

# The Elections and Labor's Struggle

Note must be taken, now that detailed figures are available, of the extremely low poll of the various parties of the working class in the national elections in November. Even in absolute terms, in round figures, higher votes have been polled in other elections. But when consideration is given to the millions of new voters, due to increase of population and extension of suffrage to women. It is found that the various labor parties—the Communist party, Socialist party, SLP—received proportionately the lowest vote in 32 years. Such a result is surprising in view of the years of economic crisis, which, one could expect or hope, would have a radicalizing, if not revolutionary, influence on the political attitude of the American worker. Yet, not only did the Communist party receive a distressingly low vote, but even the Socialist party with its emancipated program appealing to the vast mass of the petty bourgeoisie and what remains of the upper strata or aristocracy of labor, obtained a vote lower than the high vote of Debs.

### Some Factors in the Low Vote

It will give some comfort, but not be telling the whole story, to acknowledge a number of factors and deficiencies of American political life which effect the tabulation of the voting strength of the American workers. First there is the disfranchisement of vast numbers of the foreign-born, though that need not be a permanent obstacle; there is, too, the intimidation and terror in the South which brings about the real, if not formal, disfranchisement of the mass of Negro workers and peasants. Corruption and vote-stealing are factors, perhaps even worse than conceived by revolutionists themselves, as revealed in the recent elections in New York City when even a Democrat, McKee, swerving from the Tammany machine, found later that some 150,000 votes for him had not been tallied. Allow, then, for wholesale stealing of Communist and socialist votes. The political writer Kent maintains that the political machine having the most money for campaign purposes always wins the major elections. Grant its importance to the capitalist parties, that phase can nevertheless have only a secondary significance for the working class parties which depend on basic social and economic factors for their ultimate victory. The social-patriot and many times "socialist" minister of Belgium's monarchy, Emile Vandervelde, in his book, "Socialism Versus the State" made out something of a case for the tremendous ballyhoo methods of the American capitalist parties to affect the working class in casting their ballots. But that too can have but transitory significance and had its basis, in part, in a stable American capitalism. In addition, many millions of people continued the practice of staying away together from the polls.

The sad truth is that in 1932, almost four years after the most terrific economic crisis in American history, the workers as well as the bourgeoisie, middle classes and farmers, voted their belief in the efficacy of capitalism yet to solve the ills of unemployment, low wages, etc., etc. It is true that they rejected the reactionary administration of Hoover and accepted the demagogic politician Roosevelt, but that of course was a case of tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee. The shift basically was not a change from their capitalist outlook, but only a change of administrators of the system of private property.

Does this mean that relatively swift changes of the political physiognomy of the American people, and particularly the proletariat, are excluded? By no means. Despite the affirmation of faith of the vast mass of American people in the social system of capitalism, it is nevertheless observable that there is a search for new methods, even new systems. There is no longer the same certainty about the durability of capitalism or its parts. Too many dents have been made in its armor and the soldier doesn't seem to be such an ardent fighter. It is a fact that with one hand the American workers gave their okay to American political system as such, and that with the other, they are girding themselves for struggles which will bring them into sharp conflict with capitalist property rights and ideas.

The masses often devise their own strategies in the class struggle, evidently preferring or finding it necessary to experience every possible solution for their requirements. The American workers, having had in the past the least need for independent political experience and actions, because of the circumstances and character of American economic life as against that of Europe, are proceeding to turn over in their minds the ways and means out of their impasse. In this, they are no different than the workers in other countries, albeit not yet so advanced politically and industrially.

### A Lesson from England

People often shift their base of attack in the hope of effecting their aims. When the ravages of the Industrial Revolution in England, in the beginnings of capitalism, ate their way into the sinews and bones of the English workers, they turned toward trade unionism and initiated big struggles. Various factors contributed to their defeat on the economic field and they abandoned that field almost entirely and entered the struggle for the granting of suffrage and other political rights. The Chartist movement was the essence of this transference of struggle by the English proletariat from the economic to the political field. The Chartist movement had its vital importance in the evolution of the English labor movement, as did also a sharp turn at another time toward the co-operative movement led by Robert Owen as a panacea for the miserably exploited English workers.

