

Labor's Great Political Power Must Be Used for Independent Action, Election Vote Shows

By B. J. Widick

An analysis of the municipal campaigns and elections recently finished gives strong indications that the C.I.O. leadership will try to continue its policy of bartering with capitalist parties and that reaction is growing stronger in the industrial centers.

Without question, industrial workers in key cities were largely united behind the program of the C.I.O., dominated by Labor's Non-Partisan League in the municipal campaigns.

Aid Old Party Men

In New York City, labor's vote was corralled by the American Labor Party behind its endorsement of the Republican faker, F. H. La Guardia, running for re-election as mayor. Both the Socialist Party (Right Wing) and the Stalinist Party aided in winning workers' support for La Guardia.

The C.I.O. furnished a powerful base in Detroit for its democratic candidate, O'Brien, when the Auto Workers union endorsed and campaigned for him. The S.P. and C.P. were also active in supporting this capitalist politician.

In Akron, the United Rubber Workers union, spent much time and thousands of dollars urging the election of G. L. Patterson, a democrat, who was chosen as "democratic-labor" mayoralty candidate. In Canton, Ohio, a C.I.O. supported politician ran for mayor.

All the steel and mining areas in Western Pennsylvania were the scene of an intense political campaign conducted by the Steel Workers' union which endorsed and in some cases, nominated its own choices for municipal office, either on the democratic or republican ballot.

The program of the C.I.O. was a simple one. It revived Labor's Non-Partisan Leagues, which had been created in 1936 to help re-elect Roosevelt, to act as the political guide of the working class vote. This was its answer to the growing realization of the workers that political action must supplement economic struggle. The C.I.O. top leadership wanted the developing class consciousness, especially of the mass production workers, directed into the safe channels of class-collaborationism, under the slogan of "New Dealism."

Surrender Labor Program

Once the unions voted support of the League, little pretense was made that this was independent working class political action. Quite the contrary. The whole movement was consciously carried into the bosom of the Democratic party. "We've got the labor vote, we must woo the regular democrats!" the League officials said. This meant giving up any parcel of the labor program left and becoming democrats, body and soul. (This accounts for the fact that in few industrial centers did the workers vote as a unit. In Akron, only 60 per cent of the union movement voted for Patterson. In Detroit, Homer Martin, Auto Workers president, admitted the union membership didn't support the League's candidate).

Mass production workers were looking for independent political action against the capitalists. They didn't and won't get it, through present C.I.O. policies. Outside of New York City,

where the trade union bureaucracy is highly skilled through years of practice in the art of misleading the workers, the entrance of the unions into politics was viewed with uncertainty and as an experiment by the C.I.O. leaders. Opportunists to the core, John L. Lewis and his associates, wanted to find out by experience how they could proceed to control the votes of the workers.

The purpose of the C.I.O. in politics was clear to its leadership. They think, falsely and to the detriment of the workers' interests, that capitalism can be reformed. Lewis and company hope to achieve some reforms of capitalism by gaining control of municipal, state and federal legislators, so that reform laws can be passed. What puzzled the C.I.O. leadership was the method by which they could become a greater political power.

National F. L. P.?

Should the C.I.O. with its 3,000,000 members, sponsor a national Farmer-Labor Party? Should it proceed along the People's Front idea, vehemently advocated by the Stalinists as part of their complete rejection and betrayal of all revolutionary principles? Should the unions seek to capture the Democratic party? The recent elections were to furnish the significant straws in the wind to answer these questions.

It hardly need be added that the furthest thought in the minds of the C.I.O. leaders was the idea of doing anything which might, directly or indirectly, promote the class struggle in the political field and thus prepare the workers to achieve revolutionary socialism.

What were the election results? In New York City, LaGuardia—to the cheers of the capitalist anti-labor press—won decisively. The 489,000 American Labor Party votes turned the trick.

In Detroit, Akron, and Canton, the League's candidates lost. The Akron defeat, incidentally, was a real shock to the C.I.O. Even the Republicans thought the C.I.O. would win.

A mixture of victories and defeats of the C.I.O. candidates resulted in the Pennsylvania elections.

How did the results of the elections affect the political ideas of the C.I.O. leaders—whose policies will continue to predominate in the labor movement during the next period?

"Balance of Power"

"To us, the election has demonstrated beyond doubt that in a national election between democrats and republicans labor will hold the balance of power," an official C.I.O. spokesman declared. "Now our job is to consolidate those gains, and make good that belief."

The labor bureaucrats have reasoned in this fashion: In Detroit, we took a beating because our inexperienced union leaders made the issue too much

of a labor versus capital dispute. In Akron, they made the same mistake. But in New York City, our policy of not having an independent candidate, or one that appeared to be, brought real success.

It is significant too, that the C.I.O. leaders pose the question of the next national election as a race between the Democrats and Republicans, with the labor vote holding a balance of power.

