

# FOR A LABOR PARTY

*Recent Revolutionary Changes  
in American Politics*

By JOHN PEPPER



STX

FIFTEEN CENTS

PUBLISHED BY  
WORKERS PARTY OF AMERICA  
799 BROADWAY NEW YORK CITY

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

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# CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
The Problem .....	5

## CHAPTER I.

The Bankruptcy of Third Parties.....	8
The Greenback Party.....	9
The Knights of Labor.....	9
The People's Party.....	10
The Progressive Party.....	11
An Exception.....	12
Republican Party Began As a Third Party.....	14

## CHAPTER II.

Can a Labor Party Grow?.....	15
The Farmers.....	16
The Basis of Growth.....	16
Trade Unions and Labor Party.....	17

## CHAPTER III.

The Development of Centralized Government Power .....	20
War of Independence: Beginning of Centralization.....	21
Civil War Centralization.....	22
The World War: The Great Centralization.....	23
Acquiring a Bureaucracy.....	24
The Government Regulates Daily Life.....	25

## CHAPTER IV.

The Development of a Uniform Working Class....	27
The Working Class Has Its Divisions.....	27
Skilled and Unskilled Workers.....	28
Native and Immigrant Workers.....	29
The Great Leveling Process.....	32

## CHAPTER V.

	<i>Page</i>
Disintegration of the Old Parties.....	37
The Dynamite of the Class Struggle.....	37
Sectional Differences Disappear.....	41

## CHAPTER VI.

The Offensive of Capital and the Non-Partisan Policy of the American Federation of Labor....	43
Bean-Shooters Against Long Range Guns.....	44
Gompers, the Organizer of Defeat.....	47
The "Bugle-Call" of November 7, 1922.....	49

## CHAPTER VII.

The Cleveland Conference.....	53
The Great Disappointment.....	54
The Juggernaut of the Right Wing.....	55
A Shilly-Shally Center.....	57
The Left Wing Outside, Yet Inside.....	58
The Socialists Against a Class Party.....	60
Cleveland, Chicago, Washington, New York.....	62
The Great Aftermath.....	65
The July 3rd Convention.....	66
Labor Party or Capitalist Dictatorship.....	67



## THE PROBLEM

The American Labor Movement is at a turning point. In spite of peaceful tendencies of its leaders, and the unconsciousness of a 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, with ever sharper insistence, the same two lessons.

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, every big fight, even if it is for the slightest raise in wages or for the least reduction in hours, inevitably becomes, under the present conditions, an event 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. The first disillusionment of the workers came through the fact that during and after the war Wilson, the Democrat, suppressed them, and

then Harding, the Republican, oppressed them with double cruelty. Then there crystallized the half-conscious idea: The only defense that the workers have is political action independent of either Democratic or Republican parties.

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

Amalgamation and a Labor Party.

Either amalgamation or annihilation! Either formation of a Labor Party or destruction by the juggernaut of the capitalist Government!

The large masses of the workers are beginning 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 for Progressive Political Action which took place on December 11, 1922, represented no less than two million industrial workers and one million farmers. The betrayal on the part of the trade union bureaucrats and the Socialist Party leaders prevented the Cleveland Conference from creating an independent political party of the laboring masses. And yet, the Cleveland Conference was an historical event of the first magnitude because it presented before the entire working class the whole problem of a Labor Party in its breadth and depth. Since Cleveland, the militant workers see more clearly. They have less illusions as regards their leaders, and they grasp the initiative themselves. A whole string of local labor parties have been organized. The Labor Party referendum taken by the Trade Union Educational League has shown that in spite of their leaders, the trade unions desire the Labor Party.

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.

The first edition of this pamphlet was issued on October 15, 1922, and appeared as a statement by the

Workers Party. Since then, great events have taken place. All these events prove the correctness of the political analysis of this pamphlet. The elections of November 7, 1922, have shown the further development of the disintegration of the old parties. The lower middle class movement of the so-called progressives and radicals is crystallizing more and more into a third party. Gompers has pronounced the November 7 elections a tremendous victory for the non-partisan policy of the American Federation of Labor, but the facts have convinced every thinking worker that the policy of "punishing the capitalist enemies and rewarding the capitalist friends," has suffered a decisive defeat. The new facts also show clearly that the idea of a Labor Party is striking deeper and deeper roots in organized labor.

To this second edition of the pamphlet has been added an analysis of the non-partisan policy of the American Federation of Labor in the elections of November 7, 1922, as well as an analysis of the Cleveland Conference.

The first edition appeared a few weeks before the Cleveland Conference. This second edition appears a few weeks before the great political convention which has been called by the Farmer-Labor Party, and to which there have been invited 400 national and international trade unions, all state federations of labor, all city central bodies, 35,000 local unions, all farmers' organizations and all political working class parties. Unless all signs are misleading, we can cast the following horoscope: The Cleveland Conference of December 11, 1922, betrayed the Labor Party, and for that very reason the Chicago convention of July 8, 1923, will lay the foundation of a Labor Party.