Struggles of all description were to en-

## What the Presidential Vote Means for the Workers

For many decades before the English labor and political movement had made headway in the direction of joint action or agreement between the industrial and political arms of labor to achieve labor's aims. The movement has proceeded by the process of evolution and division. Rapid changes in the condition of Great Britain's imperialist domain bring the mass of English workers, who adhere to the political platform of socialism, to the point where they will have to abandon once and for all the tempo of "gradualism" in socialism and go over to the tempo and outlook of Communism.

There is need to allow and hope to believe in swifter reactions and development among the American workers from now on. Though in the last elections, their vote indicated from a class standpoint, almost total ignorance of the significance of the economic crisis in this social milieu, the fact remains that in their daily life they pay very close attention to it, and can be expected to generalize their experiences in a more thorough-going class manner. How does this show itself?

### The Labor Party

Let us take the matter, briefly of the Labor party. It is still by no means excluded that there will be formed a Labor party in the United States. But the reaction of the Communists toward it, at least that of the Left Opposition, has been clarified; namely, that of sharp exposure and opposition, despite our readiness to consider what might be our working relation to it if such a movement develops.

Not so many years ago, when Labor party agitation and attempts at organization reached their heights, the bulk of the proponents of the Labor party, in accepting it, undoubtedly attached a definite class significance to it, in fact in many cases, a revolutionary importance. They viewed it, not as the Communists did—as a part of a process of American political evolution,—but rather as the class movement of the workers and a substitute for any other revolutionary movement. It is true, also, that this same bulk removed from the Labor party any idea of mass actions, extra-parliamentary activity and viewed it in the parliamentary or English Labor Party sense. And such a Labor party, if it develops, will have all that opportunist virus and confusion. But such as it was in those years of 1922-28, it was essentially a movement of labor and even regarded by opponent classes and groups as a narrow class movement which might have its dangers for capitalism.

But today, irrespective of the development of a Labor party, such a party is looked upon altogether differently. The experiences of the English Labor Party have made their way on an international scale, not excepting America. Among its proponents in America are middle-class leaders who find in the platform of a Labor Party the reflection of the middle classes' own needs and ambitions. The wiser bourgeoisie, despite contrary noise, view such a possibility or other changes with might break up the two-party, Republican and Democratic, system, with equality. In fact, such a shrewd political observer as Samuel G. Blythe foresees such a break-up in one more, maybe two elections.

Communists, surely, have no illusions about a Labor party (or do some of them still have?). The Labor opponents of revolution, the middle class and the

bourgeoisie—all view such a party as a bulwark against effective class struggle and social revolution. The working class in the United States, which will move on both the social reformist and revolutionary fronts simultaneously, will more swiftly hereafter grasp political lessons, whether or not one of those lessons takes the form of the Labor party. Hence, in respect to the Labor party, it must be said that the last few years have witnessed changes in outlook about it.

But if the American workers have not reacted on the political, or more strictly, the parliamentary, field more in accordance with the acuteness of the economic conditions, they are preparing for class struggle on other fronts. None other than William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, speaks about economic struggles that will engage the workers on many and big fronts. It is not needed here to explain Green's role or his sudden espousal of the cause of militant labor struggle and a "new deal" for labor. That has been done already in the columns of the Militant. But it is noteworthy that Green has felt it necessary to give lip-service so far to the pressure of the mass of the labor movement.

Even more important is the fact that the new program of the labor movement, with all the confusion and illusion still to be found, has begun to catch up with

## 10,000 Out in Briggs Auto Strike

(Continued from page 1)  
they have not forgotten the machine gun fusillade of last spring when four workers were shot down in cold blood for demanding relief from Ford.

Of the same yarn is the fabrication that "You can't stop progress—our plants will be going again full tilt in a very short time." What is full tilt? Before the depression the capacity production of cars in the United States was 7,700,000 a year; the average yearly production was 4,500,000; the peak year of actual production was 1929 with 5,621,715. The latest figures for a full year during the depression give a production for 1932 of approximately 1,411,000 cars and trucks. This last figure is about 18.4 of capacity and 25.0 of the production of the peak year. Full tilt? Pap.

