
Minnesota Guarantees “June 17”: Stage is Set for Unity at June 17 Meet: Last Step Taken by St. Cloud Convention

by William F. Dunne

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The last link welding together the farmer-labor forces of the United States for the June 17th [1924] convention was forged when, following the 40-minute speech of William Mahoney, of St. Paul, for the unanimous recommendation of the Resolution Committee, the convention of the official Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, without a dissenting vote, endorsed the call for the June 17th convention, previously ratified by the St. Paul conference of northwest Farmer-Labor Parties and the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Federation.

The climax came after a week of conferences during which the reactionaries in the Minnesota labor movement, aided by [Robert] Buck, [J.G.] Brown, and [William] Rodriguez, of Illinois, and William V. Mahoney, of Washington, DC, had used every possible method of sowing dissension and distrust in an attempt to thwart the formation of a mass Farmer-Labor Party by preventing endorsement of the call and splitting away of sections of the movement.

June 17th Applauded.

The answer of the farmers and workers of Minnesota to the disruptionists and their hysterical denunciation of the reds was the unanimous vote at St. Cloud for a call that includes every section of the working class movement which subscribes to the program and purposes of the Farmer-

Labor Parties sponsoring the June 17 convention.

William Mahoney was constantly interrupted by applause although he made no oratorical efforts whatsoever. He told of the work that had been done in preparation for the St. Cloud convention, of the failures and successes, of the hopes and fears of those who had taken the lead in the work. “We must,” he said, “go on record here for consummation of our efforts on June 17 that the millions of workers and farmers who are watching this convention will know that we want no fusion with the capitalist parties, will make no deals with them, but that we are trying to build a powerful Farmer-Labor Party.”

Can't Depend on CPPA.

“LaFollette will run on this platform,” he said, and the convention broke into wild applause. “We cannot depend upon the Conference for Progressive Political Action,” he continued. “That organization is controlled by international officials who have never been distinguished for progressive principles. We who have taken the lead in this movement in Minnesota have placed our dependence upon the rank and file and we believe that this confidence is not misplaced.”

When the vote was taken the delegates rose to their feet, cheering Mahoney and the resolution.

State Senator Taylor of Montana, editor of the *Producers' News* of Plentywood, was called upon to address the convention and in a short but eloquent speech thanked the delegates for the action they had just taken and assured them that they had expressed the sentiments of the workers and farmers of Montana and of the Northwest.

The Last Gasp.

One Schier, correspondent of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, who had been cooperating with the anti-Farmer-Labor forces in the convention as a delegate from Minneapolis, secured the floor after the vote had been taken and attempted to attack Mahoney but was hooted down by the convention. This was the last gasp from the obstructionists.

Had the disruptive elements succeeded in getting as their temporary chairman Boldus of the Non-Partisan League, whom Pike, chairman of the official Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, had tried at the beginning of the session to foist on them, they might have succeeded in postponing the endorsement or even in splitting the convention. The progressives were on guard, however, and the attempt did not succeed. The reactionaries had planned to present a resolution denouncing the Communists which had been prepared by Mahoney of Washington and thus divert attention from the major issues. Without their chairman they had not the courage to make the attempt and after Mahoney of St. Paul had told his namesake of Washington that he was "a dirty, lying disturber," the latter gentleman subsided.

The progressives in Minnesota are jubilant over the elimination of all friction and all eyes are now on June 17.

Emil Holmes of the World War Veterans addressed the convention in behalf of the military prisoners and received its endorsement for his resolution urging amnesty for them.

Numerous resolutions dealing with all phases

of the farmer-labor movement were passed by the convention, among them a condemnation of the management of the Veterans' Bureau and a number denouncing war.

Complete Unity Established.

Complete unity has been established between the workers and farmers of Minnesota through the Farmer-Labor Federation. The last obstacle to this unity was removed late this afternoon when the delegates to the Non-Partisan League convention here threw their reactionary officials overboard and voted to join the Farmer-Labor Federation representing the interests on the political field of all economic organizations of the workers and farmers in this state. No development of greater significance in the Farmer-Labor movement in America has taken place within the last decade. The decision of the Non-Partisan League delegates came after the Townley machine had exhausted every effort to prevent favorable action. Magnus Johnson and Hendrick Shipstead were induced by the Townley machine to denounce the Farmer-Labor Federation as a Communist organization; every device calculated to prejudice the farmers against radicals and labor men was used; O.M. Thomason, of Benson, henchman of the Townley machine, read extracts from *The Daily Worker*, but without any perceptible effect upon the farmers, who wanted unity with the wage workers, were determined to get it, and did get it. Some of the most remarkable speeches ever made in a gathering of this kind were delivered by farmer delegates to whom the desire for unity with the organized workers was stronger than the influence of leaders whom they had trusted.