*May 15, 1923.*



## CHAPTER I.

### THE BANKRUPTCY OF THIRD PARTIES

In spite of the progress made by the idea of a Labor Party large masses of workers still regard it with skepticism. 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 undertaken 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 only show that these parties have gone bankrupt. It also shows many other interesting things. We perceive an astonishing 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 sets in.

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 lower middle class and farmers, but was later joined by masses of workers.

A tremendous economic crisis shook all America in 1873. According to a characterization by 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 expressly 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 to suit 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 remarkable 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, became 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 lower middle class and the farmers, the People's Party grew to be 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 in 1896 destroyed its independence as a political party. It then 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 outstanding 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 made its appearance in the Democratic Party when "thirty-five progressive Democrats formulated a constitution and organized a Democratic Federation."

Economic conditions became worse and worse. In 1910, a shortlived improvement, but the year 1911 is again a poor year. Babson writes concerning this year: "Investment conditions during 1911 were very unsatisfactory. Dullness was at times exceedingly marked." And, what is even more important, the suffering masses had not as yet forgotten the fearful crisis of 1907—08. 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, lower middle class, 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 this was followed by 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 lower middle 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 going around the question for anyone to say that the third party



disappears because the other two big parties are too strong, in other words, merely that third parties are too weak. But 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 unavoidably 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. The trusts ruined the small shops. The department stores and chain stores spelled the ruin of the small businessmen. The big banks and large railroad systems crushed the farmers in a deadly embrace. Advancing capital pauperized millions and made many other millions dependent. These aroused millions made desperate efforts to beat big capital, through the various third parties. But they could not win because capitalism represented a higher form of production, a finer division of labor, machinery against handicraft, factory against shop, department store against small store. Capitalism represented centralization as against local narrowness.

2. They were never the parties of the big bourgeoisie or of the workers but of the strata between the two, the lower middle class 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 and loose political organizations and had no permanent 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.

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 has been the first and, so far, 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 lower middle class but the then economically progressive capitalist elements of the Northern States. 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 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 as people do, 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 great, 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 with a destiny—the big industrial bourgeoisie, which was the motor of the development of that period, so too, a Labor Party can grow to-day because it also will represent a class with a destiny—the industrial working class which is the motor of the development of our period.

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 middle class 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 the future of the whole of society, since the necessities of economic development are identical with working class interest.

### **The Farmers**

A Labor Party will grow provided it does not attempt to be a party for and of everybody, but rather 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 mortgage farmers. 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 cooperation 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 the former third parties (Greenback Party, People's 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 industry has become more and more the very center of the economic life of the whole nation, has imparted greater importance to the working class than ever before in America.

There are nearly 5,000,000 organized workers in the United States. This powerful organized mass will provide as sound a basis for a Labor Party as the capitalists of the Northern States provided for the Republican Party in the Fifties. A Labor Party will grow



because of its formation 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 was the fate of the other third parties.

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 if it does 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 crises 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 was formed in 1881, that is to say, in a year of prosperity. During the years of depression of the Eighties, it 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 pros-

perity 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 in 1911 to more than 1,760,000. The deteriorated economic conditions in 1911 prevented a substantial growth of the trade unions, so that in 1912 the membership of the A. F. of L. increased only by 30,000 above the year before. Economic conditions improve in 1912—in 1913 the membership of the A. F. of L. reaches nearly two millions and in 1914, over two millions.

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. had 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 ensure that prosperity should 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—21 with all its sufferings and misery has not been forgotten by the workers. The American working class had never passed through such a fearful depression. This crisis has driven the workers with great momentum to the idea of political action. On the other hand, the economic conditions have improved during the last few months. The number of members in the trade unions is beginning 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 previous 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 is the structure of the working class itself.

The whole history of America shows that in this country there has never been 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 Union, according to the original conception, are separate sovereign states. They settled only their mutual business through the Federal Government. The Union 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 here there has been no standing army composed of the masses, no upper layer of bureaucrats becoming more and more



powerful, and more compact 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 country.

Important historical conditions have determined that the centralized State power should not develop in America as it did in the European countries. In Europe, the joint struggle of the capitalists 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 that 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 lower middle class 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 Federal 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. But in 1801 a "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 Republican 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 reaction-

ary 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 elections 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 World War.

The World War increased the power of the Federal Government tremendously, centralizing 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, shipbuilding, 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. A national censorship was inaugurated, and 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 unequaled, 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 Esch-Cummins Act became a law in 1920. All these laws have enlarged the scope of Federal regulation in every respect.

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 increased. 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 corps of employees examined by the Government, and not affected by the change of administration, is continually growing, and has become a government bureaucracy in the European sense of the word.

### **The Government Regulates Daily Life**

In the years since the War, there has arisen a necessity for 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 right of self-government is as much absent now as it was during the War. The Federal Government dictates even to-day 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 exercised against the coal and railroad strikes of the summer, with its deep-going and nationwide 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, had grown into a mammoth monster of centralization, similar to that of the old European governments.

The existence of a centralized government, which interferes in the daily affairs of the working class, forms the basis 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 of the whole capitalist society. The workers could not form such movements, simply because there was no centralized government that the workers were made to feel in every detail of their daily lives. The American labor movement could not conduct a political struggle on a national scale against the central government and for securing political power, as do the workers in the countries of Europe. They could not do so because there has been no permanent centralized government in the United States.