### The A. F. of L. and the A. W. U.

This struggle seems to have been quite spontaneous in its beginnings. Certainly the A. F. of L. which has claimed jurisdiction over these fiercely exploited workers, was not on hand and has not offered even to help. It will be recalled that in 1926 the A. F. of L. asserted its intention of organizing the automobile industry. At that time seventeen crafts agreed to waive jurisdictional claims during the proposed campaign, but even with this enormous impetus to start the job no move whatever was made.

According to the Daily Worker, Ford's lay-off is a move to break the Briggs strike and prevent it from spreading to "his" own plants where strike sentiment was growing as a result of the activities of the AWU. Be that as it may the Murray Body men, like the Briggs strikers, are following the leadership of the militant AWU. (Daily Worker, Jan. 28) The Daily Worker also claims militant mass picketing:—"At the Mack Avenue plant the police attempted to drive the strikers away but failed because of the militant mass picketing. The AWU is leading the strike." (Daily Worker, January 27).

The rumor was spread in the capitalist press that the Briggs workers adopted a resolution banning Communists

the new situation produced by American capitalism. In this new social program for official labor, which, besides industrial struggles, envisages also independent political action by the workers, is to be seen the positive side of the workers' reaction to the economic crisis. The negative side, the vote of labor in the November elections, has already been recorded—and, more important, is and will be rapidly forgotten in the natural course of the struggles of the working class with the employers and the governmental apparatus.

There need be no doubt that unorganized labor will be found ready to add its forces to organized labor in common struggle, and, indeed, to go beyond the official program in all respects. But that is not under discussion here. What is decisive and important is that the dialectics of the struggle are about to reconcile the seeming contradictions of the actions of the American working class on a higher plane of struggle and vision. While the election results are, therefore, extremely "disappointing" and this field of struggle is yet to be militantly invaded by the American workers, still they are not the final and only barometer. Behind the peaceful gesture of American labor at the ballot box, there is to be seen already the clenched fist about to do battle with his class enemy. The Communist party and the Communist Left Opposition must be prepared to assist and lead in the historic battles that will tend to change rapidly the face of American social and political life.

—MARTIN ABERN.

## Left Opposition Grows in China

**PEIPING.**—About a month ago we received comrade L. D.'s first letter. About two weeks ago we received his second letter together with yours. The Russian texts have been translated into Chinese and circulated among the revolutionary masses. We are very happy to have these new, precious writings.

Before September 18, 1931, the date of the invasion of Japanese imperialism of last year, the Left Opposition in Northern China was mainly occupied with theoretical questions. After the "invasion" our comrades appeared here and there in the leadership of the movement. Our political program was widely carried out. And we truly became "the most dangerous enemy of the Chinese C. P." as the Stalinists put it.

When the anti-Japanese imperialist sentiment was raging the majority of the Stalinist comrades co-operated with us. Only when the anti-imperialist movement receded did the bureaucratic Stalinist leaders find us "the most dangerous enemy". At the same time they spread more filiations about the peasants' "Red Army" among the masses, while they continued their course along the road of bureaucratic adventurism.

A certain number of the new generation have joined the L. O. and fought energetically for it. Not long before the arrest of comrade Chen Du-Hsiu we gained more militants for the Marxist-Leninist Fighting Club. This club was formerly semi-party in character and was composed mostly of members emerging from the Stalin clique. But now they fully accepted the ideas of the International Left Opposition under Trotsky's leadership and declared their allegiance

to the official Left Opposition. They were earnestly welcomed, and are now working for the Left Opposition as a new force.

Despite the blow of comrade Chen Du Hsiu's arrest the work of the Left Opposition took a step forward. More public meetings and debates on theoretical and current political problems were held. More inner discussion was carried on. More members willingly went to work in the workers' districts. More pamphlets and papers were written and distributed. Larger masses were aroused under the Opposition's program. More money was collected.

But we must recognize that this is far from enough. In every respect we must make greater efforts to catch up with the objective needs and become strong enough to correct the wrong course of the Stalinists. We are now working under tremendous physical difficulties but we are sure that "the greater the effort the less the difficulty" is true.

As to our relations with you we must say that we owe you very much and expect much more from you! The scattered copies of the Militant that we received enabled us to learn a great deal about the experiences of the International Left Opposition and lessen our mistakes.

