

THE BALANCE SHEET OF THE PARTY CONTROVERSY TO DATE

By JAY LOVESTONE.

IN view of the fact that the Comintern has not yet spoken directly on the immediate party controversy and that the national convention has not yet been held, it may be considered by some a bit premature to talk of a balance sheet of the party dispute. Still, it is appropriate, on the eve of the second stage of the party controversy, to list briefly the assets and liabilities of the contending groups in the first round of the contest.

Results of Meetings.

In the capital cities of nine of our biggest districts, membership meetings have been held to discuss the party problems. Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis and New Haven have had such meetings for discussion and voting on the thesis before the party.

In this balloting the Foster-Lore theses received a net total of 1516 votes. The combined strength that the followers of extreme right wing of our party of the Two-and-a-Half International tendency in our party, and the crystallizing opportunistic, non-Marxian Cannon-Foster leadership could muster has been registered at about fifteen hundred.

At the same time, to use the expression of the American commission of the executive committee of the Comintern, the Marxian group led by Comrade Ruthenberg, the group of "Communist consciousness" in our party, despite overwhelming odds, succeeded in polling 1286 votes. Thus, against a vicious attack, against a barrage of unparalleled slander, and vilification, against a united front ranging from the extreme right wing of Lore, Doctor Aronson of New York and "Moscow agent" fame, and Fahle Burman to certain extremely left sick comrades, the Marxian group of our party enlightened the membership to such an extent as to be nosed out by only 230 votes thruout the country.

Some Illuminating Sidelights.

But the circumstances and conditions surrounding the contest are far more illuminating and significant for the party than the cold, dry figures at hand.

First of all, the thesis indorsed by the Foster-Lore group was a jumble of false premises and empty promises calculated to appeal to every section of party opinion. To the left sick Communists in our ranks the Foster-Lore group of self-appointed "pure" revolutionists turned a face anti-farmer-labor party in principle. To the extreme right, opportunist elements in our party, the C. E. C. majority held proudly aloft the Lore-Poyntz Burman coat of arms of "militant Communism." To the comrades who still entertained doubts as to timeliness of dropping the united front farmer-labor slogan, the Foster-Lore group yelled: "We are not opposed to the labor party in principle, but not just now, in the future."

The discussion waged in the ranks by the Foster-Lore adherents was precisely along these lines. The futitarian policies of this unholy alliance menacing the progress of the Workers (Communist) Party were agitated for thru an appeal to the most backward and harmful sentiments in the party. Vicious whispering campaigns were organized on a country-wide basis against the C. E. C. minority members and their associates in many districts. The real issues before the party membership were not discussed by the C. E. C. majority or its satellites.

Not a single article was written by any of the Foster-Lore scribes attempting to deal with the political and economic conditions of the country. Not even the slightest effort was made by the Foster-Lore group to analyze the LaFollette movement and its recent development. Not an article was written by the Foster-Lore group to show that the industrial department of the party has made any effort at all to utilize our participation in the industrial and economic struggles for the purpose of increasing the political radicalization of the masses. Not a word was offered in refutation of the criticism made by the C. E. C. minority that the Foster-Lore group still maintains the "supercilious attitude towards the independent unions" it was warned against by the Profintern. Last but

not least, the Foster-Burman group actually stole the livery of Loreism in order to present some sort of a political face to the membership in the discussion.

Foster-Lore Strength at Peak.

No one can deny that the total vote polled by the Foster-Lore group represents its maximum strength. Likewise, no one can deny the fact that the C. E. C. minority strength was not fully mobilized. The C. E. C. majority had at its disposal for winning over the membership and mobilizing its adherents of all stripes the complete state power—the party machinery. Its speakers had the tremendous advantage of speaking first and last in the debates. The Foster-Lore group had its articles placed in the best section of the space allotted to the discussion of party tasks. Certain minority articles were held up in publication for sundry "strategic reasons."

Then Comrade Burman, against the protest of a considerable portion of the rank and file, made outrageous use of the official machinery of the Finnish federation in misrepresenting the issues before the party. Certain organizers of the Young Workers' League displayed their youthful energy in working overtime for the C. E. C. majority while on tour building up the young Communist movement. Nor were the DAILY WORKER machinery and other party agencies neglected. In short, the C. E. C. majority of today, unlike the majority of the C. E. C. of last year, more than utilized the party "state power" in its widest ramifications. In parenthesis, the extraordinary energy of our "educational" department which was temporarily moved to New York might also be mentioned.

The Role of State Power.