It is a new historical factor that a centralized government has developed in America through the war, for carrying on the war and for the purpose of suppressing the working class. This has provided the fundamental condition for the formation of a nationwide political mass party—for the birth of a Labor Party.



## **CHAPTER IV.**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF A UNIFORM WORKING CLASS**

#### **The Working Class Has Its Divisions**

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 the American working class has not been homogeneous, even if there have been tendencies toward bringing about a uniform working class. 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 are city-bred—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 common interests of the working class as a whole could crystallize 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 were 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.

### **Skilled and Unskilled Workers**

It would lead us too far to go into the details of the reasons why there have grown up such differences between the various sections of the American labor movement. There have been two main differences driving a wedge between the divisions 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 workers and those of foreign stock.

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, paral-

lel 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 labor 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 labor 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 Labor were insensible to the fact that their scheme would retard the progress of the skilled trades."

### **Native and Immigrant Workers**

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 immigrants to America and these work-



ers 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), which deepened the conflict between the American and the foreign workers. British, German and Swedish handicraftsmen 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, as regards both 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 industrial workers or miners, 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. As many as 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 citizens. 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 lower 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 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 aris-

tocracy, with its guild-like isolation, descended to systematic alliance with the capitalists 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 Workers 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 in America 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, are 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 of nation-wide scope, consolidating the varied interests of the different working class strata.

### **The Great Leveling Process**

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. This 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 building 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 worker to the unskilled foreign worker has to-day become a relation, 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 8,795,386 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 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 in the American working class is now being made 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 connection of the trade unions with the bourgeoisie and with the capitalist Government. At the same time, this attack brought the newly persecuted native 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 to-day. 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, railroad and textile strikes, which at one time set 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 Dynamite of the Class Struggle

The gigantic accumulation and concentration of capital, the constantly growing power of big industry, banks and railroads, has crushed the lower middle class more and more, has impoverished the farmers and made them discontented, and has brought about 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 was for the interests of capitalists, farmers and workers to find room inside the same party—this applies to both parties. 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 lower middle class and farmers are trying to wrest 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 LaFollette 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 capitalists and business politicians, will prevent the final victory of the "radical" lower middle class and farmer elements. On the other hand, signs are growing that the conflicts between the factions will lead to a split in both parties. To-day there is frequent collaboration between the conservative Republican and conservative Democratic wings, on the one hand, and between radical Republican and radical Democratic wings, on the other hand. Not only has the class struggle between the farmers and the capitalists broken down the old party lines in Congress (voting on the tariff and bonus questions), but there are even many cases where a conservative Republican votes for a conservative Democrat in order to prevent the election of a radical Republican.

It is rather amusing and characteristic of the present political situation, to read what President Harding's father says about radical Republicans: "With fellows like Borah and LaFollette to deal with, my boy has enough Bolshevists 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 conserv-



ative 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 capitalist elements in both old parties against the radicalism of the farmers. Frank A. Munsey expressed this idea most effectively when he spoke at a 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 to-day. 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 to-day, 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. Garrison, stated in a speech in Denver that he could find no question on 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. It is no longer the interests of the single regions which hold sway to-day in American society, but rather the interests of those classes which have been developed on a nation-wide scale without regard to regions.

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 to the background, and with class antagonisms becoming ever more distinct. 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 America: Above the ruins of the Republican and the Democratic parties there will appear three new parties—the conservative party of the capitalists, the “progressive” party of the small business class and well-to-do farmers, and the political mass party of the workers and 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 expansion of the network of open and secret employers' associations. The growth of the open shop movement. The forcible extension of company unions. Persecution 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 dif-

ferent crafts, there must be inaugurated a real amalgamation.

The last great struggles have revealed terrifying examples of laxity in organization. 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, native and foreign-born workers, workers long organized, and workers hitherto unorganized, all 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.

### **Bean-Shooters Against Long Range Guns**

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, denotes 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 strangle the defense against scabbing, 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 to the demand for a living wage being classed as "Red," demonstrates that the government is prepared to demolish the trade union movement. Exception 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 action 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 harassing power in the life of every citizen. This was made clear 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 criticised 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 23, 1922, 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 to-day is absolutely bankrupt.

## **Gompers, the Organizer of Defeat**

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 structure 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., but in practice, the A. F. of L. began "practical" politics as far back as 1906.

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 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 conservatism, 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, thus preventing the development of class-consciousness; 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 "striking 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 criminal 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 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. is forced to 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.

### **The "Bugle-Call" of November 7, 1922**

The November 7 elections of 1922 were a hard blow to the reactionary Harding administration. The rebellious farmers and the laboring masses helped to victory the reactionary Democrats, as well as a group of so-called progressives. After the elections, Gompers and the American Federation of Labor issued the slogan: "Labor won the elections." The Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee of the American Federation of Labor published a report with this title: "Non-Partisan Successes." In this report Gompers describes how the whole American Federation of Labor was placed in the service of the Non-Partisan campaign. We see the gigantic machinery at work. The hundreds of international and national unions, the state federations, the hundreds of city central bodies were all set in motion. Not less than 2,400 organizers were in the service of the Non-Partisan policy. Nearly 40,000 non-partisan political campaign committees were formed, and a vast mass of leaflets and other agitational material was produced. Gompers is right when he says, "Never in the history of the Non-Partisan movement has there

been such activity among central bodies, local unions, and individual members."