Old Prejudices Shattered.

The Minnesota farmers represented by the Non-Partisan League convention have, by this decision, shattered for all time the belief advanced

by the obstructionists that farmers are afraid to trust their fortunes to an organization comprising both groups of exploited workers.

There was a great demonstration in the Farmer-Labor Federation convention when their Negotiation Committee returned with the news that the farmers had decided to become part of the unity organization. A speaker was on the floor talking on an important organization question, but all business was suspended for 10 minutes while the delegates stamped and cheered, leaped on chairs and tables, threw their hats in the air, and yelled themselves hoarse. Tension relaxed immediately and it was evident then that the workers had almost given up hope of complete unity; they acted like children relieved of a threat of punishment and gave their emotions full play. Even the dignified William Mahoney [of Minnesota], chairman of the Farmer-Labor Federation convention, yelled till he was red in the face, and his grey hair completely disarranged. Too much credit for the decision of the farmers' convention cannot be given to Charles E. Taylor, of the Montana Farmer-Labor Party, and "Dad" Walker, of the North Dakota Farmer-Labor Party; they knew personally many of the delegates and more than anyone else were responsible for counteracting any prejudice that might have been aroused by the red baiting of the machine element. It was necessary for the Townley machine in order to poll any kind of a note against unity to collect delegates from paper organizations such as women's auxiliaries and county groups having no existence. Desperate efforts still left them several votes shy of a majority, and with their loss of a majority went forever their leadership of the farmers' movement in Minnesota.

Great Day for Militants.

It was a great day for the Left Wing of the labor movement in Minnesota. The yellow element, the defeatists, the disciples of the "this is

not the time" philosophy, the politicians and the official element generally, had been loud in their predictions that farmers would never join an organization of workers in whose ranks were members of the Workers (Communist) Party. The chronic croakers and their ability to forecast developments in the worker and farmer movement have been completely discredited. There is no lonelier individual in the Twin Cities today than the one who said that the Communists were the greatest obstacle to unity of the workers and farmers. As a matter of fact, this is not only a victory for the farmers and workers of Minnesota, but a tremendous victory whose importance cannot be exaggerated for the Workers Party of America and the Communist movement of the world. Any hostility toward the Communists that was in evidence before the action of the Non-Partisan League convention plugged the last gap in the working class political movement of this state has disappeared. The Workers Party of America and its members, who have given their time, money, and energy to the building of a class Farmer-Labor Party based on the economic organizations of both groups are now given the credit that is due them for their unceasing devotion to the cause of the workers and farmers and also for their organization ability, which contributed so much to the result.

The path has not only been cleared for the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota, for a splendid mass class organization in this state, but for the national convention on June 17th, and for the Farmer-Labor movement of the entire Northwest. The Farmer-Labor Federation, composed now of all farmer and worker organizations in the state, has adopted into the declaration of principles the program for the June 17th convention, adopted by the St. Paul conference of Farmer-Labor Parties last Tuesday [March 11, 1924], and which did so much to influence the decisions made by the Farmer-Labor Federation and Non-Partisan League conventions.

There Is No Division.

There is no division in the ranks of the workers and farmers of Minnesota today. They are united around a common program and organizationally as well. They have escaped the pitfalls dug for them by reactionary leaders, the yellow traitorous elements, and the self-appointed advisors clustered around their movement. The work that has been done for unity in the past week, which was preceded by months of careful preparation, is something for which the labor movement owes those who did it a debt of gratitude. It should be a source of pride to the Workers Party of America that in a task which at the outset seemed a super-human one they have played a leading part. The last doubt that this year will see the beginning of a nationwide political movement of the workers and farmers has been removed by the events of the last week here.

From now until June 17th will be a period

of intense organizational and educational activity in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and all other states where economic pressure is forcing workers and farmers to think and organize.

Prepare for June 17th.

Already the labor movement of the Twin Cities is preparing for the June 17th convention and without question it will be the largest and most representative gathering ever assembled in the United States. It will be an assemblage of workers and farmers who are thinking politically, representing great masses who are learning to think politically.

The workers and farmers of Minnesota and of the Northwest, by sinking their minor differences in interest of a common objective, have, during the past week, delivered the greatest blow to American capitalism that it has yet received.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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