

LABOR PLAYED NEW ROLE IN ELECTIONS

By JAY LOVESTONE

NO matter what criticism one may justifiably make of labor's conduct in the last elections, it cannot be denied that, as a class, the workers played a role more distinct, more important, and more decisive than in any preceding election struggles. Granting all the vagueness and lack of class-consciousness featuring the attitude of labor toward Roosevelt, yet, it must be admitted that more than ever before, did labor appear politically as an independent entity. This obviously is a mortal blow to the Gompers theory of labor non-partisanship and to the Green practice of "reward your friends and punish your enemies"—a practice which almost uniformly operates in reverse insofar as labor's interests go.

A no small phase of the consequences of labor's role in the last campaign was the death of Hutcheson, politically. This specimen of the rankest reaction and questionable integrity in American labor is politically through, because the Republican Party, whose servile tool he had been, has been unable to pay him twice in succession. In Hutcheson's fold, this is bad business. And what is bad business for this type of labor leader breeds no following!

For the ruling class as such, the very existence of the Labor Non-Partisan League and other organizations of this kind, means that even the most liberal section of the dominant bourgeois group will have to deal with labor more and more as an organized force and not resort to buying individuals. Here is a new factor making for a national Labor Party. In this sense, the American Labor Party of New York was far more important than it appeared to some of the people who thought that they were toying with it. Mr. Frank R. Kent, a Landon convert of some calibre, saw this when he pointed out in the *Wall Street Journal* of November 4th, that:

"The real Third Party movement in this campaign was not the Coughlin-Townsend-Smith-Lemke effort. The real one was that promoted by the Lewis-Berry type of Labor leader who put a full electoral ticket in the field in New York and one or two other states—all in the interests of Mr. Roosevelt. The reason this movement is serious is because its backers had no purpose except to lay their foundation. They look to 1940 for their real effort, and this gives them four years in which to prepare. Theirs was not a single campaign proposition but the beginning of a drive for the establishment of what they expect to become, one of two major political parties in this country, and they are too smart to think that can be achieved in one campaign or one year."

Lenin, in analyzing the development of the British Labor Party, time and again made it clear that the beginning of such a movement necessarily must be vague, confusing and lacking in class consciousness. Nevertheless, even tho the leaders of the United Mine Workers and the I.L.G.W.U. may not all have understood the dynamics to the Madrid government) inspired by Roosevelt becomes an abandonment of aid to democracy in Spain. Thereby it plays into the hands of the fascist war makers."

The naughty boys at Washington! Mean of them to go off on such a tangent, and let Gannes of the *Daily Worker* remain holding the bag chock full of the rosy illusions of the peoples frontiers.

(Concluded in Next Issue)

namic import of their members stopping work and attending special mid-day labor political meetings, yet, for Marxists, the revolutionary implications therein are clear.

Towards An Undermining Of Two Party System

It may sound paradoxical and to the superficial observer it may appear contradictory, still, the results of the election make for a further undermining of the two party system. Our contention is based not so much on the strength of the splinter Democrats (so-called Jeffersonians a la Colby) as on the definiteness of the 1936 breakaway from the Republican Party. The G.O.P. had calculated on a return to the fold of strong sections of the agrarian mid-west and far west. This erstwhile solid Republican territory is apparently through with the republicanism of yesterday and is looking for a new camp.

It would be far from sound to conclude that this sector of the American electorate has already become or will definitely become part and parcel of a Democratic Party in which the "Solid South" continues to play so dominant a role. The adhesion of this former Republican strength to the Democratic Party todate only emphasizes the coalition character of the Roosevelt conglomeration. Within it there is the germ of tomorrow's disruption.

In the same sense the rise of labor as a homogeneous political force, while but yesterday a power of strength to the Roosevelt ranks, is a veritable Frankenstein for the Democratic Party organization of tomorrow.

And, of course, we must assume that the powers that be in the G.O.P. will also change their "line," as it were. They will provide a re-orientation and reorganization for the Republican Party. Eaton's resignation as New York State G.O.P. chairman was but a straw in the wind. Hamilton's days are numbered despite his recent re-election as national chairman at an insurance company president's salary. No one can properly write off a Party which has managed to attract approximately 40% of the popular vote. It may lose some of the 40%, but it will attract others in the process of reorientation, reorganization, and realignment. It is this process which is far more significant than the momentary fortunes at the ballot box. The forces making for political realignment are today more active than at any time since 1912.

