

**Northwest Experiences**

# Farmer-Laborism in Action

In the last seven years no question has received more serious study and attention by American Communists than the so-called Farmer-Labor Party, or Labor Party question. Up to and including the 1928 elections the Minnesota Communist Party devoted more time, money and energy to the "Farmer-Labor Party" idea than to any other question on its program. Numerous pamphlets and much literature was issued by the Party to show why Communists should participate in the "Farmer-Labor" movement and there fight for a "genuine Labor Party".

After chasing this Labor Party phantom from the moment it made its appearance in the post war days the Minnesota workers, who by training and experience should be best qualified to analyze the question, have come to the conclusion that this entire Farmer-Labor Party movement has nothing constructive to offer the American working class.

**Reformist Labor Parties**

In the first place it should be made clear to the workers that there are two kinds of political parties, revolutionary and reformist. Practically all Farmer-Labor, or Labor Parties, belong to the last named group. Like other political parties, the character and classification of a working-class political party is determined by its organization and program. The Farmer-Labor Association in Minnesota is of the reformist variety. That is, there is nothing in its program which calls for the overthrow of the present ruling class and to place the working class in power. Like all labor parties of the reformist character, the F.L.A. simply intends to function as a party of a subordinate class to ask for favors from the ruling class, the capitalists. Therefore, it can be seen, that a reformist political party of a subordinate economic class can only obtain for its members such favors as the ruling class is willing to grant them. On the other hand, revolutionary parties like the Communist Parties, have for their main purpose to put the working class in power as the ruling class.

Communist (revolutionary) parties of the workers stand for this because it is necessary. They know that the producing class cannot even realize their immediate needs under capitalist economy and capitalist rule, to say nothing about their legitimate aims. Communists also know, and they teach the workers this fact, that history does not disclose a single instance where a ruling class relinquished power because they were out-voted. More persuasive means were necessary to replace them. Votes are only practical in settling disputes between a class, but votes are useless in settling disputes between classes. This, of course, refers to cases where there are material issues involved, and not to such immaterial questions as to whether Hoover or Smith should be the President of the United States or whether Shipstead or Nelson should have a seat in the Senate. On such issues the capitalists do not object to abide by the result of the vote.

With this all too brief analysis of the aim and purpose of political parties, let us sum up the net results of ten years of Farmer-Labor activity in Minnesota.

**Theory of Labor Reformism**

The Farmer-Labor Association is supposed to be the organized political expression of the workers and farmers in the State of Minnesota. The intention is, on the surface at least, that through this organization the workers and farmers shall control the legal Farmer-Labor Party which appears on the ballot together with the Republican and Democratic parties. The Farmer-Labor Association is supposed to furnish the program and endorsed candidates for the State Farmer-Labor Party. However, this theory has not worked out very well in practice.

In the first place the organizational structure of the F.L.A. is wrong as a labor party in that it is partly based on individual membership. This arrangement admits politicians and office seekers whose sole ambition is to use the Farmer-Labor Association as a stepping stone to climb into some soft job. The representation to the F.L.A. conventions, where the political programs are written and candidates endorsed is based on territory instead of industry. The territorial basis is the county. There are 87 counties in the state. The farmers control 84 of them. The result of this is that the Farmer-Labor Association

is controlled by conservative farmers, small-town lawyers, small business men and individual office-seekers, all of them incapable of political leadership by decree of history. At the last state convention the organized workers with their mild program were overwhelmingly defeated by the reactionary elements in control. At each succeeding election the Farmer-Labor Association is merely being used as a vote-getting machine for individuals like Shipstead, Wefald Starkey and others. The worker members of the Association merely furnish the votes and the campaign expenses.

**A "Two-Class" Party**

As mentioned above, one of the most serious defects of the Farmer-Labor Association is that it is reformist in program and outlook. Second, it is made up of two classes, farmers and workers, with the wrong class, the farmers, leading or rather strangling the movement. By the laws of economic development farmers and small business men are unable to furnish political leadership for either the workers or the capitalists, but on the other hand, must of necessity follow one or the other class. For this reason, any political movement headed by farmers or small business will soon find itself in a blind alley or will be forced to surrender its leadership to the workers or the big bourgeoisie. (the big

capitalists).

