

A
LABOR
PARTY

FOR
NEW YORK
WORKERS

By I. AMTER

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"We propose to adhere to the principle of the four year agreement with the city bankers." (*La Guardia*, report N. Y. *Times*, Nov. 1, 1933.)

"Don't misunderstand me. I agree the four year plan was necessary. I propose to make every effort to carry it out in good faith." (*McKee*, report N. Y. *Times*, Oct. 28, 1933.)

The above statements were made by LaGuardia and McKee in the New York municipal elections of 1933. O'Brien, *Tammany Hall* mayor, was making payments to the bankers and made no suggestion to change it. Does this not show clearly that *all three candidates and their parties—Fusion, Tammany and Recovery—are tied up with the Wall Street bankers?* Each one of them pledged that in case of election the Bankers' Agreement would be kept. An agreement with the Wall Street bankers these gentlemen and their parties considered *sacred!*

Remember that at that time there was mass unemployment in New York, and relief was totally inadequate. Hundreds of thousands of Negroes, foreign born and white native workers, young and single workers, as well as women workers, were homeless, starving, hopeless. But the bankers' agreement with Fusion, Tammany Hall and Recovery came first! Let the masses starve! Let children remain hungry—the bankers must receive their payment on the public debt service!

Only one year before, the workers had accepted Franklin D. Roosevelt's program of "recovery." His promise of a "New Deal" for the "forgotten man" captured the minds of the workers throughout the country. The "New Deal" was the "hope."

N.R.A. Is the Child of U. S. Chamber of Commerce

When the National Industrial Recovery Act and later the Agricultural Adjustment Act were passed by Congress, the workers and poor farmers of the country were made to believe that at last they would get a square deal. The money-changers were to be driven out of the White House—just as LaGuardia in the election

declared, "No one shall go hungry." Here was perfect IN WORDS.

Today every worker knows *the NRA and the AAA were by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce.* Every worker knows the NRA means for him—*lower wages, continuing mass unemployment, starvation relief.* He knows that Section 7-A does the right of the workers to join the unions of their own. It means the *recognition of company unions.*

N.R.A. Means Fascism and War

It means *mass hunger* for 10 million workers and their families. It means vicious *assaults and deportations* for foreign-born workers. It means ferocious *attacks* upon the Negroes throughout the country. It means the *breaking up of meetings* by vigilantes. It means the adoption of *criminal syndicalism laws* and the sending of workers to jail for long terms for asserting their rights. It means the open development of *fascism.* It means unending preparations for *war.*

Farmers Crushed by A.A.A.

The farmers, too, for a time were partly lulled to sleep by the promises of the AAA. Now they see that the AAA was made for the benefit of the *poor* farmers but only of the rich farmers and absentee landlords. The drought and piled-up debts of the farmers are killing the poor farmers. They can no longer live on their farms and are moving about as tenants (*45 per cent of all farmers are tenants*) from farm to farm, and finally losing their breadline.

The NRA has profited only the bankers and big manufacturers of this country. Profits have risen up to 600 per cent. Government subsidies to the banks and corporations amount to more than *billion dollars.* Small competitors have been driven out of business and the trusts are becoming ever more powerful.

The bankers have not been driven out of the White House. They are firmly established in the White House with Franklin Roosevelt as their chief executive.

New York Workers Starve Under LaGuardia "New Deal"

LaGuardia, champion of the Wall Street bankers, has brought similar conditions to New York. According to the report of his Unemployment Relief Committee, published on March 25, *one-third of the population of New York City—more than 2,660,000 persons in 660,000 families—are affected by unemployment.* Only one-half of this number is on the relief rolls in New York. In three years relief has been cut *\$9 per family a month.* Housing conditions—bad as they were in the past—have become progressively worse. Hundreds of thousands of families in New York live in tenements long condemned as unsanitary, as fire-traps. *Twenty per cent of the children of New York are undernourished.* In 1934, 136 persons lost their lives in tenement house fires in New York.

Negroes—Worst Sufferers

The conditions of the Negroes and Latin Americans are the worst of all. High rents, low wages, tremendous unemployment (80 per cent of the Negroes of Harlem are unemployed), disease, malnutrition, discrimination of every kind—these are the lot of the masses of Negroes in New York. This was the cause of the explosion of Negro anger and resentment on March 19th in the so-called "riots" in Harlem, which LaGuardia answered with brutal police terror, the murder of four workers and the arrest of scores.

