
For a Labor Party:

Addenda to the Second Edition, May 15, 1923.

by John Pepper

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The Problem.

The American Labor Movement is at a turning point. In spite of peaceful tendencies of their leaders, in spite of all unconsciousness on the part of the working masses, the Labor Movement is forced into ever larger struggles. These struggles place the workers in increasing measure not only in opposition to the capitalists, but also in opposition to that Executive Committee of the capitalist class which is the Government. Each great struggle in its turn, from the Steel Strike in 1919 to the Coal, Railroad, and Textile Strikes in 1922, dictates to the American workers, ~~the same two lessons~~ with ever sharper insistence, [the 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, with their will or against it — every large fight even if it is for the slightest raise in wages or for the least reduction in hours, becomes, under the present conditions, an act of political significance.

In 1921, the railroad union leaders could retire from the strike with the slogan: "We cannot fight against the government." In 1922, however, the railroad workers had to fight not only against the combinations of corporations, but also against a government power which had never before reached such proportions in America. ~~At first, to their astonishment, the~~

~~workers experienced the fact that during and after the war the Democrat, Wilson, suppressed the workers; and then the Republican Harding oppressed them with double power. [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 the capitalist parties [either Democratic or Republican Parties].~~

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

[Either] Amalgamation or annihilation! Formation of a Labor Party or destruction by the juggernaut of the capitalist government! ~~The workers can choose only between these two dilemmas:~~

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

[The 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 all 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 Decem-

ber 11, 1922, betrayed the Labor Party, and for that very reason the Chicago Convention of July 3, 1923, will lay the foundation of a Labor Party.

May 15, 1923.

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Chapter 6.

The Offensive of Capital and the Non-Partisan Policy of the American Federation of Labor.

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

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

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

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

The last struggles have revealed terrifying examples of organizational laxity. The bituminous min-

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

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

[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 capi-

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

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

"During the war a number of able patriotic American citizens, lawyers, etc., as officers in the army or as Federal officials under the Department of Justice, became acquainted with this widespread intimate connection between 'undercover' systems and Federal authorities and became seriously disquieted partly because of the possibility that, in such a system, governmental power might be put at the mercy of mercenary and interested men, or might lead to the flagrant misuse of such influence in behalf of private ends. Since the armistice several of these ex-officials have publicly criticized the whole system, without visible reform resulting. During the steel strike the same system, a year after the armistice, was worked hard. The undoubted existence of a fractional percentage of 'alien radicals' was capitalized, with government assistance, in order to disorganize bodies of strikers whose loyalty was of

unquestionable legal standing."

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

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

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

[Gompers: The Organizer of Defeat.]

The constitution of the AF 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 AF of L." But this anti-political constitution of the AF 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 AF 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 AF 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 AF of L, and in 1906, the AF of L began "practical" politics.

In that year, the AF of L formed its notorious "non-partisan policy," and issued the watchword: "Reward our friends and punish our enemies." In other words, the workers had handed over to the capitalists the task of representing politically the whole labor

movement. The "friends" and "enemies" were selected from among the capitalist parties which were saturated, to their marrow, with capitalist interests. And the method of selecting them was that a politician would make a promise, which he generally broke after election. The Gompers administration adhered, with stringent conservation, to this policy of treason to the workers, in spite of the fact that it could book only two results: first, it corrupted the workers by filling them with capitalist ideas and preventing the formation of class-consciousness in the workers; second, in daily practice it betrayed the interests of the workers to the fraud of the capitalist parties and the arbitrariness of the government.

In 1918 Gompers said: "The AF 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 AF 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 AF of L continued, with stubborn and naive persistency, the bourgeois policy of "rewarding the friends and punishing the enemies of labor." The results were, as stated by the AF 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 poli-

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

But that did not prevent Gompers from shamelessly issuing the same fraudulent slogan in 1922. At its meeting in September 1922 the Executive Council of the AF 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? Gom-

pers 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 businessmen 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 Alba 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 lockout against union workers. Thus, Gompers, who is supposedly an enemy of the open shop and the lockout, induces the workers to elect Mr. Sweet as Governor, in order that Mr. Sweet might appoint the open shop and lockout 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 a defense of the capitalists.]

[Chapter 7.]

[The Cleveland Conference.]

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

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

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

~~Since that time, the movement has not stood still. A number of important labor organizations have accepted the idea of the formation of a Labor Party. Among them was the International Typographical Union. The most important fact is that on December 11, 1922 there will meet in Cleveland the Conference of the large unions opposed to the non-partisan policy~~

~~of the president of the AF of L.~~

~~The Conference in February stated in its manifesto: "The Conference agrees that the time is ripe for progressive political action, but that the organization of a new party should await developments." It is our opinion that it was a mistake to advocate a policy of postponement, and we believe also that it was a mistake that Hillquit's jesuitism was allowed to prevent the adoption of a political program. It was also a big mistake that the most conscious and militant element of the working class, the Workers Party, was not represented at the conference.~~

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

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

[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 a 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 makeup 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 LaFollette group. James Oneal, one of the Socialist Party delegates who voted in the resolutions committee against the Labor Party, criticized 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 unscrupulous of an experienced cardsharp. 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 lead 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 seat-

†- This assertion misrepresents the Socialist Party's strategic position. The Socialist Party delegation shared the Farmer-Labor Party delegation's desire for the formation of a federative Labor Party by the CPPA, but differed on whether this was a practicable measure at the Cleveland Conference. The FLP left the CPPA following defeat of the Labor Party proposal by the December 1922 Cleveland Conference, while the Socialist Party chose to stay the course, finally quitting after defeat of their proposal for a federative Labor Party by the February 1925 Chicago Convention of the CPPA. —T.D.

ing 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 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 SP 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 Caesar 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 *NY 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 *NY 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 Creden-

tials 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 wartime 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 AF 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 Cooperative*, 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 of the middle classes. 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 the 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 the 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 LaFollette group to call the Washington 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 LaFollette 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 LaFollette 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 AF 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 farmers*, in the form of support of the LaFollette 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 LaFollette, in New

York for Meyer London." The political instinct of the Democratic ex-Congressman is correct. All three — LaFollette, 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 LaFollette 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 the 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 AF 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 AF of L political program, thus leaving the AF 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.] ~~If this Labor Party is to grow, it must be built on the trade unions.~~ [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 swamp without any principles, it must admit the left wing of the working class, the Communistic Workers Party, and the Proletarian Party.

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

The Labor Party must be the class party of the working class, but it must admit the discontented masses of the poor and the tenant farmers. The political cooperation of the workers and the farmers is one of the surest guarantees for the victory of the working class, but only if the political leadership is in the hands of the workers.

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

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

Amalgamation, or annihilation!

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

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

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

*Edited by Tim Davenport, making use of some transcription by Andrew Pollack.
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