And what was the result of this great effort? Gompers asserts: "It was a tremendous victory." The truth is: It was a tremendous failure.

The Harding administration suffered a defeat, but the labor movement was not the victor. The real victor was the Democratic Party. The workers, misled by Gompers, have given a slap in the face of Harding and Daugherty with one hand, but with the other hand they have helped the Party of Wilson and Palmer into the saddle. The workers had struggled against the government by injunction, for workers' control of trusts. But Gompers misled them. They elected middle class progressives, whose only program was: a futile trust-busting, a so-called trust-regulation, which would enable the petty business men to compete with big business.

Gompers' report (which might just as well have been a report by Baron Munchausen, the most fantastic liar of the world's literature), states that the friends of labor were elected and its enemies defeated. According to the fairy-tale of Gompers, not less than 170 "friendly" Congressmen were elected. In addition, a whole row of state-governors. He enumerated the elected "friendly" Republicans and Democrats, as Homer enumerated the heroes of the Greeks and Trojans. But he draws upon his imagination, and sees nothing of the reality, even as the old blind poet Homer.

Let us examine the heroes of Gompers more closely—these so-called "Friends of Labor." At the head marches Hiram W. Johnson, the Republican senator from California. Johnson was elected on November 7, with the help of Gompers. And on December 13, he declared on the witness-stand, in the Daugherty impeachment hearing, that William J. Burns, the labor hater and baiter is "A man of character, and integrity," and that it was he who had recommended William J. Burns as head of the secret service of the



United States Department of Justice. Gompers' non-partisan policy is responsible for the election of Johnson. And Johnson is responsible for Daugherty's injunction as well as Burns' spy system. The American Federation of Labor is supposedly against Fascism, and helps to elect Senator Johnson in order to defend the American workers against the Fascisti—the same Johnson who at a banquet with the labor-murderer Mussolini said: "After having admired the grandeur of ancient Rome, I have seen the marvel of modern Italy, Professor Mussolini."

Another one of Gompers' heroes. The election of William E. Sweet as Democratic governor of Colorado was also the result of labor's activity. And yet the first act of the "Labor-friend" Sweet, was the appointment of Alva B. Adams as successor of the late Senator Nicholson to the United States Senate. Adams is the lawyer of the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and the Santa Fe Railroad is a warm adherent of the open-shop and the lock-out against union workers. Thus, Gompers, who is supposedly an enemy of the open-shop and the lock-out, induces the workers to elect Mr. Sweet as governor, in order that Mr. Sweet might appoint the open-shop and lock-out lawyer as senator.

And a third one of Gompers' heroes. The Munchausen report of the American Federation of Labor says, "At a meeting of the New York State Federation of Labor, President Gompers mentioned former Governor Smith as next governor of New York. The sentiment expressed in that conviction set the state aflame for Smith. The enormous majority he received demonstrates conclusively that he had the solid support of labor, and the forward-looking citizenship." Hundreds of thousands of workers voted for the Democrat Smith on November 7, 1922. And the result? On April 23, 1923, 500 labor union leaders had to go from New York to Albany to demand of Governor Smith that he finally carry out the twelve points of labor. William F. Kehoe, secretary of the Central Trades and

Labor Council of New York was forced to declare that organized labor has not seen until now any fruit of its political action. Gompers and the American Federation of Labor had "heartily supported" Governor Smith, but Governor Smith did not "heartily support" a single one of the demands of organized labor—neither the state insurance fund, nor the eight-hour law, nor the minimum wage, nor the bill to curb the use of state police in industrial disputes.

The report of the Non-Partisan activities of Gompers tells about the tremendous victories of labor. The reality tells that the non-partisan activities of the American Federation of Labor were merely tremendous betrayals on the part of the trade union bureaucracy. Just before the elections, the "bugle-call" was sounded by the American Federation of Labor. Millions of workers gathered at the signal. They believed that Gompers would lead them to a defense of the working class, and they realized too late that Gompers led them but to the defense of the capitalists.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CLEVELAND CONFERENCE

Notwithstanding the tremendous efforts of the Gompers clique, ever larger masses of workers recognize the bankruptcy of the non-partisan policy, and with increasing insistence demand an independent political party of labor. 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 organizations 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.



The February Conference in Chicago 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 was a betrayal to advocate a policy of postponement. It was a crime to allow Hillquit's Jesuitism to prevent the adoption of a political program. And it is our opinion that it was a mistake for the most conscious and militant element of the working class—the Workers Party not to have sent its delegates to that Conference.

