

WORKERS PARTY REPUDIATING FARMER-LABORISM

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER.

The results of the membership meetings held in five principal cities on Sunday, Dec. 28, show that our party is definitely emerging from its farmer-labor illusions. Six weeks ago practically the entire membership of the Workers (Communist) Party was profoundly convinced that it could very profitably use the slogan of the farmer-labor party. In spite of the tremendous obstacles that have had to be overcome, the inertia, the organized resistance to the discussion in some sections of the party, the smoke screens that have been thrown out by the minority to hide the real issue, the herrings that have been drawn across the trail—yet, after six weeks' discussion, the central executive committee can say that it has convinced a majority of the membership for the Communist policy laid down in its thesis.

New York City and Chicago are the largest centers of our party, where party life is most intense and where, therefore, the discussion penetrated deepest among the members. The vote in these two cities is therefore most interesting.

Chicago, for example, had a membership meeting six weeks ago which was carried by the minority overwhelmingly—by a vote of 175 to 76.

Even after the discussion in the party press for six weeks, the membership in Chicago was still largely in favor of the farmer-labor slogan. When the membership meeting, the largest in the party history, opened on Dec. 28, the farmer-labor advocates undoubtedly would have carried their proposition if a vote had been taken without discussion.

But when the minority, advocates of the farmer-labor party, were forced to defend their position in open debate, before the assembled membership, they collapsed entirely. During the actual progress of the debate, in the few hours between 3 o'clock and 11, the block of farmer-labor sentiment was shattered. When the smoke cleared away, the central executive committee had a clear majority of 399 against 362.

New York City showed us this process carried even further than in Chicago. The farmer-labor advocates had banked upon New York. They exerted every effort to win it, and sent their star speaker there. The central executive committee not only won a majority there, completely overcoming the illusion that the farmer-labor slogan can be used to assemble masses under present conditions, but the majority vote was very decided, being 482 against 330. We can see that in New York it is a question of but a few weeks until the farmer-labor ghost will be laid to rest.

The twin cities meeting, Minneapolis and St. Paul, where the central executive committee gained a decided majority vote of the membership, is also interesting. There our party is actually faced with a functioning farmer-labor party, something that exists nowhere else in the United States. It might have been supposed that there, if anywhere, the membership of the Workers Party would be the most obsessed with the illusion of the farmer-labor slogan. But it seems that practical experience with the farmer-labor section of the LaFol-

lette movement is also a help, as well as the party discussion, in overcoming the illusions of our farmer-labor Communism. The Minnesota cities cast their vote for the central executive committee thesis.

Detroit and Cleveland are just beginning the process of laying the farmer-labor ghosts. Unfortunately it has been impossible for the C. E. C. to give these cities much special attention during the discussion and these two cities could not reach the Bolshevik point of view so quickly as did New York, Chicago and the Twin Cities. But even in Detroit and Cleveland, where the farmer-labor minority in our party won the vote, we see that the farmer-labor illusion is speedily fading. Whereas six weeks ago the vote would have been almost unanimous for the farmer-labor party yet on last Sunday, it just barely squeaked by. Give Detroit and Cleveland a little while more and they will redeem their record.

It is very illuminating, it is very educational, to see this tremendous reorientation taking place in our party with such rapidity—and it is also a matter of gratification to see how sound is the heart of our party, how readily it responds to the Communist line in political debate. Consider the tremendous difficulties that the central executive committee has been forced to struggle against. It went to a membership that was totally unprepared, with the proposal to change a basic policy, for which the entire party had been educating the movement for two years. As a consequence the C. E. C. had almost the entire party against it at first.

In addition were other obstacles. Certain language sections of our party have carried on no discussion whatever. Following an un-Bolshevik line, their officials decided to save their members from the disturbance of a discussion and, picking what looked like the easiest way, cast in their lot with the old slogan. In these sections it is only now, after six weeks, that the C. E. C. is finally penetrating with the discussion.

Other groups of the membership had been poisoned by the underground propaganda that has been carried on thruout the year by the minority national caucus, which brought many groups to the discussion caucus-bound, with the legend of the Lore alliance, with lurid tales of the "opportunistic" sins of various members of the C. E. C. All of these things required the open discussion of the membership meetings to dispel.

In spite of all obstacles, however, and starting with the party almost entirely against it, the policy of the central executive committee has in six short weeks won a majority of the membership. The farmer-labor advocates are making their last stand. The policy of the C. E. C. is sweeping the party, and in another month or so it will have the support of the overwhelming mass of the party. Everyone will soon be admitting that the farmer-labor ghost will quit walking before the party comes to its convention. That is the meaning of the vote taken by our members in New York, Chicago, the Twin Cities, Detroit and Cleveland on Dec. 28. The Workers Party is emerging from the farmer-labor illusion.