Modernizing City Machines

In the last elections it became clear that the powerful city ma-

(Continued on Page 3)

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Labor in the Elections

(Continued from Page 2)

chines are going to be increasingly dependent on a national centre for their efficacy as dispensers of patronage and agencies of loot. The pouring of new millions into the ranks of the electorates, coupled with the general trend towards concentration of political power on a national basis, decree this. Take the vote in New York on the charter question. The once invincible and ever-corrupt Tammany machine was dead-set against the charter. It flunked. It met ignominious defeat. The charter was swept in.

Then, let's take a glance at the Kelly-Nash machine of Chicago, and the Prendergast machine of Missouri. They are at least as tough and as crooked as the New York Sachems. Both were frightened by the outpouring of the uncontrolled votes, that is of the as yet unaccounted for and untagged voters. But this species of American political banditry will readjust itself, will modernize its machinery in order to hold on to its booty. We would not at all be surprised if the Roosevelt-Farley regime would make a clever move here to enlarge the mass base of these incorrigible political racket alleys and in this way, without changing their substance, give them the appearance of so-called popular clubs. The "people" would like it. It would be a sort of an American edition of the "popular front." Democracy would appear invigorated, reaction would appear prostrate, honesty would appear triumphant—and the essential role of the city machines would be undisturbed. Here would be an application and a transformation of the Aaron Burr Clubs of the days of yore.

New Forms For Fascist Organization

The Lemke-Coughlin-Townsend fascist menagerie had boasted that it corralled ten to twelve million votes. The mere fact that it could not deliver should not be taken to mean that this fascist vermin has been exterminated. No doubt the subjective forces of American fascism have been dealt a solar plexus blow. Likewise, the miserable showing made by this triumvirate should dispell the illusions even of the instructed, though illiterate, people's front partisans as to the imminency and potency of American fascism.

However, there can be no more costly folly than the conclusion that American fascism is finished as the result of Roosevelt's triumph. Such an error is of the same blood-relationship as the mistake on the opposite extreme. American monopoly capital will learn from the costly and suicidal Republican strategy in the last campaign. Biggest business in the United States will positively devise new ways and better means to build a more vigorous fascist movement in the United States. The triumph of Rooseveltian democracy last November does not remove the roots or fertile soil of fascism in this country. The very nature of Rooseveltian democracy breeds the brood and waters the soil for the sprouting weed and the poison plant. It is only a mighty forest fire carefully prepared and directed by class conscious labor that can destroy the foundation and end the future of fascism in America.

The Economic Situation

On the economic situation the election results will have no decisive effect. The process works the other way. The election results are but a reflex of the generally improved economic trend. It was almost beyond belief that with a markedly improved economic situation under, even if not because of,

INSIDE STO REVEALS

By LAMBDA

THE international press ascribed great significance to the government crisis in Catalonia which resulted in the exclusion of the POUM from the government. Strangely enough, the press of the Soviet Union takes equal delight in the case. This event has revealed the policy of the Comintern in Catalonia and in Spain in general.

The crisis in Catalonia was preceded by a violent press campaign waged by the official C.P. (PSUC) against the POUM, seconded by Antonoff-Ovsenko, the Soviet consul in Barcelona. The POUM was accused of being anti-Soviet, "fascist" and "counter-revolutionary"—a procedure in line with the crushing of all opposition movements in all C.I. sections, as Trotskyite. The POUM gave a sharp answer in its press and at mass meetings. It objected to being thrown in with the Trotskyites, reaffirmed its pledge of defending the Soviet Union against imperialist attacks, but rejected the policy of defense of bourgeois democracy as pursued by the PSUC. In the course of the campaign, however, the intentions of the PSUC were clearly revealed.

CP Plots Against POUM

In a confidential letter to the CNT, a member of the Catalan government, the PSUC put up the following demands: that the government be granted dictatorial powers, that workers' control over the government, the army, the police, etc. be eliminated and that the POUM as the strongest obstacle to the realization of these demands be removed from the government.

The CNT rejected this demand and notified the POUM. It was then presented to the government as an ultimatum, supported by the Esquerra, the party of the bourgeois left. President Companys, leader of the Esquerra, who had been in the background until then, and Terradella, another member of the Esquerra, thereupon assumed a dictatorial tone and protested the lack of "discipline" of the political parties, demanding a strengthening of the authority of the government. The CNT came out publicly against the exclusion of the POUM from the government and demanded that unity of action be retained.

