

Chicago, St. Paul, Cleveland

By Earl R. Browder

FOR the presidential elections the alignment is at last clear. Coolidge and Davis represent the bi-partisan forces of Wall Street; LaFollette heads the ranks of the middle-class, small capitalists, professional classes and labor bureaucracy; while William Z. Foster, running on a straight Communist (Workers Party) ticket and endorsed by the Farmer-Labor national committee elected at St. Paul, is the leader of all the forces that stand against capitalism.

A Struggle Against Betrayal

The events that have finally produced this alignment consist of a long record of hesitation and betrayal on the part of all the elements except the Communists and their immediate following; and the struggle against that betrayal led by the Workers Party and the Trade Union Educational League. The outstanding points in this history are Chicago (July 3, 1923), St. Paul (June 17, 1924), Cleveland (July 4, 1924), and Chicago again (July 10, 1924), when the nomination of Foster was made as the crystallization of the whole pre-campaign struggle.

In the light of the great betrayals since then, the debacle of John Fitzpatrick in Chicago, July 3, 1923, stands out more clearly than ever for what it was—the surrender to Gompersism. Strenuous attempts have been made to show the issue as that between the immediate demands of the Farmer-Labor Party on the one hand, and the dictatorship of the proletariat on the other. The Communists stated at all times: "Yes, we believe in the dictatorship of the proletariat, and will propagate and fight for it; but in the Farmer-Labor Party we are ready to unite upon the small, immediate demands, with all elements who are really prepared to break with the capitalist parties and throw themselves into the struggle."

The Communists did not insist upon the acceptance of the Communist program by the other elements; they only insisted upon the formation of a real party, they insisted upon a real break with capitalism. It was because Fitzpatrick was too timid to make such a break, because he was consciously or unconsciously preparing for his participation in the betrayal to LaFollette that has since occurred, that he split from the Chicago convention in 1923.

As a result of the Chicago convention, which overwhelmingly followed the Communist lead, the Federated Farmer-Labor Party was formed. Although this organization occupied the central position nationally in the farmer-labor movement, and led in the struggle everywhere for the upbuilding of local and state parties, it was impossible for it to create as yet the centralized national party which could unite, organizationally, all the forces of rebellion against the capitalist parties. It therefore set itself to the task hitherto carried on principally by the Workers Party, to build the United Front, to bring all the farmer-labor forces together into one party for the 1924 campaign.

Rebuilding the United Front

To this end, negotiations were entered into with the various groups of farmer-laborites throughout the country, particularly with Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party which had elected two United States Senators. In November 1923, a conference was held at St. Paul, in which the Communists participated with the representatives of six or seven parties, at which it was agreed to call a national convention to unite all groups for the 1924 campaign, and which elected an Arrangement Committee to carry out the campaign.

The call for a convention on May 30, 1924, at St. Paul, to unify the organized workers and farmers against the capitalist parties, struck a responsive chord among the masses. A great swing toward the St. Paul Committee took place everywhere. The idea was sweeping the country. Union after union endorsed it, state and local parties swung into line one after another, and St. Paul (with the Communists participating and giving the drive its power and cutting-edge) became the leader of the mass movement against Wall Street.

But the misleaders of Labor always serve their masters, the capitalist class, well. They immediately took up the discredited Gompers program of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies", and giving it a new dress in the Conference for Progressive Political Action, laid their plans for side-tracking the great revolt that was brewing, back into the parties of capitalism.

Typical of the "non-partisan" program of the labor bureaucrats, the C. P. P. A. was split

between the supporters of LaFollette, in the republican camp, and of McAdoo in the democratic. For a time it seemed that the railroad union officials, who backed McAdoo because as railroad administrator during the war he had given them permission to collect dues from the railroad workers, would carry the C. P. P. A. into the ranks of the democratic party.

But the disclosures of McAdoo's connections with Doheny in the oil scandal, his million-dollar fees, his connections with the Steel Trust, coming just before the February meeting of the C. P. P. A. at St. Louis, threw the issue into doubt. The C. P. P. A. called a conference for Cleveland, July 4th, after the old party conventions, after refusing all offers of collaboration with the St. Paul Committee in uniting all forces of labor into one convention.

In the meantime LaFollette, tremendously popular among the farmers of the Northwest because of his "war record" and his specious "progressivism" in the Senate, began to take alarm at the definite organizational form being taken by the farmer-labor movement which threatened his scheme of personal control. He issued the word to his lieutenants in the Northwest to postpone the Farmer-Labor Convention which had been set for May 30, 1924.

Communists Fight for Unity

In the entire struggle it was only the Communists who fought throughout for unity, and with a clear vision of how the splitting desires of the labor bureaucrats and capitalist politicians could be combated. They made compromise after compromise—on all questions except principle—and they stood "firm as a rock" (to quote the words of a non-Communist participator) for the complete break with the capitalist parties.