### **The Great Disappointment**

The tremendous labor struggles of the summer of 1922 together with the Daugherty Injunction strengthened the idea of the Labor Party immeasurably among the masses. Great enthusiasm and hope were aroused by the second Conference for Progressive Political Action which was called at Cleveland on December 11, 1922. Not only the militant minority, but millions of the rank and file of the labor movement took it for granted that the Cleveland Conference would at last create a Labor Party. It was the historical task of the Cleveland Conference to launch the independent class-party of the laboring masses; but the Conference simply stooped to a repetition of the non-partisan policy of the American Federation of Labor. It is impossible to sum up the great betrayal of the Conference better than is done in the paper edited by Edward Keating—the most aggressive betrayer in the Cleveland Conference. The December 23, 1922 issue of "Labor," owned by the sixteen railroad labor organizations states:

"The second national meeting of the Conference for Progressive Political Action held in Cleveland, Ohio, on December 11 and 12, reached the following conclusions:

No third party movement at this time.

Adopted a short, clean-cut platform dealing with the outstanding issues of the day.

Arranged to organize the progressives in every state

so they may be ready to achieve big things in the campaign of 1924.

By unanimous vote refused to accept the credentials from the so-called Workers or Communist Party."

Powerful workers' organizations were represented in the Cleveland Conference. The sixteen Associated Recognized Standard Railroad Labor organizations, the United Mine Workers of America, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the International Typographical Union, the whole series of State Federations of labor and central bodies—representing two million industrial workers, the Farmers' National Council, the Farmer-Labor League of America, the National Non-Partisan League—representing a million farmers. Besides, there were the delegates of the Farmer-Labor Party and the Socialist Party.

Three million organized workers and farmers would have been a sufficient basis for a powerful independent political party of the laboring masses. The Workers Party of America recognized the great importance of the Conference and also sent its representatives.

The Conference sat for two days. During these two days the question of the Labor Party was not discussed at all, except in the final short evening session. The motion for forming a Labor Party was defeated by a vote of 64 to 52.

What was the cause for the defeat of the Labor Party idea? The analysis of the make-up of the Conference gives a clear answer to this question.

The Conference from the very beginning was divided into three parts—right wing, center, and left wing.

### **The Juggernaut of the Right Wing**

The right wing consisted of the trade union officialdom. In the first place there were the delegates of the powerful railroad unions, the delegates of the United Mine Workers, and the representatives of the organizations of the well-to-do farmers. The chief spokesmen for this right wing were Johnston and Keating.

The delegation of the Socialist Party associated itself with this right wing, under the leadership of Hillquit, Berger, Branstetter, and ONeal. The right wing did not want to give life to the Labor Party at the Conference. It wished to continue the participation in the primaries of both the old capitalistic parties. A say-nothing platform was adopted. Great care was taken that the platform should be the same as the Washington platform of the Progressive La Follette group. James ONeal, one of the Socialist Party delegates who voted in the resolutions committee against the Labor Party, criticised the chairman of the Conference very aptly (the criticism is also against himself): "Chairman Johnston, in his opening address, confined it to activities within the old parties. The report of the National Committee submitted by Johnston and Howe, also was largely confined to a review of the work done within the old parties. . . . Even the program presented by the sub-committee of the National Committee glorified the capturing of old-party primaries."

Even a Democrat like Senator Wheeler, elected by the farmers of Montana was in a position to make this justifiable criticism of the labor fakers in the Conference: "In the West even the bankers are more radical than in the East the labor leaders."

The right wing had the machinery completely in its power. It was a two days' orgy of Roberts' Rules. Johnston the chairman played with the rules with the unscrupulousness of an experienced card-sharper. Keating, the Democratic ex-Congressman served Czar Johnston as hangman, and Hillquit was the third in the game. With the trickery of a common lawyer he delivered the judicial arguments for the execution of the Labor Party idea. The machinery openly suppressed motions and secretly spirited away documents. The "New Majority" gives an excellent description of this political double-dealing:

"In the resolutions committee, the powers that ruled the conference undertook to report out just what was planned beforehand and nothing more. The committee



did not want resolutions submitted to it; discouraged such submission; considered them reluctantly when they were submitted and then voted not to report upon them at all.

"The man who led this campaign of suppression and soft pedal was Edward T. Keating, chairman of the committee. He developed a poor memory, among other things, so that he forgot motions, except when prodded by the lone minority member. He even 'forgot' to read the minority report, when he was forced by the conference to report out recommendations on resolutions, including the independent political action resolution."

The Socialist Branstetter took the credentials of the Workers Party, but by miracle, the credentials disappeared. As the Workers Party presented new credentials, Branstetter by miracle found the first credentials again. Keating and Branstetter acquitted themselves like veritable heroes of Nick Carter stories.