Lehman and LaGuardia Against Workers' Interests

In the state of New York it is no different. Governor Lehman, good friend of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and enthusiastic supporter of the "New Deal," uses identically the same methods. The workers do not forget the police attacks on the Hunger Marchers in Albany, October, 1934, with the smashing of heads, the breaking of arms, and the sending to jail of more than 100 Hunger Marchers from all parts of the state. They do not forget the use of state troopers against the leather workers of Gloversville.

In the election campaign both LaGuardia in 1933 and Lehman in 1934 made great promises to the workers. Did not Lehman and the Democratic Party promise unemployment insurance, there-
by creating the illusion among the 2 million unemployed in the

State of New York that they would get the benefit of this unemployment insurance measure? But how has it turned out? *The unemployed will not get one single penny under the Byrne-Killgrew bill,* which has been adopted. Did not Lehman promise the Negro masses that he would protect their rights? But the terror continues against the Negroes in all parts of the State.

How could the workers of New York State expect anything else from Lehman when the backbone of the Democratic machine is the brutal Tammany Hall of New York which lives upon the exploitation of the workers!

Since LaGuardia and Fusion have been in power in New York the conditions of the workers have become worse. Police terror against strikers has increased immensely. Arrests have multiplied. On LaGuardia's own admission hundreds of thousands are without relief. The fire-traps still exist and workers have to pay exorbitant rents. The foreign-born suffer the same discrimination and the Negroes are even worse persecuted than before. To be sure, LaGuardia still talks "radically." Now faced with facts, he is trying to pin the conditions in New York upon Tammany Hall. Both of them—Fusion and Tammany—play with the lives of the workers in the interests of their own Parties, in the interests of Wall Street.

Republicans Trying to "Come Back"

The Republican Party is trying to take advantage of this situation. It hopes to be able to capitalize on the resentment of the masses against the "New Deal" and to restore the Republicans to power. Herbert Hoover and Ogden Mills recently made speeches in which they criticized the "New Deal." Who is Ogden Mills, the man who criticizes the NRA? He is a big banker of New York and one of the chief stockholders in the National Biscuit Company. Six thousand NBC workers struck for decent wages and union recognition. Mills ignored their demands and used the police to break up their picket line.

Herbert Hoover, chief of the Republican Party, has the least right to talk. Was he not the man who in 1930, when unemployment was growing by leaps and bounds, predicted the return of prosperity in 60 days? Did he not use the police of Washington and the U. S. Army to prevent the National Hunger Marchers in

December, 1932, from entering Washington, in order to present their petitions and demands to the U. S. Congress? Did he not drive the veterans out of Washington at the point of guns and bayonets, and murder two veterans? This arch-fascist, pretending to save the American workers and farmers!

The Democrats and Republicans both are trying to find a way out of the mess. They know that the masses are turning away from them. They both know, they who *jointly supported the "New Deal,"* that the masses are against the "New Deal" and are preparing for gigantic struggles. Therefore "Young Republicans" and "Young Democrats" pretend to have a "new" formula. A "return to democracy"—a "return to the constitution"—these are their new slogans. But what is this democracy? It is *police terror, starvation, preparations for war.* What is the constitution? It is a *trampling upon every right that supposedly is guaranteed to the American workers and farmers.*

Fascists like Coughlin and Huey Long Do Their Part

Huey Long and Father Coughlin also take up the cudgels. They *talk* against the rich, the bankers. They assail the U. S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Bankers' Association. They *speak* about the rights of the American workers and poor farmers. They "attack" the NRA and the AAA. *But how cheap are words!* Both of them are *against organized labor.* Both employ *scab* labor. Both are *for company unions.* Both are *against* unemployment insurance. Huey Long uses *Hitler* methods in Louisiana against the workers, poor farmers and the Negro masses. Both are *for an unequalled army and navy.* Both of them are *fascists* using the demagogic language of Hitler—wild promises to the masses, in preparation for establishing fascism in the United States.