In the recent Minnesota Primary election the labor vote for the Farmer-Labor ticket was very small. Thousands of workers paid no attention to the election as they could not see any object in voting. The workers have been fed up on broken campaign promises by office seekers masquerading behind the Farmer-Labor label. The wrong make-up and program of the F.L.A. has completely blurred both party and class lines, and party issues in the campaigns have degenerated to meaningless issues between individuals. Since the F.L.A. has become a plaything for ambitious politicians of the Shipstead-Starkey type the endorsements of the Association mean nothing to the workers and are generally ignored. That was the case in the Primary election just past where several endorsed state and congressional district candidates were defeated by individuals who carried no endorsement.

All the efforts which have been wasted in the last ten years by the Communist movement to build and maintain Farmer-Labor parties in the United States can be laid to the Right wing opportunist policy of the Stalin leadership of the Communist International. This false conception concerning the role of Farmer-Labor parties, is but another blunder added to the long string of wrong united fronts sponsored by the Stalin gang in the C.I. It will be the duty of the Communist League, the Left wing of the Communist movement, to furnish the American workers with a correct political program which will guide them along the most direct path toward their ultimate goal. —A.EKSTROM

**France**

## Opposition Progress

The minor effects of the world crisis which French industry has already come to experience (textile, wines, etc.) and the pessimistic perspectives created for it by the recently adopted U.S. protective tariff, do not as yet lead the French bourgeoisie to seek methods of despair ("fasciation") as the Party here would have us believe. It senses trouble for the future to be sure. It knows that the crisis is not going to leave France economically immaculate. And for this very reason it strains every effort to reinforce and consolidate its present political domination in the country. A stable bourgeois bloc, purged of all "extremist" elements, is its chief aim.

This was clearly demonstrated by the recent speech of Tardieu at Dijon. By threat and by persuasion he hopes to win over the Radicals to his Republican Concentration, because it is these that he needs to assure stability to his class-government. He openly admits that there are serious problems facing his class (the agricultural crisis, financial disorder, etc.) and he makes a strong plea for cooperation to the different bourgeois parties on the basis of what he has already "accomplished." As a major part of his "accomplishments" he cites his strong-handed suppression of Communist influence! This Communist influence, two, three years ago, was menacing. Today it is impotent! Now, he sees as the task of the government: "positive" achievement.

**The Party up a Blind Alley**

The Party writers pass over in painful silence this enemy class estimate of the movement. For, it is the solemn truth. The First of May, the inaction displayed in the campaign for the 13 martyrs of Yen-Bay attests it. Yet nothing stirs the leadership from their phillistine complacency. Vacant, optimistic phrases are still the substitute for effective class action. As long as the Party will not realize that a strong, solid working class resistance must be assembled to oppose the concentrated power of the bourgeoisie, its influence is going to decline still further. And such a working-class resistance cannot be achieved by "third period" antics, by mechanical control of the mass organizations, by bureaucratic execution of the trade union work, by leaving the basis of reality. By these methods, it only drives the workers into the arms of the reformists of all shades socialists, popists or syndicalist minoritaires. By these methods it discredits Communism as a whole in the eyes of the workers. The masses have to be educated through all possible phases of collective struggle for their historic class task and not by light-headed optimism and talk.

**Opposition Growth**

With all this tragic sterility of the Party leadership, the situation is, however, by no means hopeless. The Left Opposition is always there, watchfully exerting its pressure, struggling to revitalize the Party. The progress of the Left group is increasing. It was the Ligue Communiste which in conjunction with a majority of Annamite Communists here (who, after having carefully studied the events of the Chinese revolution, know where to find proper Communist guidance for their own) organized the first, real protest demonstration against the executions of Yen-Bay, before the president's palace. This demonstration and the impression it made upon the bourgeoisie contributed a great deal to awaken the membership of the Party to the insufficiency of the leadership and to force the Party itself into (belated) action, governmental measures striking our comrades heavily (expulsion and prison).

