Labor Party was created at the very outset as a private institution of the Socialist Party, and has never for a moment represented anything but the Socialist Party and its voters. The Jewish trade unions belonging to it do not represent any addition but consist of the old stock of Socialist Party voters. When a part of the trade union movement of New York and the Workers Party tried to join the new organization, they were greeted with sabotage and expulsion.

The American Labor Party has never for a moment been anything but a disguised Socialist Party. The Socialist Party felt that it was ruptured and that its new name did not fit the old, dubious form. The Socialist Party felt that it is no longer being taken seriously and it donned a new mask. In Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, Snug the joiner disguises himself in a lion's skin and Bottom the Weaver in a donkey's skin. The Socialist Party was—Lefkowitz and its donkey's head—De Hunt. No wonder that no one was frightened at the American Labor Party and that no one fell in love with it, that no one has taken it seriously. The American Labor Party—absolutely—not even the Socialist Party itself. The Socialist Party decided recently that at the next election in New York it would put up its candidates on the Socialist Party ticket, and would drop the sign of the American Labor Party.

The American Labor Party is dead. No sooner was it born, than it was dead. The Socialist Party was its midwife and the Socialist Party was its baby-farmer. The fate of the American Labor Party shows

clearly the lesson that it is impossible to create a real Labor Party without the rank and file and the national organization of the Labor Party. The nation New York in the history of the Labor Party movement shows clearly that a so-called Labor Party must disintegrate after a brief existence if it is simply a new name for an existing small political group.

The Second Lesson

Albany was the headquarters of the New York State Convention of the National Conference for Progressive Political Action. The rank and file were present at this convention:—1—The Socialist Party; 2—Some representatives of the rank and file of the trade unions; 3—Railroad leaders who compose part of the Democratic Tammany Hall organization.

The railroad leaders did not want a Labor Party, but wanted immediate participation in the primaries of the old capitalist parties. Their aim was the very same as that of the official American Federation of Labor with old Gompers along. They had the slogan "We are the friends of the workers and the friends of the friends."

Their aim was that of Johnson, the leader of the Cleveland Conference for Progressive Political Action. A part of the rank and file delegation was class-conscious and wanted the immediate formation of the Labor Party. Another part was not class-conscious, but represented the feelings of disatisfied workers and wanted some kind of action without delay.

The Socialist Party went to Albany in order to represent "Independent Political Action," but at the same time it was anxious not to lose the friendship of the railroad leaders.

The Socialist Party leaders, as over-

sick politicians, wanted to square the circle, with the only result that the railroad leaders beat the Socialist round-heads into the square-heads.

The Socialist Party did not dare to fight in Albany for the idea of a Labor Party, trembling to lose the friendship of the railroad leaders. It hoped that the Labor Party in Albany, in order to gain the favor of the official railroad brotherhoods, in the same way that it betrayed the Labor Party in Cleveland so as to win the favor of Johnson and Keating, and as it betrayed the idea of a Labor Party to be tolerated by Gompers.

The Socialist Party no longer strives to gain the support of the revolutionary rank and file, for the very reason that the rank and file is revolutionary. And its whole tactic is to betray the rank and file with the reactionary labor leaders just because they are reactionary.

Albany stands for the greatest defeat in the political career of the Socialist Party. In 1919 it lost the confidence of the rank and file. Since then, it has not succeeded in striking

roots in the labor movement. And in Albany its plan of alliance with the old capitalist parties has not been realized.