Masses Move Forward to Struggle

The workers are seeking a way out—a way that will provide security—a way that will protect their rights, their lives. The workers are confused. They hear high-sounding promises from Roosevelt, Lehman and LaGuardia. They hear the new promises of Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Upton Sinclair. They listen to the radical phrases of LaFollette, Governor Olson and other demagogues.

What is the meaning of all these promises? *These promises mean that the masses are beginning to understand the cause of their misery and are beginning to move into struggle to remove the causes. To keep the workers from struggle, Roosevelt, Coughlin, Long, LaGuardia make new promises. They make new sham "attacks" on big capital and pretend to "champion" the masses.*

Hearst and MacFadden—Workers' Enemies

Hearst and MacFadden, supporters of the Roosevelt policy, are open champions of fascism in the United States. Like all such people they *pretend* to criticize the policy of the Roosevelt government. They *pretend* to speak for the interests of the workers and farmers. At the same time they are doing everything in their power to *mobilize the forces of reaction against the working class* and to align the workers and poor farmers behind these reactionary forces.

Only Communists Exposed N.R.A.

The Communist Party alone exposed the NRA and the AAA. The Communist Party explained to the masses that in spite of the "promises," they actually are directed *against* the interests of the working class; they represent steps toward fascism and in preparation for war.

The workers as a whole did not accept this position. They believed Roosevelt and LaGuardia. But day by day, through their own experience, the workers have learned what the NRA is. They know now that it is an instrument in the hands of the employers and the government against the working class.

Socialist and A. F. of L. Leaders Supported N.R.A.

The Socialist Party and the leaders of the American Federation of Labor called the NRA a "new charter of labor." The leaders of the Socialist Party even called it a "step in the direction of Socialism." Both gave support to the NRA—even when they pretended to criticize it. A year and a half later William Green comes to the conclusion that "the NRA is fascism." But two weeks later, Green expressed his confidence in Roosevelt and the NRA. The NRA means fascism, says Green. Then Green stands for fascism and its champions in the United States.

A. F. of L. Leaders Tied Up With Capitalist Parties

The reformist leaders too continue to "criticize" the NRA. All

they demand is that labor be better represented on the Labor Boards. Sidney Hillman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, member of the National Labor Relations Board—a would-be “radical”—is one of the hottest champions of the NRA. He declares that without the NRA the prospect of the workers would be hopeless!

The reactionary and reformist leaders of the trade unions are likewise tied up with the *old parties*. In those states where so-called third parties have been organized—Minnesota, Wisconsin, etc.—these leaders throw part of their support to the new parties in order to get their slice out of the pie. The so-called “non-partisan” policy of the A. F. of L.—the “reward your friends and punish your enemies” policy—has only one purpose. It aims to *hogtie organized labor and to hand over their power to the capitalist politicians*. It aims to *exclude all discussion and support of real labor politics* from the trade unions so that the leaders may jockey for position in the old-line parties and their administrations. This is a source of tremendous power and income for these leaders—something that is part of their trade union leadership.

Central Trades Supports Capitalist Parties

In the City of New York the Central Trades and Labor Council supports the LaGuardia administration. One year before, in 1932, they supported Roosevelt, and in 1934 endorsed Governor Lehman. Does this not show that there is no difference between the Democratic Party and the Fusion Party?

Do the leaders of the Central Trades and Labor Council not endorse the NRA? Have they taken any steps against the police terror used against the workers on the picket lines and against the unemployed at the relief buros? Did they raise any protest against the payment of \$15,000,000 a month for the debt service to the Wall Street bankers while the workers of New York went hungry? Did they raise any protest against the adoption of the sales tax—a tax on the wages and relief of the workers—or support the demand of the militant workers that the tax for relief be placed on the people with high incomes? Have they made any demands for tearing down the condemned tenements in Harlem, Brownsville, the East Side, and the building of model workers’ homes to be rented

to the unemployed free and at low rents to the employed workers? Have they done anything to organize the Negroes into the trade unions and fight against discrimination in the shops and in the unions affiliated to the Central Trades? Have they raised a single whisper of protest against the police brutality against the Negro workers throughout the City?

In short, through their reactionary and reformist leaders the workers of this country are tied to the capitalist administration and kept from *independent political action* in their own interests.

