

Localizing the Labor Party

By J. RAMIREZ

(Continued from last week.)

The whole business revolved around a few dozen "good fellows" with a "political pull." Corrupt union leaders naturally always became henchmen of the existing city administration, because of personal favors received, in the shape of graft and protection for their misdeeds. In this way a miniature political underworld grew up in the unions, by means of which workers were influenced, now in favor of the Republicans, now in favor of the Democrats. Workers thus participated in politics not in defense of their own class interests but rather as unconscious tools of the big capitalist parties.

So well entrenched in the unions is this demoralizing "ward-boss" system that it is one of the chief reasons why practically all previous attempts to secure independent political action on the part of the Chicago workers have failed. The Farmer-Labor Party, despite the fact that it is officially endorsed by the Chicago Federation of Labor, has not been able to count on the whole-hearted support of even a fraction of the unions affiliated with that body. The Workers' Party has of course not thus far succeeded in attracting anything like the following that one might expect for a militant party of labor such as it undoubtedly is. The Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party are quite clearly without any mass support.

Alleged Progressives.

Meantime, many of the more progressive workers, although untouched by the sinister influences referred to above, have succumbed to another and more subtle corrupting influence. They have allowed themselves to be deceived by the fake liberalism of old party politicians like Carter Harrison, or by the sensationalisms of ex-Mayor Thompson. Thompsonism has been a real curse. There was never the slightest reason for supposing him a labor sympathizer, notwithstanding his personal feuds with some of the city's big capitalists. Thompson made a sentimental appeal for working class votes and then capitalized them. Personally a stockholder in several labor-exploiting corporations, his primary interests were with the enemies of the workers. It was Thompson who supported Sheriff Peters when the latter's gunmen killed off union workers out at the Argo plant of the Corn Products Refining Co. and as an interested friend of the scab-herding Yellow Taxi corporation he habitually used the police department to arrest and intimidate union taxi drivers, to such an extent that the teamsters were obliged to ask the Chicago Federation of Labor to put him on the unfair list.

With Thompson eliminated, the Brundage-Crowe-Deneen faction is in complete control of the Republican Party here. The moving spirit is Attorney General Edward J. Brundage, who is a bank director and the man who conducted the prosecutions against the Herrin miners. This group, whose candidate in the last mayoralty election was a dignified dunce by the name of Lueder, represents precisely those moneyed interests who have dominated Chicago's industrial and political life in the past. In former years the Democratic Party has been looked upon, rather innocently, as somewhat more sympathetic to labor than its Republican rival. But there is no longer any real distinction between the two parties. Dever, although a Democrat, was supported by interests who stood for the Landis' award. Moreover, while Mitchell, Reynolds, Insull and their friends may have preferred the empty-headed Lueder, they at no time seriously opposed Devers' candidacy. Both the Tribune and the Daily News took the stand that whichever way the election went, Chicago would have "the kind of a mayor that was desired." Since taking office Dever has proved that they were right. Can there be any doubt that in case of important strikes the police will be called upon to practice their time-honored function of breaking up picket lines and arresting strikers?

Must Be Mass Party.

Labor must put up a united front against the united front of the bosses on the political field. A large mass party of labor must be created, a party which has its roots in the trade union movement, one which will have to stand four-square for labor, because it is labor's own. It must exclude all capitalist elements and take in all labor elements. In it should be federated all existing parties of the workers—who would retain their autonomy inside the federated party—and all other labor organizations in

Chicago. Such a combination would give Insull, Mitchell & Co. something to worry about.

Unless the workers get together on this basis they will never be able to meet the attacks of the employers, who are every day growing more insolent and more truculent. We all know that the labor-hating capitalists of the city have created what they consider an ideal weapon against the workers. This is the "Citizens' Committee to Enforce the Landis Award." With huge sums of money at its disposal, this committee has maneuvered the building trades workers into an extremely dangerous position. The present building boom will not last forever (there are already signs of slackening) and, unprotected by contract and with many of the trades practically on an open shop basis, the building workers will find it desperately hard to defend themselves against a new campaign of wage slashing, once the period of depression sets in. The Citizens' Committee boasts that up to date "41,560 men have been placed in the fourteen open shop building trades this year, and more than 1,131 buildings are being erected under the open shop plan." It adds that "these are epoch-making gains and must not be signed away in a sentimental compromise." In a circular recently sent out to its wealthy supporters, the committee frankly styles itself a militant organization. It is becoming more militant every day. Its plans for the future, as hinted at in the above mentioned circular, reveal it as the nucleus of a capitalist drive against the entire labor movement of Illinois. It has rallied all the big interests around it, and the Chicago Journal of Commerce boldly states that "almost 10,000 manufacturers are engaged in a quiet concerted movement to establish the open shop throughout the state."

Here is a situation which in itself demands unified action, political as well as industrial, on the part of the workers. The history of industrial conflicts in Chicago has taught us clearly that every big economic struggle is a political struggle also. Already the capitalists are talking about a Republican-Democratic fusion for the November election. Whether or not the fusion actually takes place, the workers can no longer afford to hold back. The time is overripe for working-class fusion.

Richard Ford, I. W. W. Life Term Denied Parole

SACRAMENTO, Cal.—The State Board of Prison Directors has refused a parole to Richard (Blackie) Ford, I. W. W. organizer, who, with Fred Suhr, is serving a life sentence at Folsom Prison because of the Wheatland hop riots in 1913. The Board stated that Ford will not be eligible for parole until 1925.

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