In the North of France a strong detachment of the regional C.G.T.U. has joined the Opposition Unitaire (which rallies about the political program of the Left Opposition and the Verite.) The C.G.T.U. Left Opposition is rapidly developing, parrying successfully the calumniating attacks of the both the Stalinist majoritaires and the syndicalist minoritaires ("Committee for Trade Union Independence") In the Party itself, different nuclei and sub-sections (Tours, 13th Arrondissement, Paris etc.) have started a struggle against the false policy of the leadership, backing and declaring their full support of the Left Opposition. The struggle for the Party and for the reestablishment of a Leninist line has only begun. —S.GORDON

## Why Doesn't Lovestone Answer Trotsky?

More than three months ago, the following letter from comrade Trotsky was transmitted to Harry Winitzky, business manager of the Revolutionary Age, organ of the American Right wing:

Buyuk-Ada, April, 16, 1930

Dear Comrade Winitzky:

I have received your organ regularly. The various addresses signify the same. In thanking you for your kind attention, I nevertheless feel the need of expressing openly to you a certain surprise on my part in connection with your letter. The Revolutionary Age has from its very beginning, and its present director\* long before its appearance, constantly and energetically denounced me and my friends as counter-revolutionists. I cannot doubt that this happened out of honest conviction.

You sign yourself, dear comrade Winitzky, fraternally". The sincerity of this salutation, I also have absolutely no right to question. But since we are no diplomats, and what we say must correspond to what

\*Trotsky refers to Jay Lovestone.

we think, I assume that if not the Revolutionary Age as a whole, then at least a section around it, no longer regards us as "counter-revolutionists". Would it then not be in place to acknowledge this openly?

I raise this question not in my interest but in the interest of political clarification in general.

In this spirit I also sign myself,

Fraternally,

L. TROTSKY

Three months, and many issues of the Revolutionary Age, have elapsed, but no answer has been made in that paper, unless one can count as such the continued misrepresentations of Trotsky's and the Opposition's standpoint that appear in it regularly. The letter, it is true, was reported at the recent "convention" of the Lovestone group, and interpreted by the professional Trotsky-slayer, Bert Wolfe, as a "bid for unity" with the Right wing! But Wolfe's conjuring tricks are not yet enough to obviate the need for an open reply to comrade Trotsky's letter.

What have Winitzky and his paper to say?

## The Man Stalin Chose to Succeed Blumkin!

The French press is announcing new revelations on "the activities of the G.P.U." They are supposed to come from a high Soviet functionary. In fact, it refers to a new deserter of Bessedovsky's type, who as soon as he passes "over the other side of the wall", goes over body and soul to the bourgeoisie and swears to fight Bolshevism with all his power.

The cases of desertion by functionaries of the rotten apparatus abroad have become very frequent. Diplomats, military attaches, commercial agents, bank directors, the whole fine gang that is often recruited from the bourgeois world, seeks the first opportunity to betray the proletarian state. It is a normal condition and that is why we have not bothered ourselves with these people in our press.

But the case of the latest deserter is very characteristic of the Stalinist apparatus and of the struggle that Stalin, with the aid of the apparatus, conducts against the Left Opposition.

Agabekov, the name of the new deserter was charged with a secret mission of the G.P.U. for Turkey, Greece, Syria, Palestine and Egypt. And here is what Agabekov says in Miliukov's paper, Posledni Novosti (Latest News) of July 2nd, 1930:

"It is Blumkin who was charged before me with this mission. Last fall he was recalled to Moscow, and, suspected of Trotskyism, he was shot. I was designated in his place and I was given the order to relieve from their posts all his collaborators suspected of Trotskyism, too."

This declaration explains a lot about

the methods of struggle that Stalin uses against the Left Opposition. In the same declaration, Agabekov says that while he was yet in Moscow he no longer believed in the dictatorship of the proletariat and that he "considered it as the dictatorship over the proletariat". But Stalin does not trouble about such a trifle provided the functionary is faithful to him and accepts all the dirty jobs against the Opposition. All the rest—conviction, fidelity to Communism, etc.—are secondary matters. The Opposition, hunted driven from their posts, deported like Rakovsky or shot like Blumkin are replaced by the Bessedovskys and by the Agabekovs.

The Agabekov case shows us again that in the bitter struggle against the Left Opposition, against the Bolshevik vanguard that has remained loyal to Communism, Stalin employs covert or open counter-revolutionists, people who are ready at the first occasion to betray the Soviet state.

—O.

## KLORKEIT No. 4

Note that the fourth number of Klorkeit, organ of the Jewish Left Opposition group in France, has arrived. It contains among other articles the fourth installment of comrade Trotsky's "The Third Period of the Mistakes of the Comintern."