

The American Communists and La Follette.

By I. A m t e r.

The statement of Senator La Follette on May 28 that he will have nothing to do with a party of which the Communists are a part, and warning the workers and farmers not to participate in the convention of June 17 at St. Paul, Minnesota, at which a National Farmer Labour Party is to be formed, is a most cheering bit of information.

Among other things, La Follette stated that the Communists have only destructive intentions in taking part in the formation of the party and are merely following the instructions of the Communist International. This is not at all new either to the Communists of America or the workers and exploited farmers. The Communists have not concealed from the exploited masses of America that the only thing that will help them in the struggle against the capitalist class and the capitalist government is the establishment of a Soviet Government and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. As the workers and exploited farmers, however, do not perceive this necessity and are still unwilling to fight for these aims, the Workers Communist Party is ready to aid them in any independent political action and in the formation of an independent political party to conduct the struggle against the capitalist parties and capitalism.

To this end, the Workers Communist Party has been most active in the formation of local and state Farmer Labour Parties. It has sought and found the co-operation of the Minnesota Farmer Labour Party, within which has been formed the Farmer-Labour Federation, embracing the organized workers of St. Paul, Minneapolis and Duluth, the three industrial centers of Minnesota, and the poorest farmers, and actually controlling the Minnesota Farmer Labour Party. In the primaries for the nomination of the candidates of the Minnesota Farmer Labour Party, the Workers Communist Party has put up Communist candidates, who advocate the full Communist program. Despite this fact, the Minnesota workers and exploited farmers have not been abashed, but have been willing to co-operate with the Workers Communist Party. Even the liberal group, the "Committee of 48", has not been frightened, but has stated openly that the June 17, convention must include ALL groups of workers and farmers, irrespective of their philosophy. But even if the Workers Communist Party had tried to conceal its purpose — which it has never done — its activity in the political field and in the trade unions has been perfectly clear. Every practical demand that the Communists have made in the interest of the workers has been attacked by the bureaucrats as Bolshevik. The very idea of independent political action and an independent Farmer Labour Party has been assailed as a machination of Moscow. — regardless of the fact that a farmer labour party has existed in the United States since 1919 under the leadership of the Chicago Federation of Labour.

The statement of La Follette will have a most wholesome effect. At the same time, it is clear evidence of the importance and power of the June 17 convention. The economic reports in the capitalist papers indicate quite clearly that the bourgeoisie of America is scared. The capitalist papers do not know who the candidates of the capitalist parties will be and what programs will be adopted. What terrifies them most is the formation of a "third" party. The present economic crisis in America is attri-

buted in great part to this feeling of "insecurity". This "third" party, however, intended to hold its convention on July 4 and has as its aim, not the formation of a new party, but the endorsement of the "progressive" candidate of either of the capitalist parties. The Railroad Brotherhoods, the independent railway unions outside of the American Federation of Labour, which comprise the real aristocracy of American labour and are arch-conservative, are the backbone of this convention. Their leaders state openly that endorsement of a capitalist candidate is the probable outcome of the July 4 convention.

Why is La Follette taking a position against the June 17, convention? The movement for the formation of a National Farmer Labour Party has assumed great momentum. The agricultural crisis, the crashing of a large number of country banks, and particularly the sudden industrial crisis which has set in in the past six weeks after a period of slowly growing depression, and above all the complete indifference of the government to the increasing misery of the exploited farmers and of the industrial workers, have opened the eyes of the workers and exploited farmers to the absolute necessity of acting politically independently of the capitalists and the capitalist parties. State and local farmer labour parties are being formed in every part of the country. The movement has not been localized, but extends from Massachusetts to California, finding its strongest expression, however, in the middle west. In the corn and wheat states of the middle west, according to government reports one-quarter of the farmers are bankrupt; four-sevenths of the total farm income is used to pay taxes and interest on mortgages and debts; fifty per cent as many banks have failed between 1920 and 1923 as during the whole period from 1902 to 1923; the purchasing power of farm products is less than half of what it was before the war; the steel industry, which was operating at 90 to 95 per cent of its capacity in the month of March, dropped 25 per cent in three or four weeks; the coal mining industry is operating at 25 per cent of capacity, in some fields at only 10 per cent of capacity; the automobile industry dropped 25 per cent in capacity in a few weeks; the needle and packing industry are demoralized; more and more textile mills are closing; the shoe and furniture industries are suffering very seriously; the railways are prescribing "stringent economy" and in consequence are laying off thousands of men; the building boom, which came to a close in the past year in the West, has at last broken in New York, where speculation has been rife.