Comrade Pepper, they have developed a penchant for farmer-laborism and farmer-labor slogans, under any and all circumstances, irrespective of the movement of the masses—in spite of the fact that the historical development in the United States may take an entirely different road from that of the farmer-labor party.

The following apology is from Comrade Bedacht, who has organized the deviations of the minority into a system of pseudo-Marxian deviation:

"Tho the campaign for a labor party may or may not result in the formation of such a party, yet, the process of the campaign itself, the maneuvers of the campaign, would bring us in contact with the masses, would strengthen our party numerically, would teach our party maneuvers and activities, and is bound to extend the influence of the party to greater numbers of workers and exploited farmers."

In this paragraph we have the whole secret of the errors of the minority. Here we have the idea of maneuvers without a practical goal (the minority comrades themselves speak of a broad labor party as an illusion). Maneuvers without any basis in the forward movement of the workers. Maneuvers for practice, maneuvers for the sake of experience, maneuvers for the purpose of making immediate contacts for the Workers Party. For this, Bedacht is willing to educate the masses to farmer-laborism, with the farmer-labor slogan, against their own ultimate class interests.

Now we are in a position to see why it is that the minority is constantly shouting for "action," "organ-

ization," without the slightest regard for the objective needs of the masses, and why they ridicule the majority for thinking in terms of the masses. The minority wants to "organize," "crystallize," "maneuver" everything in sight—or out of it. A half-dozen fake, camouflage farmer-labor parties (which could, no doubt, be "crystallized") would not help the working class onward, but would only confuse it. Nevertheless, we might get a few members for the Workers Party.

And we find ourselves in the comfortable paradise of the subjectivist. If it is good for us organizationally, it must be good!

Comrade Bedacht and his group have turned our revolutionary motto upside down. Instead of "The Communists have no interests separate and apart from the working class as a whole," we find the fatuous doctrine of "The working class has no interests separate and apart from the Communists."

A queer sort of Marxism this, which bases its policy on the Workers Party instead of on the working class as a whole! Such policy logically translates itself into the slogan, anything to get members! Which is a slight variation of the old S. P. slogan of, anything to get votes! Our minority comrades are to be sharply differentiated from the opportunistic fakers of the S. P., but that is where their tendency leads.

Eduard Bernstein, the father of revisionism, wrote in 1893: "The final aim is nothing, the movement is everything." This is the beginning and end of opportunism.

WHAT SORT OF AN ANIMAL IS A FARMER-LABOR PARTY ANYHOW?

R. BAKER.

THERE is a tremendous fear among the defenders of the minority thesis that if we abandon, for the time being, the farmer-labor party slogan, (and that is all that remains of this great mass-class movement) we will remain naked and isolated from the masses.

What do we mean by going to the masses? We mean fighting side by side with them on their many battle fronts to improve their living conditions, to ward off the attacks of the employers, rallying them for struggles against the misleaders of the unions, fighting the capitalist state and its tyranny, and, in these battles imbuing the workers with a revolutionary ideology.

A farmer-labor party, as we know it is an occasional conference of delegates from the unions, generally party members, but, our real contact with the masses is made in the unions from which the delegates are sent to a F. L. P. conference.

Let us not forget that our past labor parties were successful only insofar as we had prestige, influence and leadership in the unions, and now that these labor parties disappeared in smoke, we still remain in the unions and our prestige and contact with the masses remains unchanged.

We have developed our leadership there, not by talking alone, (this is for the information of those comrades who carry no union cards) but, by participating in their strikes, and that means our strikes as well, by initiating movements to improve the unions as fighting organs of the class struggle, by discrediting the reaction-

ately, no samples left. If you could see one of these queer animals that we were building right and left only a few months ago, you wouldn't speak of the united front in the same breath that you speak of a F. L. P. But, isn't it strange comrades, how these mass-class parties disappeared when we deserted them for just a few short months to carry on the Communist campaign?

It is interesting to analyze the lineup in this controversy; the comrades who claim to be the "theoreticians" and the "Marxians" of the party, with few exceptions, want a farmer-labor party "dead or alive," and the comrades fighting against it are the cruder proletarian elements to whom the class struggle is a hard bitter fact, who bear the scars of many battles against the bosses and the misleaders of labor, and incidentally, the comrades who made possible the labor parties that we had. To those comrades of the minority who are in the unions, I just want to say; after reading all these articles take an evening off to visit your union and raise the question there, and you will discover that these strange people will not listen to you, they are too busy trying to prevent the impending wage cut, or planning an organization drive to strengthen the union or else discussing the problems of unemployment as they effect the local union.

Also, remember that the trade unions after all, (putting aside the sick and death benefit societies for a moment) are the basis, the raw material, from which any labor party is to be built. Let us not pay too much attention to the panicky fear of "isolation." A good percentage of our membership is in the unions and