

Before the Conventions of Our Enemies

Mass Work in the Election Campaign

By WM. Z. FOSTER.

WHAT the Central Committee Plenum resolution says about the basic necessity to free our mass work from the prevailing sectarianism, bureaucracy and formalism applies with special force to the national election campaign now facing us. Up to this point our work in election campaigns, especially those of a national character, has been hardly more than a loose and scattered agitation of a number of general revolutionary slogans, all of which agitation was quite disconnected from the life of the workers. Consequently our campaigns did not strike deep into among the masses. The whole business was pretty much froth at the top. But now we must resolutionize our election work. While we must point out more energetically than ever to the workers the revolutionary way out of the crisis—they being especially responsive now to revolutionary propaganda—must have as the very starting point of our work the daily grievances of the workers. That we must put the immediate demands, shop demands and local political programs, in the center of our election activities. This must not be done simply in an agitational manner, but by concretizing them and linking them up with the workers' struggles. This means further that we must in general make skillful application of the principles of mass work, basing our campaign upon the shops, using the methods of

concentration, and energetically applying the united front. We must especially utilize the campaign to greatly recruit our Party and to strengthen our mass organizations in every direction.

The Election Campaign and the Daily Struggles

Our election campaign must be a great mobilization of the workers for actual struggle against every phase of the employers' offensive. These are concretized in the six central immediate demands in our national platform. The thousands of meetings that we will hold must be the starting points or intensification points of definite struggles for concrete immediate demands against specific employers, city governments, etc., linked together in local platforms. Our agitation must not result simply in applause, votes, and ideological sympathy, but definite mass action by the workers.

That is to say, our election activities must launch definite struggles such as, for example, the initiation of strong local fights for unemployment insurance, the formulation of specific demands and organization of movements of the unemployed against the local city governments for relief, the beginning of concrete struggles against wage cuts in specific plants, the development of fights against crass forms of Jim Crowism, the development of demands and

movements inside the A. F. of L. unions against the bureaucrats, etc. Our election meetings should turn around definite programs of action, not mere propagation of demands in a general way. We should so organize things that great demonstrations of the unemployed culminate at points where our leading candidates speak; out of our agitation there should be organized definite strike movements, properly prepared. Everywhere that the workers are in struggle our campaign must be made a burning issue by the most active Party support of these struggles. In short, we must try to make it so that when the workers think of our election campaign they will at once link it in their minds with their own most burning grievances and inspiring struggles.

If we thus connect our campaign with the workers' life the latter will be incomparably more receptive to our more general slogans. It will be easier to show them why they should join in the defense of the Soviet Union. It will be more simple to make them understand why they should vote our ticket and join our Party. They will begin to understand that our Party not only talks about the ultimate revolution but organizes the workers for struggle here and now. Our Party will be enabled to sink its roots deep in the masses.