What has this brought us to throughout the country and in New York as well? It has put us in the position that with the support of the labor organizations the capitalists of this country put up their own candidates, write their own platform and are able to put over all their measures on the working class without the workers being in position unitedly to fight back. Elections, once over, and the capitalist politicians in office, they “forget” their programs and carry out the policies of the capitalists as they see fit.

Unity of Workers—Need of the Hour

The strikes and unemployment struggles that have taken place show quite clearly the need of *unity*. When workers march on the picket line the cop does not ask which political party they belong to. The police smash their lines and break their heads indiscriminately. When workers fight for relief, they are not asked what their religion is. They meet the same attack. The bosses are united in opposition to the workers whether these same bosses belong to the Republican or Democratic parties. *Unity of the workers is the need of the hour.*

Bosses Prevent Unity

Who prevents this unity? First of all, the *bosses* who do everything in their power to keep the workers from uniting, by pitting white against Negro workers, native against foreign-born workers, men against women workers, young against adult workers. They raise *race antagonism, national antagonism*. The bosses know that if they can keep the workers fighting among themselves, they have us all by the throat.

“Outlaw the Communist Party,” shouts Hearst. Hearst is

railing not only against the Communist Party, but against the whole labor movement. He hopes that by outlawing the Communists the bosses can smash all working class organization.

Reactionary Labor Leaders Prevent Unity

The employers do not depend upon their own forces to prevent the unity of the workers. Inside the ranks of organized labor, Green, Woll, Berry, Ryan, Tighe, Zausner, Dubinsky, do everything in their power to split the ranks of labor, drive out the Communists, and stir up racial and national antagonisms. Thus they prove they are carrying out the will of the bosses in the interests of the bosses and not of the workers.

There are other leaders of the working class who "talk" about unity and united front, but stop every action that will bring this about. This is typical of certain leaders of the Socialist Party and the reformist leaders of the A. F. of L.. The actions of these people produces the same results as the actions of the reactionaries: *they keep the ranks of labor split*. Look at the actions of the "old guard" Socialist leaders in preventing one united May Day demonstration.

In spite of the bosses and their agents in the working class, *unity must be achieved*. But it is not sufficient that this unity be only on the picket line. This unity must be built in *every* field, in the struggle against hunger, fascism and war. This unity must be in the interests of the workers and poor farmers against the capitalists of this country.

Labor Party—Burning Need

This unity must be built also on the political field. An all-inclusive fighting Labor Party is the need of the hour.

Now let us see what this Labor Party should *not* be? Can it be a Labor Party such as has been established in the state of Minnesota, using radical phrases but the same methods of suppression against the working class? In Minnesota the Farmer-Labor Party declares that it is no longer progressive—it is "radical!" It stands for the taking over of the means of production! While the Farmer-Labor Party leaders utter such radical phrases, Governor

Olson used the National Guard to smash the teamsters' strike in Minneapolis.

Can it be a party like the LaFollete Progressive Party of Wisconsin, which also uses high-sounding radical phrases, but uses police terror against the workers of Wisconsin and the National Guard against the farmers? Clearly that kind of a "Labor Party" the workers do *not* want.

Can it be a Labor Party such as is proposed by the leaders of the Socialist Party—a party to be composed of leading trade unionists, etc, and excluding the Communists and militant workers? These trade unionists support the fascist NRA with its attacks upon the working class and their right to strike and picket. Clearly this is *not* the kind of a Labor Party that the workers want.

Fighting Labor Party Based on Local Unions

What *kind* of a Labor Party do we need? What the workers want and need is a *real fighting Labor Party*. It should be a party *built upon the local unions of the American Federation of Labor and independent unions, on the unemployment organizations*. It should be a party with a *fighting program*, taking up the *daily immediate needs* of the workers and poor farmers. Its program should consist at least of demands for the unrestricted right to organize into bona fide trade unions, for the right to strike and picket, against injunctions and company unionism, for full and equal right for Negroes, for adequate cash relief for the unemployed, for trade union rates on all relief projects, for an immediate building construction program, for genuine unemployment and social insurance such as is embodied in the Workers Unemployment, Old Age and Social Insurance Bill, H.R. 2827, for a genuine child labor bill, for immediate cash relief for the farmers and cancellation of all debts, against fascism and war.

