

Campaign Notes of a District Organizer

By ARNE SWABECK.

"LA FOLLETTE or Foster," said the secretary of the miners' local at Johnston City, Ill. to me, "is the issue amongst the Illinois miners in this election. As far as we are concerned the old parties are not considered, we are thru with them." He was a LaFollette supporter.

This statement vividly illustrated the distance traversed in rapid tempo during a short span of political development in this country. LaFollette versus Foster—the representative of the small capitalists and certain sections of the labor aristocracy or the representative of the revolutionary proletariat—that is the issue which demands a definite decision by the workers, not only now but after this election as well. It represents a certain analogy with conditions of the politically more developed countries of Europe. An intensive struggle for the leadership of the masses of workers between the socialist traitors and their supporters, the labor bureaucrats, and the petty bourgeoisie on the one hand and the Communists on the other, preceding the establishment of a real united front for the victory over capitalism.

Perhaps the beginning of this struggle was more clearly indicated thru the Chicago factory straw vote conducted by the local Workers Party. First the general break away from the old parties and secondly the heated debates as to the issue—LaFollette versus Foster.

The great majority of the factory workers canvassed by this straw vote and even a good proportion of office workers employed by the same concerns showed that they were thru with such outstanding tools of capitalist exploitation as Coolidge and Davis. While many would step up to deposit their straw, looking slyly at the canvassers, indicating that they had taken the "great step away from their old party" and voted for LaFollette, whom some of the bosses call radical, others would proudly announce "I am for Foster," knowing that theirs was the class conscious part. Those were also the ones who would immediately set out to convince their fellow workers that this was a class issue—Communism versus Capitalism—even tho the latter may wear the mask of LaFollette progressives.

Getting on the ballot by nominating petitions is tedious work. Yet the circularizing of petitions offers splendid opportunities to bring this issue to the workers. One of our Chicago party members confessed to me that nine hours' work on one Sunday for one of the Communist congressional candidates had netted him only 61 signatures, but he had missed no opportunity to explain to the workers the issues that were at stake. And then—nine hours, voluntarily, of such tedious work show the stuff that some of our party members are made of.

Evenings, when our party workers went out to get signatures, time was too precious to allow for lengthy discussions. One respectable citizen, after having signed his name to a Workers Party petition presented to him exclaimed, "I will sign for anybody except these d— bolsheviks." Our comrade was in a hurry to leave but he managed to leave a DAILY WORKER in this citizen's hands and get the promise that he would read it. Butting into another family this comrade had no sooner mentioned the word petition than the man of the house curtly informed him that there was only one kind of petition that he would ever sign his name to. "What kind?" queried our comrade. "Only a Communist petition will do for me," came the reply. Well, all adults in that family were immediately signed up.

Canvassing the outskirts of the city one young chap, in informing one of our party workers that his father was not home, said, "You may come back later. Of course, I cannot guarantee that my father will sign his

name to your petition, you see, he is ruling in the case of our party. only a socialist."

Seemingly nothing could stop LaFollette in his own state, Wisconsin. Nay more—supported by the Milwaukee socialist party, bankrupted by the traitorous selling out of their official leadership, LaFollette was ready to annihilate all working class opposition. Although filing nominating petitions containing nearly twice the amount of signatures required by the state, his chief satellite, Attorney General Herman L. Ekern ruled that the names of the Worker Party candidates for president and vice president, Wm. Z. Foster and Benjamin Gitlow could not appear on the ballot. That privilege would be reserved only for LaFollette and Wheeler even tho they were nominated in the same manner. Meanwhile the police under the jurisdiction of the socialist mayor of Milwaukee discovered that the "restricted zone" rule could conveniently be applied against Workers Party street speakers, no matter what part of the city that might be. Never

Capitalist solidarity knows many methods. When one fails another will be tried. And so when our comrades of Gary, Ind., approached the banker who is in charge of the armory of that city to make arrangements to rent the premises for a meeting, bringing with them the necessary amount of money, he asked who was to speak and for what party. Upon being informed that the speaker would be Wm. Z. Foster, the candidate for president of the Workers Party, he said: "Nothing doing, Foster is not a good citizen." This was the verdict of a banker.

Nevertheless Foster will be on the ballot in Indiana and he will also speak at Gary. The steel workers will know that a vote for Foster means the first step toward class action. To many of them the issue LaFollette versus Foster has gone a long way towards complete clarification. The brutal capitalist exploitation, as particularly manifested in the steel mills, breeds class consciousness and continually strengthens the founda-

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mind the regular republicans, the LaFolletteites and the Salvation Army that were holding forth in the same zones.

Our party fought both obstructions compelling a reversal of the rulings on the ballot, and our street speakers, interrupted now and then by involuntary visits to the Milwaukee police station, addressed thousands of workers. The names of our presidential candidates are now on the ballot while ever growing numbers of workers come to listen to the Communist message delivered by our speakers. Actual demonstrations teaching these workers that the capitalist face is by far the predominating part of the LaFollette movement. They are turning toward the leader of the revolutionary proletariat—the Communist Party.