Our organ is called the Vanguard. We have now published six issues. Besides this we have a workers' newspaper which is a weekly and a student weekly, four issues of which have been published. If you can find a Chinese comrade to translate them we will send you some copies.

—LEFT OPPOSITION OF NORTH CHINA.

## Oppositionists Expelled from I.L.D.

**YOUNGSTOWN.**—On December 29, four workers were admitted to the I.L.D. here in Youngstown. Three of us entered as Left Oppositionists. Our purpose as we stated at the time of our admission was to help in building up the I.L.D. as a weapon of defense against the capitalist class.

About a week ago we met the section organizer of the I.L.D. on the street. She told us that the four of us were expelled from the I.L.D. in our absence, without a hearing and an opportunity to defend ourselves before the membership. When we asked her what the charges were, she said: "Because of being renegades and counter-revolutionists." That is because we are Left Oppositionists. The fourth worker is comrade Love, a foundation member of the party in Youngstown, now sympathetic to the Lovestone group.

On Friday, January 27, we went to the general membership meeting to ask the comrades whether what the section organizer had told us was true, and to demand that we be given our rights as workers to be heard in our defense. The bureaucrats tried to get around this elementary workers' right by ruling that the I.L.D. meeting was a closed meeting and telling all those who were not members to leave. Two workers who had come to the meeting to join protested.

The membership saw the sense of their protest and our demand. Together with them we succeeded in getting the question on the agenda. At this point Rogers, section organizer of the party, left the meeting and went into the cellar.

After a discussion conducted, surprisingly enough, in a comradely spirit, we came to the vote. There were about

eighteen members present. The chairman who, as far as bureaucratic procedure is concerned has nothing to learn from John L. Lewis, counted nine votes for our expulsion. And that, as far as he was concerned, was the end of the matter. Despite our protests no vote against was taken; nor were the abstentions recorded.

The Left Opposition comrades rose and left demonstratively. Love remained declaring that he was a member of the I.L.D. and would not be expelled by such bureaucratic procedure. The bureaucrats attacked him. The noise of the fight reached us on the street. We rushed back to separate the comrades and prevent the interference of the police.

The workers in the hall were decidedly against this disgraceful scene. Their interference, however, was temporarily postponed by the sudden appearance of Rogers. He rushed in and drew a murderous wood scraper from his coat. Brandishing this he made for the Left Opposition comrades. He might have killed us had not the workers, alarmed by this lunatic, forced him to curb his lust. "Comrades of the party," he shouted, "throw them out." The workers anxious to put an end to the whole business threw us out.

But this is no solution. The workers must understand that it is not the Left Opposition that must be thrown out but the maniacal bureaucrats. The Left Opposition will continue to press forward in Youngstown, as elsewhere, with the ideas of Marxism. Not all the murderous bureaucrats in the Stalinist apparatus can stifle the voice of the proletarian revolutionists. We will return to the I.L.D. and the party.

—S. F.

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Lastly, there is the half-turn that the party and the I.L.D. are making. Hacker admitted at a meeting last Sunday that the line of the I.L.D. in the Mooney fight had been sectarian. And Frank Spector writes in the February issue of the Labor Defender: "At the bottom of our failure to develop a broad united front has nearly always been the sectarian attitude on our part." This does not trace the root of the trouble to the soil from which spring these weeds of policy—the theory of social-fascism. But it is the beginning of wisdom.

If the party members will raise their voices and demand a full accounting instead of this half-way apology (which is accompanied by the usual benedictions of the line and the criticisms of the execution) they can make this turn a genuine one. They must insist that they enter the Chicago conference prepared to work with the other groups represented there, not giving up for a minute their independent role as the vanguard of the class and their right to criticism of their opponents. With a correct policy on the question of the united front and the capital of Mooney's cell, plus their splendid record in the relief demonstrations the Communists can win the leadership of the movement and raise the struggle to new heights.

This can very well be the impetus which the class needs to resist the onslaughts of the bosses. Mooney has correctly insisted that the struggle for his freedom is inextricably bound up with the fight of the class against its capitalist masters. That is how we approach the problem, too. Everything now depends on the party. The Left Opposition will be present to raise its voice for Mooney's freedom and Communism, and work energetically in the movement.

—T. STAMM.

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