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# Detroit Central Cans New Party: Refuses to Affiliate with FFLP as Not Representing Farmers or Labor

by Robert M. Buck

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Attributed to editor Robert Buck.

Another bubble has burst with reference to the new Federated "Farmer-Labor Party." At the Chicago conference [July 3-5, 1923], George M. Tries, representing the Detroit Federation of Labor, went along with the new party, undertaking to commit the organization that sent him.

The Workers Party group controlling the new party hailed this as constituting affiliation of the Detroit central body. They juggled the constitution so that the Detroit Federation of Labor should be entitled to a member on the National Committee of the new party so as to cinch the Detroit "affiliation," and Tries was elected.

But the Detroit Federation of Labor, after hearing the report of its delegate, and after having its Executive Board investigate for 2 weeks and report back, has rejected the new party on the ground that it does not represent what it purports to represent, either farmers or labor. This action was taken by the adoption of a minority report, the majority of the Executive Board having recommended affiliation with the new party.

The following is the text of the minority report adopted:

## **Text of Minority Report.**

Judgment cannot be made upon the Federated Farmer-Labor Party on the basis of the fact that the so-called communist element in the United States, as represented by the Workers Party, controlled the convention which launched

the new party. Any criticism of or refusal to endorse or affiliate with the new party proceeding from that basis would of itself place the Detroit Federation of Labor in a false light before the working class and the general public of this country. Judgment must be passed in the light of other facts. Any mass party of the working class and farmers would deserve the support of the Detroit Federation of Labor in spite of errors in program and method of organization.

In view of the many endorsements of independent political action on the part of farmers and wage workers by the Detroit Federation of Labor, Detroit labor must be regarded as being committed to the principle of a farmer-labor party. The question then to answer is whether or not the Federated Farmer-Labor Party is a mass party representative of the farmers and wage workers of America as at present organized.

The statement has been made that the Federated Farmer-Labor Party was organized by the rank and file of farmers and laborers and not formed from the top down by big officials. An analysis of the representation at the convention would seem to indicate that it was organized from the outside with a view of imposing it upon the labor movement.

Accepting for the moment the claim of the executives of the new party that 600,000 members were represented at the convention it still would fall far short of being generally representative of the thought among farmers and workers. There are presumably over 4 million wage workers organized in the United States. Accurate data of the number of farmers organized are not available.

**Membership is Exaggerated.**

It would be unwise to accept the figure 600,000 as the membership attending the convention and it would be less wise to assume that representatives of anything like that number approve the new party. This is shown by the fact that the new party office has seen fit to discount the tabulated list of membership broadcasted in its press service 25 percent. This list specifies organizations represented totaling 816,935 members. An analysis of the list as presented by the new party itself would seem to indicate that considerable less than 100,000 would be closer to the number that may be said to now be affiliated with or have endorsed the party.

The Detroit Federation of Labor would be very unwise if it would allow itself to be stampeded into an abortive attempt to organize a labor party, the reaction from which is apt to set back the organization of an actual farmer-labor party.

The character of the propaganda being carried on to secure affiliation to the new party is similar to that carried on by other organizations which have proven failures in the United States. In the publicity for the new party the claim is made that "more than 500 local trade unions" and "some 25 central labor bodies" were represented in the convention. Their own list shows but 12 central bodies and 135 local unions. When it is remembered that there are 111 national and international unions, 4 departments, 49 state branches, 901 central bodies, and 493 local trade and federal labor unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, it is plain that no considerable percentage of American labor can be said to be in support of the new party.

Regarding farmer organizations it is more difficult to obtain data. Certainly none of the well known radical national farmers' organizations appear to be with the new party.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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