
The Declaration of Independence of the American Working Class.

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Revolutionary Development or a Vicious Circle?

The American labor movement has a very interesting history. But now for the first time the labor movement itself is making history. The working class in America has been until now an appendage either of the capitalists or the lower middle class. Now for the first time the American working class is beginning to play an independent historical role. The workers have time and again played the role of supers on the political stage while the great "heroes" Bryan, Roosevelt or Wilson took the stellar roles. There were even times when the workers were promoted to minor character parts in the tragic-comedy of lower middle-class movements. But only now, with the appearance of the Labor Party movement of the post-war period, is the American working class grasping the initiative, and is the hero of the political stage. From 1918 on, we see an uninterrupted development of the Labor Party movement in America. Like the giant in the fairy tale, the idea of a Labor Party is advancing with seven-league strides. A few of these strides: In 1918, the California and Chicago federations of labor declared for a Labor Party. In 1919, the Illinois and Pennsylvania State Federations of Labor and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers. In 1920, the State Federations of Labor of Michigan and Indiana. In 1921, the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor and the United Mine Workers. In February 1922 in Chicago the Conference of eighteen international

unions belonging to the American Federation of Labor, and seven unions outside of the A.F. of L. In December 1922, in Cleveland, the representatives of two million workers and one million farmers.

All the resolutions have remained paper resolutions up to now. In Chicago, the betrayal by the trade union officialdom and the Socialist Party blocked the formation of a Labor Party. In Cleveland, the sabotage of the leaders again betrayed the Labor Party. The various local labor parties have remained isolated until now, and therefore powerless. But colorblind are those who only see the betrayal, and not the mighty advance of the labor party idea. They are incurably crippled by skepticism — those who content themselves with asserting that the American Federation of Labor leaders are traitors, failing at the same time to perceive the increasing determination, and the growing class-consciousness of the masses of the rank and file. We still have so-called revolutionists in America who believe in nothing except their own disbelief, and they believe faithfully that movement of labor in America is no more than a vicious circle. In a period when the whole edifice of capitalism is tottering, and even the prophets of capitalism can but promise the return of normalcy, there are still labor leaders who say that nothing uncommon is taking place in America, nothing new, and that we are living in a period of normalcy. These people — and we find them at the extreme right wing of the labor movement, in the Gompers entourage, as well as at the extreme left wing, in the so-called

Proletarian Party — are like the seismograph. They can record a political earthquake when it is far away from here, in Turkey, in India, or in Bulgaria, but they are rendered useless when a political earthquake occurs right here in America, in their vicinity.

The Labor Party movement is a political earthquake of the first magnitude. The American capitalist class issued its Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The day of the Declaration of Independence of the American working class will be the day of the founding of its independent political party. July 3 and 4, 1923, the date of the Convention of the Farmer-Labor Party, can be in history the date of the declaration of independence of the American working class; however, that Convention will not be the *end*, but rather the *beginning* of the formation of a genuine Labor Party.

The New America.

What are the new factors in the economic, social and political life of America, which will render possible the creation of a revolutionary mass party of the working class?

Many Americans are not yet aware of it, but it is a fact nevertheless, that the world war has given birth to a new America. In Europe, during the war, there was a commonly known anecdote relating to the senile Austrian emperor, Francis Joseph, that he was for a long time dead, but that the people at his court did not dare to tell it to him. We may say that a new America was born in the war, but that the philosophers and sycophants of capitalism do not dare to tell it to her.

The unprecedented accumulation and concentration of capital has given rise to *three fundamental facts*. First, the growth and centralization of the *government*. Second, the growth and unification of the working class. Third, the bankruptcy and revolt of the farmers.

The *federal government* has become omnipotent, with a gigantic bureaucracy, with a tremen-

dous army and National Guard, and with the power to interfere in the daily life of every citizen. The government is the arbiter in every struggle between capital and labor.

Never as yet has the *working class* attained to such social significance as at present. The proletariat is the product of capitalism. Its social significance was bound to grow, for the very reason that the capitalist mode of production became the *general*, reigning mode of production in the United States. In the last ten years, the center of gravity of national production has shifted to *big industry*. The old America imported manufactures and exported raw material; the new America imports raw material and exports manufactures. In the last ten years the majority of the population of the United States has for the first time become *urban*. But the working class has not only grown in numbers, in social importance and in density, but it has also become more *unified* internally. The great difference between skilled and unskilled workers, between native and foreign born workers, have been considerably leveled during and after the war. Never before has the working class shown such a militant spirit and such a feeling of solidarity as today.

The same capitalism which increased the number and social significance of the working class, has decreased the number of *farmers* and ruined them economically.

