

# The First Mass Party of American Workers and Farmers

By JOHN PEPPER

**A Party of 600,000 Farmers and Workers.**

Summed up in a single phrase, the historical significance of the July 3rd convention is this: The first real mass party of American workers and farmers has been founded in Chicago.

The 740 delegates, who assembled in Chicago, represented not less than 616,000 workers and farmers.

The new Federated Farmer-Labor Party is a mass party. It is the first mass party of workers and farmers in the United States. Mass is something relative. Historical circumstances decide whether 10,000 or a million stand for a mass. But no one can deny that a party of 600,000 workers and farmers is a real mass party. If one knows that the Socialist Party

has only 12,000, the Workers Party only 20,000 members, and the old Socialist Party at the zenith of its development had no more than 100,000 members:

The Socialist Party, which has already long ago allied itself with the \$25,000 a year labor leaders against the class struggle, declares that the Federated Farmer-Labor Party is no real party, because the big official leaders of the national and international unions are not in it, and because it is, in reality, simply the Communist Party, under another name. The Socialist Party was not represented in the convention. It declared that the laboring masses are not as yet ripe for organizing a Labor Party, and that without the big leaders, the Labor Party could never be organized. The Socialist Party press belittles the July 3rd convention because it organized the Federated Farmer-Labor Party without the big leaders, and against them, though with the participation of 616,000 workers and farmers. The Socialist Party today is only a jackal of the battle-fields of the class struggle. It fears the battle, but always appears after the battle, in order to steal something from the spoils.

## A Party of Officials or of Rank and File?

The new Federated Farmer-Labor Party is no artificial product of a mere doctrine, but is the result of a special American development. It does not ape the British Labor Party. It was not formed from the top by big officials of the American Federation of Labor and of national and international unions. It is a creation of the rank and file, a creation of local unions, city bodies, and state organizations. The new party does not, like the British Labor Party, comprise nearly the entire working class, but only the left wing of the labor and farmer movements. And it does not copy the British Labor Party in this regard also—that it accepted the Communists, the Workers Party, into its ranks, from the very first.

In spite of all Socialist theorists, the American movement does not wish to follow the "brilliant" example of the British labor leaders. The American Socialists long for the time when they could imitate the example of the British Labor Party, the official opposition of His British Majesty. But Gompers is not Smillie or Macdonald. He sells the workers

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# THE FIRST MASS PARTY OF THE AMERICAN WORKERS AND FARMERS

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openly to the capitalists of the old Republican and Democratic parties. And even Johnston and the leaders of the mighty Railroad Brotherhoods do not wish to form a Labor Party. It is their wish to deliver the votes of the workers and exploited farmers to the La Follette group, to the political representation of the lower middle class and well-to-do farmers. The Cleveland Conference of December 11, 1922, showed clearly that neither the Johnston clique nor the Socialist Party sincerely wish to form a Labor Party. The progressive officials have showed themselves just as much fakery as the conservative officials.

As the Farmer-Labor Party issued the call for the July 3rd convention, that meant nothing else but the liquidation of the last illusion that the big leaders of the American labor movement would ever lead the workers in an independent political struggle. We Communists at that time criticized the split, not because we had any trust in the officials but because we hoped that if the militant elements would stay in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, they would sweep along ever greater masses against the officials. At the moment that the split was made, when the militant elements decided to carry on an independent action, the Workers Party accepted the fact, and immediately declared that it would participate in the July 3rd convention.

The Farmer-Labor Party, which was leader of the shilly-shally center in the Cleveland conference, had not seen clearly through the consequences of its own tactics. It did not see clearly that its split from the Cleveland conference denoted a break with the entire officialdom of the Amer-

ican Federation of Labor and the railroad brotherhoods, and it waited for the officials of the national and international unions and the Socialist Party to come to the July 3rd convention. They did not understand the situation—that the longing of the masses for the Labor Party was strong enough to bring the delegates of the rank and file to the convention, but not strong enough as yet, to drive the labor officials to the formation of a Labor Party.

**Luck and End of the Farmer Labor Party.**

The leaders of the Farmer-Labor Party—Fitzpatrick, Nockels, Buck and Brown—set the rank and file into motion. But as the mighty rank and file, dominated by a militant spirit, gathered at the convention, these leaders were frightened back before their own bravery and began to fight against the convention. They called together the convention in order to found a Labor Party. But when the convention took its task seriously, and set itself to forming a Labor Party, they wished to disrupt the convention. Like Cronos, the Greek god, they wished to devour their own child immediately upon its birth. But the convention, like Zeus, the son of Cronos, showed itself stronger than the officials of the Farmer-Labor Party, and dethroned the whole officialdom of the Farmer-Labor Party, proclaiming itself sovereign. Fitzpatrick, Buck and Brown played a sorry role in the convention. In Cleveland they still spoke for the idea of a Labor Party. In Chicago they fought against the idea of a Labor Party. After the Cleveland conference, Fitzpatrick declared that they were splitting because that conference merely reviewed the vague phrase of progressive political action, but sabotaged

the organization of an independent Labor Party. In Chicago Fitzpatrick declared himself for the vague phrase of independent political action, and sabotaged the formation of an independent Labor Party. In Cleveland he made the split for the Labor Party. In Chicago he made the split against the Labor Party.

In Cleveland, the Farmer-Labor Party officials were still for accepting the Workers Party delegates, in Chicago they conducted a desperate fight against admitting the Communists. Fitzpatrick is an old fighter and an old opponent of Gompers. He has merited much in the labor movement, but at the July 3rd convention he made a speech against the Labor Party, against the Third International, against the Communists, against Foster, a speech which might just as well have been made by Samuel Gompers. The tactic of the officials of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party has brought ruin to them and to the old Farmer-Labor Party.