Labor Party Must Declare War on Oppressors

What would it mean if a Labor Party of this kind—a real fighting Labor Party—were organized in the state of New York? What would it mean in New York City? It would serve notice on the bosses and their political machines that the workers and poor farmers no longer will allow themselves to be led by the nose. Just as they are fighting for their own trade unions and their own

farm organizations, so too on the political field the workers and poor farmers are declaring war against their oppressors.

It would mean that the workers of New York City, no matter what political party they belong to, would realize that they have much more in common as workers than they have with the bosses, and are uniting their forces on the political field to fight for their interests against the bosses. It would mean the building up of a powerful political force and organization in New York City fighting in the interests of *only one class, the working class.*

It would mean that men and women, elected by a Labor Party of this nature, would be responsible, for instance in New York, *not to the Wall Street bankers and their political machine, but directly to the unions, unemployed organizations, etc., that elected them to office.*

It would mean that the candidates whom we have elected would be pledged to enact laws in the interests of the workers and the poor farmers.

Labor Party Fights For Workers' Interests

A Labor Party would fight for genuine unemployment and social insurance such as the Workers' Bill, HR 2827. It would fight to make New York a 100 per cent city and state. It would fight for the abolition of all injunctions in labor disputes. It would fight for a real child labor bill, for a proper school budget, so that every child would get a full, free education. It would fight for a real building construction program and for taxing the rich and relieving the poor. It would fight against jim-crowism and segregation and for the rights of the Negro people. It would fight against military training in the schools. It would struggle for the right of workers to build their own organizations, hold meetings, etc., without the interference of the authorities. In short, the Labor Party would fight for all those things that the workers as a whole are interested in.

Labor Party judges would refuse to evict workers and farmers from their homes. Labor Party governors would refuse to call out the National Guard against the workers and poor farmers. If people elected by the Labor Party should sell out to, or compromise

with, the enemies of Labor, then the workers would clearly know who they are and would take the proper action.

Even if, through the manipulation of the elections against them, the Labor Party should not succeed in electing any candidates, the Labor Party itself would represent an organized force that the bosses' parties would have to deal with. This would prevent the boss parties from putting across many vicious anti-labor laws and force many concessions from them.

How Should a Labor Party Be Built?

The Labor Party should be built upon the basis of the affiliation of trade unions, unemployed, fraternal, farm and other organizations. Such affiliation would not interfere with the functioning of the trade unions, unemployment organizations, etc. These organizations would continue to act in the interests of their membership on the economic field, but would unite their forces on the political field in the Labor Party in order to carry out joint action in the interests of all workers. It would not mean that every worker in the trade union must give up his support of the party he now supports. Each worker would still be at liberty to vote as he sees fit. But it would mean that the organization as a whole would have recognized the need of an independent political party of labor—a party fighting in the interests of the working class. This would be a tremendous step forward for the American workers and show that on the political field the workers are bringing about working class unity, as more and more they are achieving it on the economic field.

Bosses Fear Real Labor Party

This unity is feared by the bosses and their political parties. Just as on the picket line and in the shops they do everything to break down this unity, so too on the political field, they will not hesitate through corruption, demagoguery, bribery and terror, to prevent unity.

In the coming elections in the state and the city of New York we must make every effort to bring about unity. The growing unemployment and mass starvation throughout the state, the rising cost of living, the increase in terror against the trade unions and particularly against the Negro people, the unparalleled prepara-

tions for war, the jingoism that is being aroused in schools and colleges, the fascist attempts to prevent any criticism of public action, make it necessary to build up unity also on the political field.

Fighting Program, Fighting Candidates

In every *assembly* district, in every *aldermanic* district, efforts should be made to build a united front of all workers' organizations, be they unions, unemployed organizations, fraternal, veterans' posts, church organizations, social or cultural clubs, around a program such as is above outlined. It may be that all the above points are not acceptable to every organization. In conference, a *minimum* program of fighting character should be adopted and working class candidates for the elections be set up.

Many a demagogue and charlatan will be attracted to a mass movement of this kind. Politicians of all kinds will try to enter. *Only such candidates, therefore, should be nominated as are known for their loyalty to the working class and for their fighting ability*—men and women who have been in the struggle and have proven that they have only one allegiance, and that is to the working class.