Capitalism produced, in the big industries and big cities, its own grave-digger — the working class. And at the same time it changed the farmers — its surest mass support in the past to a bankrupt, despairing, revolting mass. Today the farmer is forced to sell his products cheaper than he produces them. The average income of the farmers in 1918 was \$1,278, and in 1920, \$465. And in the last year, the farmer has been even worse off. The Joint Congressional Commission of Agricultural Inquiry reports: "Measured in purchasing power, the farmer's dollar during the last twelve months has been worth less than in any preceding months in thirty years." Wherever the farmers turn, they

face capitalist exploitation. The meat packers, railroads, milk trusts, grain gamblers and cotton brokers, the elevator systems, the banks are all blood-sucking leeches on the body of the farmer. Capitalism has ruined the farmers to such an extent, that it is now forced to trample even upon its own economic laws. Between bankers and farmers there no longer exists that highest capitalist law — cash payment. The farmers are simply no longer paying the mortgages, and yet the capitalists do not take the land away from them, because they cannot do anything with it themselves. (Only two solutions of the agricultural crisis are possible. First, that the capitalists themselves take over the land, that they mass the farms into great industrial units of agricultural production, and transform the tenant and mortgage farmers into farm laborers. Second, that the farmers through revolutionary action, declare that the land belongs to those who use it, and annul all their obligations to the capitalists and big landowners.) The condition of the farmers is unbearable. The farmers are in rebellion. This rebellion is assuming various forms. First, a mass desertion of the farmer from the land. During ten years, from 1910 to 1920, the decrease of the agricultural population was no less than 1,200,000. Second, the farmers organize various cooperatives against the middlemen and trusts. Third, the farmers organize for the political struggle. The Non-Partisan League, the agricultural bloc in Congress, the LaFollette Group, the Democratic insurgents, are but various helpless political expressions of the farmers' rebellion. Fourth, the poorest and most conscious elements of the farmers realize more and more that the only remedy for them is the joint fight with the workers against the common enemy — the capitalists.

The centralized, omnipotent, capitalist government, the growing and ever more unified working class and revolting farmers — these are the new factors in American political life. Capitalism has created the omnipotent government — that mightiest of all its weapons, thereby producing that

very force which pushed the workers and farmers into politics, into the fight not only against individual capitalists or trusts but against the capitalist government as an institution.

Capital, the great revolutionist, has laid the foundation for a Labor Party.

The Decay of the Old Parties.

The two big old capitalist parties of the Republicans and Democrats present a picture of chaos and disintegration. They have no differences today in their program. The Harding administration is the direct continuation of the Wilson administration. No one can discover any difference between Palmer and Daugherty. Wilson was for the League of Nations and the World Court, and Harding is for the World Court and the League of Nations. That is all the difference. Both are for government by injunction against the workers inside of the fatherland, and for capital-export for the bankers with the help of the bayonets of the fatherland. They resemble each other like twins. How could this be otherwise, since God Capitalism has created both in his own image. The Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey carry these different skins, so that the masses might think that they really differ. In Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Snug the joiner is disguised in a lion's skin, and Bottom the weaver a donkey's head. In our political play the skin of the Republican elephant hides Mr. Profiteer, the capitalist, and so does the Democratic donkey-head hide Mr. Money-Bag, the capitalist.

The two old capitalist parties are remnants of the old America, in which the class conflicts were not as yet so sharply developed. Great masses of farmers as well as workers have always voted for both parties. The conflict between capitalists and farmers and between bosses and workers have become so acute today, that they cannot remain in one and the same party. The class conflicts are breaking the old-party framework. We find today

much more bitter conflicts inside of the Republican and Democratic Parties, than between them. Sharp conflicts arise from the dilemma that both parties would like to serve the capitalists and at the same time retain the votes of the farmers and workers.

Especially sharp do these internal conflicts show themselves as factions conflicts within the Republican Party. And that is precisely because it is the party in power and thus provokes greater criticism from the masses. Especially interesting do these factional conflicts show themselves in the clash, within the Republican Party, over the World Court. The bankers are for a world court. They want the participation of the United States in European affairs, because they want profit-bearing export of capital to Europe. The farmers and lower middle class are against the World Court, and against participation in European affairs because they have no interest in capital-export and on the contrary, their interest is to have cheap and plentiful money here in America. Harding and Hughes must carry out the orders of the capitalists and fight for the World Court. But the Republican Party machinery under the leadership of John T. Adams, chairman of the Republican National Committee, is against the World Court, not because they are less lackeys of capitalism than Harding, but because they fear that the farmer masses will break completely with the Republican Party. The third faction in the Republican Party is formed by the LaFollette group which, in the interest of the well-to-do farmers, stands in opposition to the capitalist Harding administration all along the line.

