
Spirit of Unity Prevails at St. Paul as Farmer-Labor Conference Starts

by William F. Dunne

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ST. PAUL, Minn., March 10 [1924].— William Mahoney, editor of the St. Paul *Trade Union Advocate*, opened the conference of representatives of farmer-labor parties at 3 pm today in the Labor Temple.

The conference was called to take final action on the decision of a previous conference held on Nov. 15 last to hold a National Farmer-Labor Convention on May 30.

In his opening speech Mahoney stated that he had been notified by many organizations that they could not be represented but had sent their views. "This," said Mahoney, "is what we do not want."

It will be some time before credentials are approved, the convention organized and the voting strength of the gathering known. State parties from Minnesota, Nebraska, Montana, North and South Dakota, and Washington are represented here in addition to the two factions of the Illinois Farmer-Labor Party, the Buffalo Labor Party, and the Labor Party of Washington, DC, headed by William V. Mahoney.

William E. Rodriguez and Gifford Ernst are here for the insurgent faction of Illinois, Illinois Farmer-Labor Party; J.G. Brown and Robert M. Buck for the old organization.

Rodriguez, Ernst, and William V. Mahoney, of Washington, DC, wasted a lot of valuable energy before the convention was called to order, in conducting a propaganda campaign among the

delegates against the Communists, with copies of *The Daily Worker* as Exhibit A.

The farmer delegates seemingly have been vaccinated against Rodriguez-Ernst-Mahoney virus, judging by the amused look on their faces as they listened to the self-appointed red baiters.

Mahoney's speech was cautiously worded, and an attempt to explain the failure of the committee to send out the call for the May 30th Convention, but he admitted that this failure had brought a storm of criticism and hundreds of resolutions from farmer and workers organizations protesting the delays. He further stated that he had direct assurance that LaFollette is to run independently if his health permits.

Speaking of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, Mahoney said that the group which endorsed McAdoo in Chicago was more representative than the group which was at the official St. Louis gathering. According to Mahoney's close friends this is the first time he has made such an admission.

Speaking of the May 30th date, he asked the conference if they wished to organize only the advanced farmer and working class elements or if they wished to wait and possibly break millions of people away from the old parties.

The IWW in Washington are swinging toward political action and in a number of lumber communities are cooperating with farmers' political movement to a marked degree, according to

William Bouck, head of the Western Progressive Farmers. Free speech fights have been conducted jointly by the farmers and the lumber workers organized in the IWW and out of these has grown a feeling of solidarity.

The bitterness of the struggle in which both groups are engaged has largely broken down the old antagonisms and a real united front is in process of formation between bankrupt farmers and lumber workers.

Charles Taylor of Montana is bubbling over with enthusiasm over the rapid progress being made by the Farmer-Labor Party in that state. Beginning with a conference of 36 delegates in Great Falls, the latter part of October [1923], in both the lumbering, mining, and farming sections of the party it is building a powerful machine.

J.W. Anderson and Pat Budden, State Secretary, have been touring the state and in many towns the halls could not hold the crowds that

turned out and the apathy that was prevalent before the first of the year has disappeared.

“The Conference for Progressive Political Action is no longer a factor in Montana,” says Taylor. “President Steve Ely of the State Federation was a bitter opponent of the Farmer-Labor Party when first started, but at one of Anderson’s meetings, shortly before I left, Ely acted as usher. He probably had a change of heart after his own local at Sand Coulee told him they wanted no more opposition of the Farmer-Labor Party from him.”

Local unions are affiliating direct with the party in Butte and coal mining towns and other industrial centers. According to Taylor the liberal Republican governor has made his peace with the Anaconda Mining Company and the lineup is consequently becoming clearer. “If the election was held tomorrow we would count on at least 20,000 votes,” said Taylor.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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