Communists Support Real Labor Party

The Communists are the best fighters in the interests of the workers. Having the only program for the final emancipation of the working class, still the Communists will support a movement of this character. The Communists fight not only for the overthrow of the system which means hunger, fascism and war, but also for every daily need of the workers and poor farmers. That is why the Communists are hated and feared by the capitalists. That is why Hearst, MacFadden, Woll are carrying on a vicious campaign against the Communist Party. That is why they carry on a bitter struggle against the Young Communist League, which is mobilizing the millions of youth in the factories, stores, colleges and schools and among the unemployed, both white and Negro, in the struggle for their daily needs and against the N.R.A. The Communists are convinced that if they can induce the workers in *their own interests* to build a Labor Party they will learn through experience that the only way out of the crisis—the only path along which the workers can go in the struggle against hunger, fascism and war—is to *put an end to the system that causes hunger, fascism and war*, and

to establish a *Workers' Government* in the United States—a *Soviet America*. This is the path the Russian workers and peasants took in November, 1917, which has led to the abolition of unemployment, the steady increase in wages, the building of a new culture, a new system—Socialism.

Communists Helped Build Labor Party 12 Years Ago

The Communist Party long ago advocated the Labor Party. In 1922-24 the Communists actively participated in the organization of the Labor Party movement. Great success was not achieved owing to the upsurge behind LaFollette, Sr. Then came the period when the organized labor movement in this country declined. During the so-called days of "prosperity," the American workers did not feel the need of trade unions or of independent political action. Since the beginning of the crisis in 1929, but particularly since 1933 when millions of workers have streamed into the trade unions, and above all, since the introduction of the N.R.A., when more and more the illusions of the workers had been destroyed, the question of independent political action has come to the fore.

Organized Workers Support Labor Party

Already three international unions have gone on record for a Labor Party—the United Textile Workers, International Ladies Garment Workers, Amalgamated Clothing Workers. In the city of New York at a recent meeting of trade unionists (Electrical Workers, Local 3), the proposal of a Labor Party was hailed with enthusiasm. Organized labor which must be the basis of a fighting Labor Party is recognizing the need more and more. Now is the time therefore to proceed with all energy to build the Labor Party.

There are those who believe that we cannot have a labor Party until the leaders of the A.F. of L. give their consent. These people, as already shown, are tied up with the major political parties. They are the people who continue to split the working class. Only under *mass pressure* will they change their position at least in words. We should not and dare not wait till these gentlemen change their minds. But there are leaders of local unions who are ready to go along with the Labor Party movement. They are progressive rank-and-filers whose loyalty to the working class may not be questioned.

What should we do?

In each assembly or aldermanic district (in the smaller towns, on a city-wide basis), small conferences should be held of representatives of working class organizations, *excluding none*. A minimum program could be agreed upon, suited to the needs of the workers of the particular assembly or aldermanic district. Under the auspices of this united front, conference calls should be issued to all workers' organizations in the district. At the conference, the program should be brought forward, amendments and additions be solicited, thorough discussion of the program be had, and candidates be put up.

Acceptance of the program does not mean that each organization should not have the right, while *fighting for this program*, also to bring forward its own program. The Socialists, while supporting this program, should have the right to propagate their entire program. The Communists should have the right to bring forward their program.

Test of Loyalty Is Struggle

The test of loyalty to the Labor Party should not be one of words but of struggle for the interests of the workers. Thus if a Labor Party program were adopted in an assembly district, calling for equal rights for Negroes, and if efforts were made to keep Negroes off jobs, would it not be a farce if those who support the Labor Party did not make a fight against this discrimination? Would it not be a farce if a Labor Party program were adopted and efforts were made by the authorities to suppress meetings, if the supporters of the Labor Party would not protest and fight against the stopping of meetings?

The Communist Party declares that even though it might not be content with the united front Labor Party program that was adopted, it would with 100 per cent loyalty support this program. At the same time it would show the workers that only through a much broader program of struggle will it be possible to attain those things that every worker wishes today.

Let us build the united front on the political field! Forward to a real fighting Labor Party in each assembly or aldermanic district! Let us lay the basis for a Labor Party in New York City, New York State and for a nation-wide Labor Party in this country.

THE END