At the beginning of the convention, Fitzpatrick was greeted with the greatest ovation and with unanimous enthusiasm of all the delegates, but his last speech at the convention was applauded by not more than thirty to forty persons. Fitzpatrick had entered the Ashland Auditorium as the future leader of the American working class, and left it a politically isolated man. Today he must choose. Either he realizes his mistake and returns to the militants, or he must ally himself with Samuel Gompers against the militants.

**It is a Mass Party!**

The Farmer-Labor Party officials are now trying desperately to continue the existence of the old Farmer-Labor Party. But none of them is a Jesus Christ who can, by miracle, infuse life into a corpse. All state organizations of the Farmer-Labor Party have gone over to the new

Federated Farmer-Labor Party. Only the Cook County organization has remained within the old Farmer-Labor Party. The delegates of Washington, Ohio, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Montana, Idaho and California declared themselves for the new party, and are today on the executive committee of the new party. All farmer organizations of Wisconsin, Nebraska and Oregon have joined the Federated Farmer-Labor Party. The Non-Partisan Leagues of North Dakota, South Dakota and Idaho and the Progressive Party of Nebraska are today affiliated with the new Federated Farmer-Labor Party. All delegates of the miners' union, with the exception of two, joined the new party. Of the 740 delegates, less than fifty delegates remained with Fitzpatrick, outside of the ranks of the new party. The old Farmer-Labor Party officials may now weep and wail that their Labor Party idea has been stolen, that their name has been taken away, and that they wish to continue their old party and will do so. The truth is that not one farmer organization has gone along with them, that all the farmer organizations without exception have joined the new party. The chairman of the new party is a dirt-farmer, a leader of the Western Progressive Farmers. The first vice-chairman is the representative of the Progressive Party of Nebraska, which is a farmer organization. The second vice-chairman is a representative of the farmers of Wisconsin. The Farmer-Labor Party has been reduced to a single organization—Cook County. They went forward to conquer the United States, and they have one county—Cook County.

It is just as ridiculous when the Socialist Party denies that the new Federated Farmer-Labor Party is a real mass organization—the Socialist Party, which was forced to give up the idea of the N. Y. State Farmer-Labor Party, because it feared that the Workers Party would get the

majority there, and even in New York City has thrown away the mask of an American Labor Party, and once more put up its ticket in the name of the Socialist Party.

**The Role of the Workers Party.**

The new party is a mass party. It is a party of the rank and file. It is a party, not only of workers, but also of farmers. It is a ridiculous lie to assert that the Federated Farmer-Labor Party is nothing but a new name for the Workers Party. The Workers Party is a minority in the new party, just as it was a minority in the convention. Of the 740 delegates, the Workers Party had only ten official delegates, and only 170 delegates, who represented various trade unions and other labor organizations. And yet, the convention was almost unanimous on all important questions. The old Farmer-Labor Party officials never received more than fifty or sixty votes. It was not the Workers Party which dominated the convention, but rather the idea of the formation of a genuine Federated Farmer-Labor Party, and the Workers Party was nothing else than a driving force and ideological representative of the idea of independent political action of the worker and farmer. It is just as ridiculous to say that the new party organization is controlled by the Workers Party. The Workers Party is in the minority on the National Executive Committee and the Executive Council of the new party. The Workers Party has not the ambition to control the new party. Its only wish is to strengthen the militant spirit of the new party, to develop its class-consciousness, and to evolve the new party to a real party of the laboring masses. We do not wish to dominate or control the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, but we assert proudly that without the unifying work of the Workers Party, this new party would not have been organized, and that after the betrayal by the

Socialist Party and the bankruptcy of the Farmer-Labor Party, the Workers Party is the only political group in this country which fights consciously and militantly for the idea of a Labor Party.

The 600,000 workers and farmers who have formed the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, are not as yet communists. It would have been a blunder if the Workers Party had proposed a communist program, because a big part of the workers and farmers would have simply run away. In the program of the new party there are many theoretical mistakes, but that is no harm. The prospects of today are such, that even the left wing of the labor movement can be united only with these non-communist, theoretical half-measures. Only thus could the 600,000 farmers and workers be united for organized action.

But there are two points in the resolutions which are an absolute guarantee that the new party is not a reformist party, but will be a really revolutionary, militant party. The first point is the one which declares that the masses must first capture political power before they can have nationalization and public ownership. The second point is the one which declares that the land shall belong to its users. These two points bind the party to the life and death struggle against capitalism.

**The New Immediate Tasks.**

The new Federated Farmer-Labor Party is organized, but the July 3rd convention means only the first step. We must go further, if we would prevent the movement from ending in a fizzle. Four great tasks face us in the near future.

First, we must give a broader basis to the new Federated Farmer-Labor Party. We must call upon the Cleveland Conference for Progressive Political Action, and besides that upon all existing local labor parties, to unite with the new party.

Second, we must exercise a greater and greater pressure from below upon the national and international unions, to force them to join the new party.

Third, we must organize everywhere, from coast to coast, local, city and state units of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

Fourth, we must immediately begin an energetic, nation-wide campaign for the next convention of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, to meet early in 1924. At this convention, there must be present, not hundreds, but thousands of delegates. The next convention must unite, not only the left wing, but the majority of the working class, for conscious political action, and the struggle against the capitalistic class parties, as well as against the lower middle class La Follette and Ford movements.

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