Of course, we are not swearing volleys against the C. E. C. majority for its use of the party state power in the controversy. We are charitable enough not even to condemn its repeated flagrant misuse of this state power. We do not deny that the C. E. C. majority—the Foster-Lore group—nosed out the Marxian group of Comrade Ruthenberg by 230 votes. We do not begrudge the Foster-Lore group this paltry majority of 230. It certainly was well-earned, considering the efforts invested and the resources at the command of the Foster-Lore group. In fact, we marvel at the fact that Foster-Lore majority was so slim after the eleventh hour change of rules disfranchising hundreds of comrades at these membership meetings and in view of the lack of facilities at the command of the C. E. C. minority to mobilize its real, full strength in the party.

A Redeeming Feature.

It is plain that the party expression to date is nearly evenly divided. In every big city where the C. E. C. majority position was indorsed, it was done so only thru an organic merger and complete unity of the Foster-Burman group with the Lore followers. In New York, Boston, and Chicago, the solid block of Lore adherents alone gave the majority of the membership meetings to the C. E. C. majority. Consequently, no matter what damage the party controversy might have brought, it at least has brought one inestimable gain to the party. We have in mind the fact that this discussion has once and for all established in the eyes of the membership the unity between the Foster-Burman group and the Lore Two-and-a-Half International group in our party. The growing awareness on the part of our membership of the menace to the party in such an alliance—an alliance in flagrant violation of the last C. I. decision on the American question—can only prove a source of greatest strength towards a speedy galvanizing and complete unification of our Communist ranks for intensified struggles against the exploiters, their government, and the reactionary trade union bureaucracy.

Considering all the obstacles, considering the level of the discussion maintained by the Foster-Lore group, the Workers (Communist) Party should feel highly gratified at the splendid response given by the membership to the Communist policies proposed by the Ruthenberg group. Our Workers (Communist) Party can well face the future, its rapidly growing difficult future, with so firm, with so adamant a Communist backbone in its ranks.

held on Dec. 11, 1922, at which were represented 27 national unions, 8 state federations of labor and various agricultural and political organizations, a motion for "independent political action by the agricultural and industrial workers thru a party of their own" was defeated by a vote of only 52 to 64. According to figures published in the Labor Herald, almost twenty state federations of labor endorsed a labor party in 1923, in addition to hundreds of local and national unions.

In 1924 the farmer-labor majority in the lower house of the legislature of North Dakota, was increased from one to eleven. (New Republic, Nov. 26, 1924). Ayres received over 18,000 votes for United States senator on a farmer-labor ticket, and Putnam received 20,876 for governor. Two years ago the vote for the farmer-labor candidate for governor of Minnesota was 295,479 as compared with 309,758 for the republican candidate. In the recent election the farmer-labor candidate polled 365,000 votes as compared with 400,000 for the republican candidate. As farmer-labor candidate for the U. S. senate, Magnus Johnson received about 375,000 votes against 385,000 for Schall, his opponent. True the Minnesota party is part of the LaFollette movement, which we must severely criticize as such and demand a real labor party, nevertheless the results indicate that the farmer-labor party slogan still retains its popularity.

In Denver the farmer-labor vote for LaFollette was 4,951 in spite of the fact that there was a separate LaFollette-Wheeler ticket.

In Montana an energetic campaign was waged by the farmer-labor party.

These facts and figures show that the farmer-labor party movement is not a mere bubble, which has for some unexplicable reason appeared and suddenly disappeared from the political horizon, but rather that it is a movement which has years of thro-going organization behind it and that its roots are sunk deep in the economic struggle of the industrial and agricultural workers.

LaFollette Movement and F. L. P.

It is true that the LaFollette wave has for the time being engulfed it. Can such a movement, however, be swallowed for long by the present nondescript shadow of an organization headed by LaFollette? Can this vague vacillating, purely temporary alliance of conflicting elements hold the workers who have unmistakably expressed their determination to have a real, independent political party? Are economic conditions at this time for the crystallization of a third middle class party which can retain its hold on the workers who desire a class party?

Unless we are blind to facts we must admit that the LaFollette hedge podge will not be able to hold the workers and farmers who, in the face of increasing exploitation and oppression (a prospect admitted by the majority), will be forced to defend themselves thru the aid of their own political weapon, a labor party. Under these circumstances let us examine for a moment what will be the probable results if we as active trade unionists were to put the majority's policy into effect, i. e., not to "promulgate the slogan of a 'farmer-labor party' at the present time," calling upon the workers instead to join the Workers Party. The value of a slogan can well be tested by its applicability in the trade unions.

In Practice.