### **A Shilly-Shally Center**

Over against this unscrupulous Right Wing there stood a shilly-shally Center. It was composed of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and a few other state federations, the delegation of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and representatives of the Farmer-Labor Party. These elements were honest in wishing to form a Labor Party. But they were not firmly determined to fight. Four battles were fought out in the Conference. First, the question of seating the Workers Party. Second, seating of the local unions. Third, the question of resolutions. Fourth, the question of the Labor Party. The Center was defeated in all four battles. The defeat was inevitable because the tactic of the Center was one of hesitation. In the first battle on the question of seating the Workers Party the Center decided to vote in favor, but they did not press the matter. They said that they were keeping their powder dry for the greater struggles

later on. Joseph Schlossberg, one of the delegates of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers makes this criticism in "The Advance" of December 22, 1922: "The Farmer-Labor Party delegates, the liveliest group of the Conference said: 'Let them pass anything they want. We are waiting for the Labor Party resolution. That will tell the story. Nothing else matters.' " But this tactic of hesitation was not peculiar to the Farmer-Labor Party alone. It was the tactic of the whole Center, including the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. It was a suicidal tactic. The Center could have been victorious, if it had undertaken the fight at the very beginning, on the question of seating the Workers Party and the local union delegates. The Center tolerated the expulsion of the Workers Party delegates, tolerated the sabotage against the seating of the local union delegates, thereby degrading itself to a minority, thereby depriving the Conference of the most militant elements. The Center believed that if it sacrificed the Left Wing, it would beat the Right Wing more easily. The Center did on a small scale what Robespierre did on a large scale. Robespierre sent the left wing to the guillotine, thereby making possible the Thermidor victory of the right wing.

### **The Left Wing Outside, Yet Inside**

The Left Wing of the Conference was composed of the Workers Party, and a score of local unions. The representatives of the local unions were suspected of being members of the Workers Party. The majority of the Conference had seated the local unions, but the machinery sabotaged this decision, so that they never really were in. The Workers Party delegation was barred out altogether. And yet the Workers Party played a remarkable role for it was both inside and outside of the Conference. It was outside and yet for two days the only live issue at the Conference was the Workers Party. It was outside, and yet it was so much inside, that it had to be expelled three times over.

The first time that the Workers Party was thrown out was when Keating opposed the acceptance of its credentials, declaring that the Workers Party should be kicked out because it is un-American. Robert D. Cramer of the Minneapolis Trades and Labor Assembly made a brilliant reply: "I certainly hope that the Conference will not take the same attitude in regard to the Workers Party that the Department of Justice and William J. Burns are taking... The very persecution by the Department of Justice and William J. Burns should be sufficient credential for these to sit here." The question was referred back to the credentials committee.

The second time that the Workers Party was thrown out, was when the credentials committee reported and recommended that the delegates of the Workers Party be not seated on the ground that the program of their organization was not in conformity with the principles of the Conference. Though Robert D. Cramer rose and moved that the delegates be seated, just as chairman Johnston put the question, he was disregarded. The chairman of the machine calmly continued, "Is there any objection?" and striking with his mallet on the table immediately added, "There being none, the report is adopted." No one could say a word! No vote was taken. The only right move at this moment would have been an appeal to the chair, but no one attempted it. That blow of the mallet hammered in the first nail into the coffin of the idea of a Labor Party.

The Workers Party was therefore officially and finally thrown out of the Conference. But its spirit was still inside, as the spirit of opposition, as the spirit of class-consciousness, forcing the S. P. delegation on the second day of the Conference to bring up again the question of the exclusion of the Workers Party. The Socialist Party statement declared that the Socialist Party delegates did not believe that the representatives of the Workers Party were agents of the employers nor that they should be excluded because they were un-American. But the Socialist Party



delegation was nevertheless unanimous for the exclusion of the Workers Party because of its "disruptive" tactics, and because the claim was that the Workers Party is against the principle of democracy and in favor of the dictatorship of the working class. That declaration against the Workers Party was the wreath placed by the Socialist Party on the coffin of the idea of a Labor Party.

But though they killed the Workers Party three times at the Cleveland Conference, it was still impossible to kill its spirit. Even its spirit was mightier at the Conference, than all the living there present. Johnston, Keating and Hillquit could have said the same about the Workers Party on the Cleveland field of battle, that Brutus, in Shakespeare's play, says about Julius Ceasar on the Philippi field of battle:

"Oh Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!

Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails."

### **The Socialists Against a Class Party**

The most outstanding fact of the Cleveland Conference was the stand of the Socialist Party against the idea of the class-struggle. The Socialist Party simply became the ally of the Right Wing trade union bureaucrats, thereby preventing the creation of a political party of the working class. The betrayal by Johnston and Keating surprised no one. We all knew that green cheese can never turn into a moon. But the Socialist Party stands supposedly on the basis of the class-struggle, and until Cleveland it had taken a stand, at least theoretically, against participation of workers in the primaries of the old capitalist parties.

The Socialist Party helped to murder the idea of a Labor Party. More than that, it was a premeditated murder. The "Socialist World," official monthly magazine of the Socialist Party, makes the confession in its issue of December, 1922: "The Socialist caucus before the Conference convened decided that it was impossible

to secure the adoption of a Socialist program or even the organization of an independent Labor Party at this Conference." The N. Y. Call of December 11, 1922, states: "However, it would not be helpful to press the matter of an independent party, if it appears that a large number of delegates are not yet ready for it." And the N. Y. Call dubs this policy, "The Policy of tolerance and willingness." We brand it a policy of betrayal and deception.

The Socialist Party was represented on the Organization Committee by Hillquit who submitted a report for participation in the primaries of the old capitalist parties. The Socialist Party was represented on the Platform and Resolutions Committee by James Oneal. Nockles, Secretary of the Chicago Federation of Labor, declared publicly that Oneal voted against reporting out the resolution in favor of the Labor Party. The Socialist Party was represented on the Credentials Committee by Branstetter, and Branstetter "lost" the credentials of the Workers Party, and sabotaged the seating of the local unions, because they were all in favor of the Labor Party. As many committees, so many betrayals.