Unity was preserved in the Arrangements Committee of St. Paul on the question of convention date, by compromising on June 17th, instead of May 30. But on May 28th, LaFollette made another attempt to split St. Paul, with a letter denouncing the convention because of the participation of the Communists.

In spite of all the sabotage, a great convention of 600 delegates met in St. Paul on June 17th. And here, too, the struggle for unity and for the protection of the whole movement against treason, fell to the lot of the Communists. The convention was sharply divided on the issue of support to LaFollette, and on the question of the immediate organization of a party. The Communists united the convention through an agreement which provided a class-struggle program of immediate demands, stop-

ping far short of Communism, and for the organization of a campaign committee which should definitely organize the Farmer-Labor Party nationally after the elections.

On the issue of LaFollette, the Workers Party, through William Z. Foster, made the following statement which crystallized and typified its whole fight for unity and against treason:

"Relative to the candidacy of Mr. LaFollette, the position of the Workers Party on the matter is, that in the coming negotiations between the National Committee of the Farmer-Labor Party and other groups relative to combined action upon a presidential candidate, the only basis upon which the Workers Party will accept LaFollette as a candidate is, if he agrees to run as the Farmer-Labor candidate, to accept that party's platform and its control over his electoral campaign and campaign funds."

The convention unanimously nominated Duncan McDonald, a coal miner, for president, and William Bouck, a farmer, for vice-president, and instructed its Committee to negotiate with the Cleveland conference on the question of a united ticket.

The Cleveland Betrayal

On July 4th, the Conference for Progressive Political Action met in Cleveland. It rejected all proffers of cooperation from St. Paul, refusing to seat William Mahoney, an ardent supporter of LaFollette, because he had participated at St. Paul. It surrendered completely to LaFollette, and his "personal" candidacy, so completely that it swallowed his program whole, without dotting an "i", and left the question of vice-presidential candidate for him to decide. It took not the slightest step to organize a party, and endorsed LaFollette's statement against party organization. All elements, including the Socialist Party, that participated, accepted the betrayal without protest.

The complete failure of the socialists, the clothing workers, and other elements to form a left-wing at Cleveland, disheartened all the weaker elements that had heretofore adhered to St. Paul. It was evident that LaFollette would drag some of them along and precipitate another struggle within the farmer-labor movement.

In this crisis the Workers Party took a determined stand. It declared that the only safe guard of the idea of independent political action by the working class, was the immediate naming of a Workers Party ticket, of which there could be no doubt that it would go through the campaign and conduct the struggle without flinching against capitalism in all its forms.

A national conference was called in Chicago, July 10th, at which William Z. Foster was named for president, and Ben Gitlow for vice-president. The National Committee of the Farmer-Labor Party met on the same day, withdrew the candidacies of McDonald and Bouck, and adopted a declaration calling upon all adherents of the Farmer-Labor program to throw their support to the Workers Party. This statement was signed by Alex Howat, chairman, A. C. Hathaway, secretary, Alfred Knutsen, Scott Wilkins and Joseph Manley, members. Alice Daly, of South Dakota, declined

to sign, and William Mahoney, the remaining member, had resigned.

Thus has the alignment taken place for the 1924 presidential election campaign. The issues are clear. William Z. Foster, the candidate of the Workers Party, running on the platform of the dictatorship of the working class against the dictatorship of the capitalist class, is the only representative of the struggle against capitalism. The betrayal of the official mis-leaders of Labor has been complete. Only the struggle for Communism remains in this election for the workers and farmers.

The Steel Campaign Fiasco

By Wm. Z. Foster

WHEN the great steel strike of 1919-20 came to an end, I, as Secretary-treasurer of the National Committee, left in the treasury about \$130,000, the remains of the strike funds. The hard-boiled trade union officialdom, accustomed to waste whatever funds that come to their hands, smiled at this and looked upon me as one of the innocents. Many greedy eyes were cast upon the big fund and prophecies were freely made that it would be duly frittered away in the approved A. F. of L. fashion, that it never would produce an organization in the steel industry, for which purpose it was supposed to be devoted.

Those who spoke thus spoke from the book, because the steel strike fund is now practically a thing of the past and there isn't a trace of organization in the steel industry. The way the fund has been wasted is a disgrace. For three years after the close of the strike no real work worth mentioning of education or organization was carried on. Yet about \$55,000 was gotten rid of. Finally, on June 20, 1923, with a blare of trumpets, the A. F. of L. announced that with the remaining \$75,000 the steel workers would be organized.

If the public and the gullible ones in the labor movement believed that there was something in the new campaign, the wise heads in the bureaucracy were not deceived for a moment. It was the common gossip among them that the steel strike fund melon was about to be cut, and that a number of good jobs would be opened up for the benefit of the worthy brothers. No one seriously expected that real organization work would be done.

