
Reply to the Farmer-Labor Party: A Letter to J.G. Brown, Secretary of the Farmer-Labor Party of the United States from a Committee of the Socialist Party of America, circa June 1, 1923.

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Mr. J.G. Brown, Secretary,
Farmer-Labor Party of the US,
166 W Washington St.,
Chicago, Illinois.

Dear Sir and Brother:

The National Convention of the Socialist Party has earnestly considered the invitation extended by the Farmer-Labor Party to the Socialist Party and other organizations of workers to attend a national conference in Chicago, beginning July 3 [1923], to discuss “such steps as may be necessary to bring about complete unity of the political forces of the entire working class.”

The Socialist Party fully agrees with the Farmer-Labor Party as to the desirability of uniting the workers on the political field. The only question is how soon and by what means this end can best be attained.

A necessary condition to the establishment of a really powerful political party of the working class is the active support of at least a majority of the great trade unions. Unless there is assurance that this support is now obtainable, any attempt at this time to effect the proposed “unity of the political forces of the entire working class” would result in disappointment.

Is there reason to believe that a sufficient number of powerful national and international unions favor independent political action at the present time? We wish that we could answer this question in the

affirmative. Candor compels us to admit that, while there are evidences of widespread discontent with the parties of capitalism within the ranks of Organized Labor, comparatively few of the great unions are yet ready to take the decisive step of launching a working class party on a national scale.

We are convinced that working class opinion is fast evolving in this direction, influenced thereto by the logic of events as well as by the arguments of those who already advocate independent political action. We think, however, that it would be a mistake to force the issue prematurely, or to take such action as might give a delusive appearance of political unity of the whole working class without the reality.

The Socialist Party has decided to continue its affiliation with the Conference for Progressive Political Action. It believes that by working through state conferences called by that body, where the views of local labor organizations in each state will be directly represented, it will at the present juncture best advance the cause of working class unity on the political field.

For these reasons the National Convention of the Socialist Party declines the proffered invitation to the Chicago Conference.

With fraternal greetings, we are

William H. Henry,
Algernon Lee,
James Oneal,
Committee.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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