These are a few manifestations of the present time which are driving the workers and exploited farmers to the formation of a National Farmer Labour Party. It is the economic factors with their political reactions which are worrying the capitalists and capitalist parties. And there is no way out for the capitalists. The international market is saturated, the innovations and improvements have been fully carried out, trade is dull, the wholesale and retail market is stocked up. And there is no hope of brisk foreign trade, which in the past six months has slowly diminished. Hence the capitalists regard the formation of a party of workers and exploited farmers with great concern.

The "third" party will not be formed. On March 18, La Follette indicated very clearly that he would not break with the Republican Party — which should have been clear to any one who knows La Follette and his policies. La Follette has put up a radical program and demands that the Republican Party orientate itself toward this program. The Republican Party will not adopt his full program, but will accept some points. If Coolidge will not accept the program, another candidate acceptable to the "insurgents" in the Republican Party will be nominated — despite the fact that Coolidge today apparently has sufficient delegates to the Republican convention pledged to support him, to ensure his nomination. And there is always the hope the Democratic Party will nominate a "progressive" candidate. The sponsors of the "third" party have sabotaged the formation of a farmer labour party for two years, and have been driven further and further away from the idea by the activity of the Communists.

Hence, La Follette, and with him the whole capitalist class of the United States, have realized that the June 17, convention is the only danger confronting them in the coming presidential election — hence their vicious campaign against the Communists and the farmer labour party. This also accounts for the statement of La Follette denouncing the Communists. La Follette's declaration will have the effect of driving all vacillating elements away from the June 17, convention, so that it will be a pure workers' and exploited farmers' convention. More than that, it will drive

out all elements which are unwilling to form a real fighting party and who have not yet recognized in the activities of the Communists, that they are the best fighters in the country. La Follette has rendered the June 17, convention a great service, since the great masses of the workers and farmers have had faith in him. They will now regard him as what he is: an ambitious politician striving only for office and power.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The Mining Women in the Ruhr Struggle.

By Kl. S.

In the colossal struggle of the mining proletariat of the Ruhr area against mining capital, there were not only 500,000 miners but also hundreds of thousands of working women who took an active part in the conflict. The Communist Party has not yet sufficiently understood how to draw greater masses of women into the proletarian struggle and to lead them to become active members of the Party. For the most part it has only in theory maintained the important place of women in the revolutionary struggle, without itself being permeated throughout its membership with the sense of this importance and acting accordingly. For a long time the majority of the proletarian women have stood passively aside. But in the masses of the women there slumber unsuspected powers. The awful need, the starvation of their children, the absolute beggary and impoverishment of their families have shaken the mining women into wakefulness and released their powers. In an incredibly short time the mining women, who up till now stood absolutely apart from political life, grasped the tremendous significance of the miners' fight and immediately, purposefully and courageously took the necessary steps for assuring its success.

In the whole of the Ruhr district the women Communist in every town, in every locality, informed the masses of the women, in public meetings of the significance of the miners' struggle. The women understood that the attacks on wages and working hours, the deployment of the white troops in Germany, the mobilisations against Soviet Russia, the Experts' Report — that all these are links in one chain forged for the shackling of the proletariat in eternal slavery and exploitation by International Capital. The response of the women in all resolutions was a hundred-fold; they solemnly pledged themselves to active participation in the miners' struggle, to unconditional holding out until the seven hour shift and a decent human wage had been won. The women have put their vow into practice.

At the beginning of the Ruhr strike strike-breakers were to be found in many of the mines. The women immediately recognised the great danger which threatened the unity of the struggle from these strike-breakers who, by doing the most necessary work in the mines, kept the industry going. The women formed Information Detachments, which visited the strike-breakers in their homes, and made clear to them the injury they were doing to the workers. Not satisfied with this the women, armed with pick-handles, wooden laths and rubber piping, lined up before the mine gates, forced an entrance and gave the strike-breakers a good drubbing. Thereby they came into collision with the police. The women were indefatigable in discovering new methods of rendering the strike-breakers harmless. Thus in one place these fellows were marched through the town in a great demonstration procession, each bearing a card: "Strike-breaker" round his neck. In many places the windows of the houses in which the strike-breakers were living were smeared with tar or "decorated" with inscriptions. These energetic fighting methods of the working women resulted in there being no more scab work performed in the majority of the mines. Also the officials, who did emergency work, left the mines for fear of a rough handling.

The procuring of necessary provisions was largely a task for the women, as they are most seriously concerned with the hunger of their children and the cares of maintaining the home. The women therefore applied by delegations, supported by demonstrations, to the town and municipal authorities with the demand that the latter should assure the feeding of the strikers. In many cases the municipalities yielded to the pressure, fitted up kitchens, and distributed provisions. The women eagerly participated in the generous relief work of the International Workers'