The Socialist Party betrayed everything. It excluded the left wing from the Conference because the left wing was for the Labor Party. It betrayed the movement for the liberation of class-war prisoners, and pushed the resolution which was only for the liberation of war-time prisoners. It even betrayed the very platform which it had itself proposed. It betrayed the idea of the Labor Party organizationally and ideologically.

We Communists are not the only ones who bear witness to this unexampled betrayal by the Socialist Party. Every participant of the Conference—friends and enemies alike of the Socialist Party, and even the Socialist Party itself—all bear witness to this betrayal. Only a few examples. John Fitzpatrick, in reporting over the Conference to a meeting of the Chicago Federation of Labor on December 17, 1922, declared: "The

Chicago Federation of Labor is not going along with any such scab dual organization of the A. F. of L. as the Cleveland Conference produced. How the Socialists can do so is beyond my understanding."

William H. Johnston, the chairman of the Cleveland Conference and the accomplice of the Socialist Party stated in a telegram to the president of the Washington State Federation of Labor: "All the delegates representing labor organizations—representing more than three million constituents—were opposed to independent party at this time. Representatives of the Socialist Party also opposed at this time on ground that such movement was premature." And in a subsequent letter to the same State Federation, Johnston wrote: "The Socialists read and prepared a statement defining their position and opposing a new party on the ground that it was premature. I might say for the delegates from the Socialist Party that they were most constructive and went along with the labor organizations." (The Washington Co-Operative, January 3, 1923.)

And the Socialist Party itself admits the betrayal. The December, 1922, issue of the official Socialist World states: "In the committee on organization, Comrade Hillquit did not make a hopeless, last ditch fight for the immediate organization of an independent party but, on the contrary, supported and secured a proposal that state conferences be called which are to decide for each state, whether or not they will go in for independent political action."

### **Cleveland, Chicago, Washington, New York**

What is the summary of the Cleveland Conference? It was born of the class-struggle waged by the laboring masses, and it died as a tool of the social peace with the middle class. It was born out of the will of the rank and file, but it became a plaything in the hands of the officialdom. It is an absolute falsehood to assert that the Labor Party was not formed in Cleveland



because the working masses were not sufficiently ripe or radical. On the contrary, the only possible explanation for the betrayal by Johnston and Hillquit is that the masses are becoming more and more militant, while these leaders shun the struggle.

The Cleveland Conference of December 11, can only be understood in the light of the National Railroad Amalgamation Conference of December 9, in Chicago, together with the Workers Party Convention of December 24, in New York, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the Conference of middle class progressives held in Washington, on December 1.

The leaders of the railroad workers were so reactionary on December 11, at Cleveland, because on December 9, not less than 400 delegates from all trades of the whole railroad industry had assembled in Chicago from all parts of the United States. Johnston and Stone fought so desperately in Cleveland against the Workers Party, against the Labor Party, and against the very idea of the class struggle because 400 representatives of the rank and file of their own unions had organized at one stroke under the leadership of the Trade Union Educational League, for amalgamation, for the Labor Party and for the class-struggle. The Socialist Party had to ally itself on December 11, at Cleveland, with the reactionary trade union leadership, because it knew well enough that the Convention of the Workers Party which was to be held on December 24, in New York, would approve the alliance of Communists with all militant rank and file elements of the labor movement. The mere existence of the Workers Party has driven the Socialist Party to become an ally of the most reactionary trade union officialdom.

Not only the workers but also the farmers are becoming increasingly militant. Greater and greater masses of farmers are strenuously demanding of their so-called radical and progressive representatives in Congress to break with the old capitalist parties, and form a third party. The desperate discontent of the farmers forced the La Follette group to call the Wash-

ington Conference on December 1. All the leaders of the Cleveland Conference participated in this Conference—there were Johnston, Stone, Keating and various presidents and chairmen of the railroad labor organizations. There were, in addition, delegates from well-to-do farmers' organizations which were also later represented at Cleveland. The purpose of the Washington Conference was to open the way to a third party which would unite the lower middle class, the farmers, and the workers, against the old parties, under the leadership of the La Follette group. The program and tactic of this progressive movement is, however, only in the interest of the lower middle class, and the well-to-do farmers, and not in the interest of the workers and tenant-farmers. Trade union leaders and farmer leaders came from Washington to Cleveland with their hands tied. They had pledged themselves to repeat in Cleveland the petty bourgeois program of Washington and, in the interest of the lower middle class third party, to prevent the formation of the Labor Party. The La Follette group did not form the third party at the Washington Conference, merely deciding to continue the policy of boring from within the old parties. And this is the reason that the Cleveland Conference decided for participation in the primaries of the old parties.