The labor leaders in Albany know what they wanted. They were against the formation of the Labor Party and they wanted immediate action within the old capitalist parties. The only tactic which could have led the railroad leaders to victory would have been: 1—Stop the formation of the Labor Party; 2—Appeal to the rank and file against the leaders; But the Socialist Party had the dogma, as formulated by Gompers, that the rank and file and the leaders of the workers must be separated. The Socialist Party has the dogma that the Labor Party can be formed only when, not the rank and file are alone for it, but also the big international unions, in other words, the labor officials. The Socialist Party leaders are not for bankruptcy in Albany, because these dogmas are just as true for Marxism as science as the dogma of the virgin birth by Mary is true for natural science. Neither Gompers nor Johnson will ever bring about the creation of the Labor Party, leaders over the political corpses of the \$25,000 a year labor leaders. The process of creation of the Labor Party, in other words, the process of the separation of the rank and file from the influence of the high labor officials. It is probable that the pressure of the rank and file will over a big part of the small officials for the idea of the Labor Party. It is even possible that when the pressure from the rank and file will greater, some of the high officials will go willy nilly with the Labor Party movement. But the high labor officials as a stratum will never be leaders in the Labor Party movement in America and will serve to the last as the Praetorian Guard of the capitalists. The greatest lesson of Albany is that in the United States the idea of a Labor Party can win only thru an appeal to the rank and file and only thru the fight against the reactionary leaders.

The Third Lesson

The July 3rd Convention at Chicago presents the third tactical lesson. There were three distinct delegations:—1—The old Farmer-Labor Party; 2—A rank and file representation of over 600,000 workers, and farmers; 3—The Workers Party.

The Workers Party faced a critical tactical situation at the July 3rd Convention. It knew that the convention would be a pure rank and file convention and that none of the national and international unions would be represented. It knew that the whole officialdom of the labor movement is against the Labor Party and that the Workers Party therefore waged the most energetic fight for the immediate formation of a Labor Party.

For the last forty years Johnson has been the spokesman of the railroad leaders. Johnson and the old Farmer-Labor Party were for the Labor Party idea, but only if they could realize it in "respectable" companies, and the company of an railroad high and mighty officials of former and workers came to Chicago in order that something be done immediately, and in general were in favor of immediate formation of the Labor Party. And it was a great victory for the old Farmer-Labor Party over the Labor Party; we proposed five places on the National Executive Committee for the Farmer-Labor Party, and only two for us; we wanted to make every convention of the Workers Party in the last year has been developing a more and more intensive propaganda for the idea of the Labor Party.

What sort of tactic was the Workers Party compelled to employ in this situation?

In contrast to the Socialist Party and its central role, all the workers who believe that the whole social development in the United States is nothing but a vicious circle, the Workers Party holds to the opinion that the recent development of three new facts: 1—Centralization of the government; 2—Centralization of the working class; 3—Dissolution of the old parties, has made the formation of a Labor Party not only possible, but inevitable. The lessons of the Cleveland Conference and the lessons of the amalgamation movement have proven conclusively that the workers of the Labor Party in America takes a different direction than in Great Britain. It will be impelled not from above by the officials, but from below by the rank and file.

The Central Executive Committee of our party therefore before this July 3rd convention that it would not stop in Chicago the tactic of the Socialist Party in New York in the formation of the American Labor Party; that it would not force the formation of the Labor Party in case only the old Farmer-Labor Party and Workers Party should appear at the Chicago Convention. For the Labor Party must not be degraded to a new name for an old, small, political group but must be based on trade unions and farmers organization.

After careful evaluation and after three days debate decided that the representation of half a million workers and farmers would form a sufficiently broad basis upon which to found the Labor Party. There were delegations from the Workers Party numbering 600,000 workers and farmers. The Workers Party therefore waged the most energetic fight for the immediate formation of a Labor Party.

The officials of the Chicago Federation of Labor and the old Farmer-Labor Party were frightened back at their own courage. After much hesitation and wavering they reveal

their faces as traitors, and determined to go on with their old, old ways. Do they want to admit the Workers Party into the Labor Party?

The negotiations committee of our party tried every means to secure a compromise. We offered the old Farmer-Labor Party the basis of the Federated Farmers-Labor Party; we proposed five places on the National Executive Committee for the Farmer-Labor Party, and only two for us; we wanted to make every convention of the Workers Party on the basis of the Federated Farmers-Labor Party; we proposed five

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