The *New York Tribune*, one of the leading Republican organs, commented as follows upon these factional conflicts: "If cooperation with Europe was solely a doctrine of the Democratic Party, or the Communist Party, the official literature of the Republican National Committee could hardly be more savage against everything that seems to promote it."

President Harding, in a desperate speech, has

begun a campaign against factionalism: "Can any student of our times in America, or the world, doubt for a moment that factionalism is developing as never before? We have our factions which seek to promote this or that interest, without regard to the relationship to others and without regard to the common weal."

The *Detroit Free Press* sees with the greatest consternation that these factional fights begun by the agricultural bloc and the LaFollette group will inevitably lead to the breaking up of the recent party organizations: "The logical end of the process will be a complete division of the country on lines of interest or class such as one sees in European parliaments, where agrarians, clericals and laborers cash with each other and with other parties founded upon socialism, communism, republicanism and monarchy."

Not as yet so open, but just as grave, are the class conflicts within the Democratic Party, where mainly the representatives of the big Southern landowners and the Eastern Tammany Hall are in conflict with such representatives of the lower middle class as Hearst and Hylan.

The Third Party and the Labor Party.

The logical outcome of the factional struggles — in other words, the class struggles — is the third party movement.

The third party movement is not a movement of the working class. All the groupings which tended towards a third party show that they are led in the interest of the well-to-do farmers and the lower middle class. The agricultural bloc in congress is but a union of the farmer of the Middle West with the landowner of the South. The Non-Partisan League was born of the rebellion of the exploited farmers, but its policy is simply to represent the interests of the well-to-do farmers. LaFolletism, like the agricultural bloc and the Non-Partisan League, is but a political expression of the interests of the well-to-do farmers irrespective of

their old political adherence. All these groups are also supported by a part of the working class, but they have never been and are not now representatives of the workers of industry and the farms.

The social contents of the third party movement as it appears in the Middle West, are the class interests of the well-to-do farmers and of the town middle class which is surrounded by a farmer population and is dependent upon the farmers economically. The third party movement in the eastern part of the United States presents another picture. Here its social contents are mainly the political expression of the small businessmen and storekeepers of the big cities. Hylan the demagogic mayor of New York, and the yellow Hearst papers, represent the eastern type of third party movement. From the class point of view, the differences are not so great between the Western and Eastern third party movements. But there are great differences between their origins and social traditions, and so also in their phraseology and their manner of struggle. Country “puritanism” and city corruption, LaFollette pathos and Hylan demagogy, the overalls of Frazier and the evening clothes of Hearst, the farmer’s hatred for the big cities and the city folks’ contempt for the farmers — these can with great difficulty be united in a new party. A single name can today unite in one third party the western farmers and eastern lower middle class — the name of Henry Ford. Henry Ford is no Western farmer nor is he an Eastern petty bourgeois, but he can become the ideal of both. He personifies the dream of the petty bourgeois, he is the mechanic who became the richest industrialist of the world. And he personifies the dream of the well-to-do farmer; he manufactures cheap tractors and even cheaper autos and still cheaper fertilizers. And he unites in himself the dreams of both, for he is an opponent of Wall Street. The

logical presidential candidate for a third party is therefore Henry Ford.

The third party movement is an enemy of the working class no less than are the old capitalist parties. It is a betrayal of the working class when an attempt is made to induce the workers to join the third party movement. The interests of the well-to-do farmers are different from the interests of the workers and poor farmers. LaFollette and Hearst want to destroy the trusts. The interest of the workers demands the submission of the trusts to the control of the workers. The lower middle class wants to destroy big industry. The program of the workers must be the workers’ rule over big industry. The Non-Partisan League wants cheap credits for the farmers and an alliance between the farmers and bankers. The program of the exploited farmers must be: the land should belong to the one who uses it.

Only an independent political party of the working class can represent the interests of the laboring masses of the factories and farms. It is therefore a betrayal when the American Federation of Labor openly allies itself with the capitalists and through its non-partisan policy supports the old capitalist parties. But it is just as great a betrayal when the leaders of the Cleveland Conference conclude an alliance with the well-to-do farmer and lower middle class and support the LaFollette third party movement. Only the July 3 convention in Chicago represents the policy of the workers and poor farmers. The duty of the Workers Party of America as the class conscious revolutionary party of the working class is to be in Chicago on July 3, with all its power and militancy, to give an impetus to the Convention, so that it shall really mean a step towards the Declaration of Independence of the American working class.

Edited by Mitch Abidor.

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