From the point of view of the class-struggle we have the following groupings within the labor movement, after the Cleveland Conference: 1. Gompers and the official A. F. of L., in alliance with the capitalists, in the form of support of the official Republican and Democratic parties. 2. The bureaucracy of the railroad labor organizations, of the United Mine Workers and the Socialist Party, in alliance with the lower middle class and the well-to-do framers, in the form of support of the La Follette third party movement. The policy of this group was characterized in classic fashion by Keating in his debate with Hillquit in New York. He said: "In Wisconsin I would vote for La Follette, in New York for Meyer London." The political in-

stinct of the Democratic ex-Congressman is correct. All three—La Follette, Keating and Meyer London are all equally the representatives of the lower middle class. 3. The Chicago Federation of Labor and a number of other state federations, the Farmer-Labor Party, the Workers Party and the poor tenant and working farmers dissatisfied with the lukewarm policy of both the La Follette group and the Non-Partisan League. These are the forces for an independent class-party of the laboring masses, for a Labor Party.

### **The Great Aftermath**

The disillusionment of the Center of the Cleveland Conference began soon after Cleveland. Only a few of the most important symptoms. The Minneapolis Review of January 12, 1923, commented as follows upon the Cleveland Conference: "Those captains of the ships of labor were interested in one thing: to wreck the political aspirations of labor upon the rocks of capitalism... The Chicago and Cleveland Conferences were called to prevent the building of the Labor Party, to smash labor forms of action. They pointed out what progressivism, that elusive fish, has done in the capitalist parties. What has it done? Absolutely nothing. On the very first touch with capitalism it demonstrated its loyalty to capitalism."

The Chicago Federation of Labor immediately took a stand against the betrayal by the Cleveland Conference. John Fitzpatrick declared on December 17: "We were willing to go into conference with all other groups to try to work out a common understanding and common direction, but when in Cleveland they definitely adopted a constitution which follows the non-partisan plan of working with the Republican and Democratic parties they become scab and dual to Sam Gompers, and the Chicago Federation of Labor will have nothing to do with such a policy. If we have to go along that reactionary path, we will be regular and go with the A. F. of L., but we are not weakening in our position



that there must be a definitely workers' party. We are going right ahead."

The New Majority of December 23, 1923, declared that the Conference "Had adopted a platform far more conservative than the A. F. of L. political program, thus leaving the A. F. of L. Non-Partisan Political Campaign Committee the left wing of nonpartisan political action for labor, the conference safely ensconcing itself on the extreme tip feather of the extreme right wing."

In the official organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, Joseph Schlossberg, general secretary and editor, writes as follows: "The Conference for Progressive Political Action reaffirmed the Gompers policy of 'rewarding friends and punishing enemies.' It was not formulated in that language. The form is different, but the substance or lack of substance is the same. Capturing Republican and Democratic party primaries is only more complicated and illusory but just as humiliating and discouraging as Gompers' simpler method of rewarding and punishing."

We see all elements of the Center at Cleveland expressing the same bitter disillusionment. They began to see more clearly the main reason for the Cleveland defeat—namely, the tactical failure in not defending the left wing, the Workers Party.

### **The July 3rd Convention**

Out of this disillusionment over the officialdom was born the action of the Farmer-Labor Party which has invited all national and international trade unions, state and city bodies, all local unions, all other workers' organizations and all political workers' parties to meet on July 3, for the purpose of organizing a genuine Labor Party. The Workers Party of America will also take part in this convention. The sabotage by the trade union officialdom might prevent the Convention of July 3, from forming a Labor Party which would

comprise all the millions of organized workers. But certain it is that the Conference will represent hundreds of thousands, and will be the first real step to an organization of a mass-party of the American working class. Let them belittle the July 3 Conference—those perpetually crippled by skepticism, for whom the whole development of the American labor movement is but a vicious circle. Let us not forget that the Socialist Party, even at its zenith, did not have much more than 100,000 members, and did not receive more than a million votes, while the July 3 Convention will form a Labor Party with over half a million members at the very start, which will take away millions of workers' votes from the capitalist parties.

The July 3 Convention is not the end, but only the beginning of the development of a working-class political mass party. It is not artificial, but is really born from the fighting spirit of the rank and file. The best proof is that wherever we turn we see the Labor Party idea striking deeper and deeper roots everywhere. Since the Cleveland Conference, a string of local labor parties have been organized. In many places this has been done together with the Workers Party, despite the resistance of the officialdom and the Socialist Party. The Labor Party referendum of the Trade Union Educational League has been a great success. The convention of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workmen accepted the idea of the Labor Party. Such an important strategical point as the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor admitted the necessity of a Labor Party, to include all political parties—which means also the Workers Party.

### **Labor Party or Capitalist Dictatorship**

The idea of a Labor Party is advancing, and it can no longer be stopped. The Labor Party will be organized despite Gompers, despite Johnston and despite Hillquit. It would be like pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp, to believe that the American Federation of Labor

bureaucracy will form the Labor Party. But the Labor Party can grow only if it is built up by trade unions.

If the new Labor Party is not to sink into a morass, devoid of principles, it must admit the left wing of the working class, the Communistic Workers 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 co-operation 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 would escape annihilation.

Against the united offensive of the organized capitalists and the government, 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 capitalists, or only cowardly, broken-down, senile leaders with no vision, can advise the workers to go the way of slavery and to forge their own chains.

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