Under this policy the members of the Workers Party will then have as their major political task in the labor movement (for political propaganda in the unions must be a prime activity there), to force the acceptance of the complete program of the Workers Party. In the most reactionary organizations, where workers only yesterday were blindly following LaFollette, Davis, yes, and even Coolidge, you will ask the workers to come out for the dictatorship of the proletariat and to join the Workers Party. (See statement on C. P. P. A.) Those militants who have been partially sympathetic with your work in the union, but who are political still confused will be squarely confronted with the issue to accept or reject the complete program of the Workers Party. There will be no other alternative. The result of such a foolhardy policy can only be to prejudice the very elements whose support you can ultimately win and to make it easy for the reactionaries to expel you without a murmur of protest from your fellow workers.

It is a cardinal principle of strategy that you must not expose your weakness to the enemy whom you are fighting. When the issue of supporting the Workers Party comes on the floor, will your sympathizers support you? Of course not. Only the Communists will (if they dare at this time) come out openly in support of the full program of the Workers Party. They will be completely isolated and exposed to the danger of being picked out and expelled by the officials.

Expulsion on such an issue at this time would be comparatively easy. The workers do not realize the importance and necessity of the existence of the Workers Party. The reactionaries will charge that you are in the union, not for the promotion of the interests of the workers, but primarily in the interests of the Workers Party. Immediately you would be

placed upon the defensive, whereas Communists should as a rule be on the offensive. You would have on your hands a difficult job of showing even the most backward workers, even those who voted for Davis and Coolidge, first that they need a political party of their own class (which they have not yet learned) and second that the political party is the Workers Party. To this the majority would reply, "But see what the Workers Party is planning to do about unemployment, child labor, the foreign-born, etc.," and the unsophisticated workers would ask, "What has the Workers Party done about these issues? Has the Workers Party any representatives in congress or the legislature to fight for our interests?" Of course, the Communists understand that these issues cannot be fought out in parliaments, but the masses of workers do not.

A Confession in Bankruptcy.

The majority would have us voluntarily give over the political leadership of the workers to the farmer-laborites and the socialists. During the coming struggle the workers will need a political weapon. The farmer-laborites and the socialists will come out for a labor party. Shall we sit idly by, shall we merely oppose the proposition and present no counter-proposal or shall we oppose and present as a counter-proposal, "Join the Workers Party?" In the first case we relinquish our role as the vanguard and the leaders of the workers. In the second we seem to be fault finding only with no constructive to offer. The third proposition is a futile mass appeal at this time, as I have already pointed out.

What a sorry figure we will cut

before the workers, when we the most energetic exponents of the class farmer-labor party idea, now keep silent or oppose it entirely. Will we not rightfully be branded as traitors and turncoats by the workers?

Compare the predicament into which the application of the majority policy places us, with our favorable position under the minority proposition. As soon as we actively and energetically come out for a class farmer-labor party, a national federation of workers' and farmers' organizations, both economic and political, the leaders are forced to take the defensive. Those elements which are not yet with us but who are in favor of class political action, must line up with us. The masses who are not yet amenable to the complete program and principles of the Workers Party can easily understand and sympathize with the slogan for a real party representing all the forces fighting in the struggle for the workers and farmers of the country. We sink our roots more and more firmly in the masses and they learn to have confidence in us.

We can, therefore, the more easily state who we are and what we stand for. We do not place the backward masses in the position of taking or leaving the program of the Workers Party, for which they are not yet ready. However, we energetically and systematically enlighten the more class-conscious workers as to our full program, and its real meaning. These elements we can win to our party by such a plan of education and activity, on the basis of a realistic policy grounded on the objective conditions which the workers are facing today.

Contact With the Masses, Not Isolation

By HENRY BLEECKER.

THE movement for a farmer-labor party which started a few years ago was swallowed by the LaFollette movement. For this reason we must abandon the slogan, "For a farmer-labor party," and start building the Workers Party according to the thesis of the majority of the central executive committee. Instead of a farmer-labor party slogan they propose the slogan "For a labor congress."

Conditions Which Created the Farmer-Labor Party Movement.

The movement for a farmer-labor party started to crystallize during the year of 1919-20. This movement was characterized by: (a) unemployment; (b) reduction of wages; (c) strikes; (d) open shop drive; (e) injunctions. In 1921 we passed thru a period of economic depression, six million workers were unemployed as a result of this. Those who secured work were forced to work for reduced wages.

In the steel strike of 1919 and the miners' strike of 1920 the government used all its forces to break these strikes: Federal troops, injunctions, etc. The realization of the workers that the government is protecting the interests of the bosses stimulated them toward independent political action, with the result of the formation of the Chicago labor party. But, this movement made little progress until 1922 when the shopmen and miners' strike broke out. The government again played the role of defender for the capitalists. The farmers were suffering from the same economic depression. Millions of farmers were driven into bankruptcy. The farms were deserted, and the oppressed farmers made way for the city in search of work. This fermentation among the workers and farmers brought the farmer-labor movement to the fore. Farmer-labor parties sprung up in several states. International unions expressed themselves in favor of independent political action.