Strange enough, precisely the same methods to hamstringing the revolutionary workers attempted in the state dominated by LaFollette were pursued in Indiana, dominated by the steel kings, the Ku Klux Klan and home of the headquarters of the grandest collection of reactionary union fakers. But they failed just as miserably there.

The political lackeys and lickspittles of these dominant powers in Indiana secured an injunction restraining the Board of Election Commissioners from placing the candidates of the Workers Party with those of other so-called minor parties on the ballot, giving their usual flimsy excuses for such action. It is interesting to note that the injunction appeared as soon as nominating petitions of the Workers Party had been filed. But no matter how endeared the injunction weapon has become to this gentry, this time it could not stand the test. A demand for a rehearing finally resulted in a reversal of the injunction

tion for the revolutionary movement.

Down in Christopher, Ill., the Ku Klux mayor and his Ku Klux helpers and sheriffs closed the hall on Mother Bloor, the Workers Party campaign speaker, and drove the assembled workers on the streets. He prohibited any Communist meeting in the town. Then the miners who filled the streets to hear the Communist message marched to the city limits followed by their wives carrying children in their arms. "A pathetic but impressive sight," said an eye-witness. Under the flickering glare of a lantern the meeting was held. That, however, did not end the fight. One week later Wm. F. Dunne, Communist candidate for governor of the state, spoke to a much larger gathering right in the heart of the town.

The mayor of Madison, Ill., issued the same sort of an edict against Communist campaign meetings and closed the halls. It only resulted in a bigger protest meeting addressed by Mother Bloor at Granite City which is virtually built together with Madison and ruled by the same steel trust. The numbers of this gathering was further increased at the subsequent meeting addressed by Comrade Dunne.

Surely great efforts are being exerted to line up the Illinois workers for LaFollette. Here is where this campaign is being particularly concentrated to attempt to carry in a popular sweep all the less conscious working class votes. But with this concentration the issue LaFollette versus Foster has become more pronounced.

Illinois is supposed to be a cinch for LaFollette. Undoubtedly the experiences of the great industrial proletariat of this state will manifest itself in a confused rebellion against the strikebreaker president and the Morgan-Rockefeller lawyer and all that they stand for. The vague desire for a la-

bor party has prompted many workers to look toward the LaFollette movement believing that that is it. Said the secretary of the big miners' local of Staunton, Ill. to me: "I am for LaFollette because I believe it is the beginning toward a labor party. On most of the other progressive issues I agree with you fellows. I am with you in the fight to rout the labor fakers who have infested themselves upon our movement."

He did not realize that the LaFollette movement has served as the main factor to defeat the labor party.

While the LaFollette movement has two faces ready made, in Illinois it takes great care to appear primarily under its labor face, yet the state campaign committee is dominated by representatives of non-labor elements, progressive republicans, republicans, progressive democrats, Irish-Americans, German-Americans, etc. Not that this composition is anything incidental or for that matter different from any other state.

Nowhere has the manipulations in the pre-election maneuvers of the astute but visionless trade union bureaucrats become as politically corrupt as in Illinois. The labor endorsements of the "progressives" was skillfully engineered to include Governor Small; the champion among corrupt capitalist politicians; the "good roads governor" who builds hard roads in the state paying the workers 40 cents an hour, working ten hours a day. As the miners, due to unemployment were compelled to engage in this kind of work, they realized why these were called "hard roads." This Governor Small as soon as the zero hour for the filing of independent nominating petitions had struck, announced himself as a regular republican; a supporter of Coolidge and Dawes and all that Wall Street stands for. This, however, did not disturb the labor politicians in the least. They knew the game and are continuing their endorsements of capitalist politicians.

Meanwhile unemployment is increasing in Wisconsin, Indiana and Illinois. The big factories are laying off help, steel production is at a low ebb and many mines have remained closed for months. The workers are feeling the realities of the capitalist method of production.

Two hundred Illinois mines have remained closed for more than six months, the remaining 197 are operating, averaging one-third time. Forty-three thousand Illinois coal miners have been unemployed for more than six months, the remaining 62,000 average two days a week. September, 1924, found 97,000 fewer workers employed in the factories of the state than the same month last year. The free employment agencies report 142 applicants for each 100 jobs while 68 per cent of the entire working population of the state are on less than full-time schedule—starvation and misery in prospect.

From the old parties nothing can be expected. From the capitalist government or the capitalist manufacturers' organizations nothing but ruthless prosecution of the capitalist aims in the class struggle can be expected. The LaFollette movement offers no hope of relief for this prospective starvation and misery. On the contrary its avowed aim is to keep capitalism in power and maintain the capitalist system of production. Only the Workers Party organizes and prepares the workers thru a militant struggle for their immediate needs and for the overthrow of capitalism.

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