The campaign has been conducted under the control of Mike Tighe, President of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel & Tin Workers, and Wm. Hannon, Executive Board member of the International Association of Machinists. Tighe is a fossilized unionist of the vintage of 1890. He fought the 1919 strike at every turn of the road and is a good protection for the steel trust against the organization of its workers. His calibre may be judged from the fact that he not only refused all substantial aid to Jacob Dolla, who served almost five years in jail as a result of the 1919 strike, but he actually expelled him from the union and allowed his family to suffer in want.

Hannon was one of the most trusted members of the National Committee that organized the steel workers in 1919. He endorsed and helped formulate all the policies that were carried out. Yet immediately upon the conclusion of the strike, he turned upon the men who had trusted him and cooperated with him. In an article in the Machinists' Journal he cut himself loose from all responsibility and paraded himself as a victimized militant who had tried to make something out of the affair. Naturally, under such leadership as that of Tighe and Hannon, nothing was to be expected from the campaign, except that the fund would be duly spent.

Following its usual custom, the general office of the American Federation of Labor has taken no interest in the campaign. Neither Mr. Gompers nor Mr. Morrison feel the slightest responsibility for the organization of the steel

workers. They have not turned a hand over, either to help or to see that the campaign was conducted in a vigorous fashion. The same is true of nearly all of the Internationals involved.

Neither the A. F. of L. nor the Internationals have put any organizers in the field. They let the full burden of the campaign fall upon the steel fund. Not content with that, they have, notably Tighe, loaded up the organization staff with fossils altogether incompetent to act as organizers. At one time there were a dozen organizers in the field. These received \$250 per month, with \$7.00 per day expenses, or in other words \$460 per month for full time organizers. At present, the campaign being an admitted failure, there are only four men in the field. With few exceptions the organizers engaged in the work have looked upon their jobs as sinecures and have acted accordingly.

The Money Wasted to Organize 200 Men

The campaign, such as it was, has been conducted chiefly in Chicago, Cleveland, and Bethlehem, a little work also being done in Buffalo. This resulted in complete failure, due to the antiquated and spiritless methods employed. At no point was enough grip secured in the industry to develop even a local strike. Nowhere were real organizations established. The total number of workers signed up throughout the campaign in all the districts did not exceed 200 at the very outside. Such is the ridiculous showing made by the great American Federation of Labor, with its corps of highly paid organizers, after a year's "work" and the spending of many thousands of dollars—a maximum of 200 steel workers who have been coaxed, cajoled, or kidded into joining the unions.

During the existence of the American Federation of Labor there have been many glaring examples of failure in organization work. Time and again the conservative leaders of the unions have demonstrated that they do not understand the first principles of mass organization. But the so-called steel organizing campaign easily tops the list of such fiascos. It is the most pitiful example of impotency and incompetency, that the labor movement of this country has yet seen.

But, characteristically, Hannan and his associates have an alibi for their miserable failure. They have the assurance to come out and make the claim that the recent introduction of the eight hour day in the steel industry was

due to their efforts. They say that Gary was afraid of their organization campaign and introduced the eight hour day to head it off. Many mean things have been said about Gary, but to accuse him of being afraid of the spineless, visionless, organization campaign now being carried on by the A. F. of L. in the steel industry is ridiculous. About the only sentiment that Gary or any other militant capitalist could feel towards such faint efforts as were put forth by the unions in the present campaign is contempt.

Empty Boasts and Empty Treasury

Even before the campaign began, the agitation for the eight hour day, which developed out of the big strike and which had seized upon a wide breadth of public opinion, had reached the point where the eight hour day had been determined upon by the steel barons. For the men in charge of the present campaign to try to cover up their incompetency by claiming credit for the eight hour day in the steel industry, would be a farce if it were not so tragic.

For 25 years, or ever since the loss of the great Homestead strike, the conservative leaders of the labor movement have failed utterly in the task of organizing the great army of steel workers. Time after time they made efforts, only to still further discredit the unions by showing their weakness. Then, in 1919, a few radicals managed to take a hand in the work, and to apply modern methods, with the result that something substantial was accomplished. Those who are incurably optimistic thought that perhaps the Gompers machine might have learned something from the lessons of the last great struggle. But the bureaucrats have proved themselves totally incapable of so doing. The present organizing campaign in the steel industry is just as antiquated and futile as any that have preceded it under conservative leadership.

The great steel fund has been wasted and the workers are entirely without organization. And it is safe to say that the conservative leaders will never be able to organize them. The job is entirely beyond their comprehension and ability. Only revolutionists can accomplish it. The organization of the steel industry awaits the day when the revolutionary forces are developed to the point where they have sufficient resources to put on the necessary campaign. This day will come much sooner than many expect.