The Workers Party and the United Front.

The Workers Party was politically unknown to the masses. Thru its participation in the movement for a farmer-labor party and by applying the United Front tactic in accordance with the instructions of the Comintern, the Workers Party became a factor in the political struggles of the exploited masses.

The LaFollette Movement.

Parallel to the farmer-labor movement, the small bourgeoisie who are also in conflict with the big capitalists began organizing politically, which expressed itself in the formation of the progressive bloc in congress under the leadership of LaFollette.

The call for the June 17 convention for the sake of organizing the workers and farmers into a political party was unsuccessful on account of the attacks of LaFollette and the union bureaucrats of the A. F. of L. The workers and farmers deserted the June 17 convention, and followed LaFollette because they were under the illusion that a farmer-labor party would be created by LaFollette after the election.

Who Voted for LaFollette.

In the article, "Sound the Alarm," written in the WORKER of Nov. 15, Comrade Bittelman states that the petty bourgeoisie deserted LaFollette in the last election because of the terroristic methods used by Wall Street to elect Coolidge, and the promise of certain economic concession on the part of Wall Street to the petty

bourgeoisie. He further proves that the 5,000,000 votes which LaFollette received came mostly from the workers and poor farmers.

The Economic Situation in the Near Future.

In their analysis of the economic situation, the majority of the central executive committee state the following: (Paragraph 6, Economic Situation, majority thesis) The overwhelming weight of economic tendencies now operative, point to an intensification of the class struggle, resulting in renewed efforts of the employing class to cut wages, lengthen hours and to destroy the unions.

We as Communists must draw the conclusion that this unrest among the workers and farmers will again be expressed in a demand for a farmer-labor party, and not to be isolated from this movement we must take an active part in it.

The Majority's Slogan for a Labor Congress.

The majority of the central executive committee are against the farmer-labor party slogan. Why? They claim there is no movement for it. I ask this question, is there a movement for the so-called labor congress which the majority urges us to work for? When we look thru the pages of history of the American working class political movements we find that the idea for independent political action was never expressed in the form of a labor congress. The slogan for a labor congress will only hinder the movement for the formation of a farmer-labor party, which is not only in demand at present but was historically popular, among workers and farmers.

Conclusion.

We expect intensive crises in the immediate future. The workers and poor farmers will again start organizing politically thru a farmer-labor party. It is, therefore, the duty of the Workers Party, if it expects to become a Communist mass party, to take an active part in this movement.

As in the program of the profintern for the Trade Union Educational League, in reference to the labor party.

"The league shall take an active part in the building of the labor party. This movement not only teaches the workers their first lesson in class political action, but it also furnishes a favorable ground for the left wing to fight the trade union bureaucracy and to bring about trade union progress generally. The league must take full advantage of the favorable situation created by the labor party movement."

Comrades, the slogan of a farmer-labor party means contact with the masses. Without this slogan—tends to isolation.

CHICAGO, ATTENTION!

All friendly organizations, T. U. E. L. groups, party branches, language federations and Y. W. L. branches! Arrangements have been made for the following major city affairs. Do not arrange conflicting affairs on these days:

Karl Liebknecht Celebration—Sunday, January 11, Northwest Hall, corner North and Western Aves. Auspices Y. W. L. Local Chicago.

Lenin memorial meeting—Wednesday, Jan. 21, Ashland Auditorium, Van Buren and Ashland. Workers Party, Local Chicago.

The Red Revel—Saturday, Feb. 28, West End Women's Club Hall.

THE FARMER-LABOR PARTY POLICY IN THE UNIONS

By BERT MILLER.

PAT and Mike, two bricklayers from the Emerald Isle, were working one day on the front of a building, when suddenly a portion of the scaffolding collapsed and Mike fell to the street. He lay there for a long time in a state of unconsciousness until a doctor was called. The doctor examined Mike thoroly and pronounced him dead. At that moment, Mike woke up and said, "By God, I ain't dead at all." Whereupon his colleague, Pat, exclaimed in a voice shaking with exasperation, "Shut up, ye fool, don't ye tink de doctor knows wot he's awk in' about?" And so the members of the Workers Party, as well as the

working class in general, are asked to meekly accept the verdict of Bittelman, when he pronounces in tones of extreme unction and finality, that the labor party slogan is dead. Having, like Mike, experienced the advantages of life and real activity, the members of the Workers Party, as well as the workers in general, will be prone to question the solemn verdict of even so "sage" a counsellor as Bittelman. They will instead seriously examine the facts in the situation.

The Development of Farmer-Labor Movement.

In 1920 the national farmer-labor party polled 265,411 votes in 19 states. At the conference of the C. P. P. A. Party. Immediately you would be