The fact that the PSUC finally did succeed in gaining the support of the CNT to oust the POUM was due entirely to a series of maneuvers in which the Communist Party utterly disregarded its own principles and certainly all Communist principles. Taking advantage of the anarchist position that the government ought not to consist of political parties but exclusively of trade unions, the PSUC reworded its demand to read that the government be composed of representatives of the UGT and the CNT as well as the Esquerra as the political representative of the petty bourgeoisie. Up to this time the PSUC had vigorously agitated for the reverse, namely, the participation of workers political parties in the government—a correct Communist demand.

CNT Falls Into Trap

The CNT fell into the trap, the new government being composed of representatives of the UGT, the

his regime, Roosevelt could be defeated. In a momentary sense the election results have proved a sort of stimulus to immediate business, because the campaign was out of the way. The consistently conservative nature of the Roosevelt program now unfolding itself, will, of course, stimulate big business confidence in itself and in its leader in the White House. To some extent, this is a positive factor making

(Continued on Page 4)

THE 1936 ELECTIONS

(Continued from Page 3)

ign for an ascending curve of rent, interest and profit.

Accentuating State Capitalism Trend

As a consequence of the election, the trend toward State capitalism will be accentuated. Even if Landon had been elected the essential tendency would continue. Specific expressions might, in some respects, be different under the latter circumstances. We must recognize that the development of state capitalism, regardless of opposition to some of its forms in certain bourgeois ranks, does serve, for a brief period, and in a limited way, as a stabilizer of private bourgeois enterprise.

Radical Labor Hard Hit

We will not go into a detailed consideration of the effect of the elections on the radical sections of the labor movement. For the Socialist Party the election was a

crushing blow. Norman Thomas received merely a consolation vote. The results of the campaign will serve to precipitate a new crisis and deepen the old crisis in the Socialist Party ranks. The Thomas organization will pay a very heavy price for its sectarianism—and its simultaneous opportunism. The Trotsky toxin is proving fatal. Appearing as a cure for S.P. impotency and division, it is operating as a curse and germ of destruction.

For the Communist Party the election results were a scathing indictment of its entire line. But yesterday it would have been unbelievable that General Secretary Browder would, as a communist, boast about having elected Roosevelt. However, on the basis of fostering all the bourgeois-democratic illusions, on the basis of fighting for "the people" instead of the working class, such inconceivable possibilities of yesterday have become tragic realities of today.

The loss of the Communist vote

is greater than the absolute figures would indicate. The significance of the loss is more sinister. Four years of capitalist crisis and difficulty had apparently not been utilized by the C.P. For the first time in the history of the C.P. there was no increasing presidential vote. Worse than this, the C.P. should have registered this time an increase beyond the absolute gain in the total number of participating voters because the millions of new voters this time came from the most oppressed sections of society. The more than 20% loss of the C.P. vote is a direct fruit of its overt and covert support of Franklin D. Roosevelt as a champion of "the battlers against fascism" in America, the fascism about to triumph and about to resort to arms in order to undo the will of the people!

In 1936 the Communist Party song was of a quite different tune. Not even all the radio opportunities, not even all the acres of publicity in the daily press, not even all the stupidities of the G.H.Q. of the G.O.P., not even Tampa and Terre Haute incidents, not even

the increasing popularity of the U.S.S.R., not even the new situation in the labor movement could prevent the American C.P. (applying the people's front strategy) from playing a grotesque and pitiful role. Both the strategy and results emphasized the ridiculous mechanical transference of tactics from abroad to a situation in which such policy isn't even debatable.

Sharper Struggles Ahead

On the class struggle in general the election results will have a sharpening effect. It is now obvious, as it should have been months ago to everyone, that the election campaign itself tended to delay quite a number of strikes. No doubt the very energy and resources thrown into the election campaign by the United Mine Workers tended to slow down the C.I.O. campaign for the unionization of the steel workers. The very illusions which labor entertained as to its scoring a victory thru the election of Roosevelt will cause the labor organizations to demand a price, to try to collect. Here is

a factor serving to lend impetus to giant labor struggles. The process of disillusionment will be costly, but the struggle will be worth while, determined, unifying, and inspiring.

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