The writer well remembers a conversation with some top C.I.O. leaders on labor going into politics, a few remarks from which are pertinent. "If we saw some more Farmer-Labor party victories, we'd begin to press for a national party. If we don't see that, we'll act as a buffer force between the Democrats and Republicans," one of them said.

The defeat of the Farmer-Labor party by a Republican candidate in the Minneapolis elections, along with its evident weaknesses elsewhere, threw cold water—at least for the coming period—on any ideas the C.I.O. leaders had in that direction. They'll be satisfied with supporting "progressive" Democrats or Republicans.

A Fatal Faith

In other words, they are prepared to have repeated the experience with Roosevelt during the "Little Steel" strike, over again, on a thousand fronts. All they received from the White House during the massacre at Chicago, the shootings of workers in Canton and Youngstown, was the rebuff, "A plague on both your Houses." Roosevelt betrayed the workers in the steel strike. He caused thousands of relief workers to face starvation because of the WPA slashes. Yet the C.I.O. leaders again have affirmed their faith in capitalist politicians. The Stalinists shout to the house-tops that they second those policies, which betray the workers.

Revolutionary socialists must point out the utter futility of the political policies of the C.I.O. A return to the militant and progressive policies which built the vast industrial unions is necessary. The reaction in the middle-

Appeals Court 'Exonerates' Sacramento Defendants

Norman Mini and the seven other defendants in the famous Sacramento criminal syndicalism case have been "exonerated," by the reversal of the conviction recently handed down by the appeals court. But the hypocritical capitalist court saw to it that the victory of the National Sacramento Appeal Committee was whittled down to the irreducible minimum.

Norman Mini himself had already served his term, and even his period of parole had expired before the court acted. The same was true for other defendants.

In its lengthy decision, a copy of which has just arrived, the court limited the reversal to a single point. It left inviolate the validity of the vicious criminal

syndicalism statute, the vague indictment under which the workers were arrested, and the outrageous conduct of the court and the prosecution. The reversal was given solely on the ground that the jury, having declared the defendants not guilty on another count based on the same facts, had by implication exonerated the defendants from the charge under which it simultaneously convicted them.

We congratulate Norman Mini and the other defendants, who at least will not have this conviction used to speed them again to jail for class struggle activities. But the struggle of the California labor movement against the criminal syndicalism statute has yet to be won.

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west developed out of the smashing of the Little Steel strike. It can be blocked from growing only by pursuing a class struggle program against the bosses. Ford's dynasty in Detroit is the strong-hold of reaction. Organization of Ford workers into a powerful, militant industrial union, would break the backbone of the anti-labor sentiment. The C.I.O. must make this its major task immediately.

The road into the Democratic party or any other party based on reform of capitalism is a blind alley for the workers. Not until the workers take the path of revolutionary struggle against the bosses will they be able to find a fundamental solution to their pressing problems.

Just as the workers smashed the open shop and the company unions by fighting independently to form industrial unions in the economic field, they must smash the chains that bind them to the capitalists in the political field.

The immediate and the historic interests of the working class were defended in the municipal elections only by the revolutionary socialists who ran independent candidates in the New York, Minneapolis, Akron and Cleveland elections.

These things the C.I.O. leadership does not understand or understand only too well. But the rank and file workers, through their own experience and our propaganda, will understand, and will act accordingly.

Sam Baron Arrested in Spain

Sam Baron, sent to Spain by the National Executive Committee of the Right Wing of the Socialist Party for the purpose of investigating the arrests of the leaders of the POUM, has himself been arrested by the agents of the G.P.U. in Spain.

A message in code, received by his friends in Paris, read: "Sam Baron under arrest in Valencia. Communist agents accuse him as Trotskyist. He is in trouble."

As in the case of Erwin Wolf, Mark Rein, Kurt Landau and what now amount to thousands of others revolutionaries and labor militants, we protest with the greatest energy and indignation this latest act of political banditry committed by the Stalinist Secret Police.

The Stalinists in Spain, as well as anybody who

has had occasion to come into political contact with Sam Baron, knows how utterly ridiculous it is to charge him with the "crime" of Trotskyism.

The only "crime" of which Baron is indubitably guilty is having made an attempt to look into the hideous frame-up against a working class political party which the Stalinist-Republican regime in Spain, aided by the G.P.U., has perpetrated against the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM). Anyone who refuses to accept on mere say-so the Stalinist charge that any and every one of its political opponents or critics is automatically an agent of the Gestapo and in the service of Hitler, Mussolini and or the Mikado—himself becomes such an agent.

The entire labor movement must exclaim with a single loud voice against the loathsome methods and record of the Stalinist G.P.U. and demand the immediate release of all working class prisoners now held in its dungeons—and not only in Spain but in the U.S.S.R. itself.