

A Labor Party on the Way

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FOR the first time in labor history, a state-wide referendum of trade-union members is to be held on the question of the Labor Party. This referendum, to begin in all Connecticut American Federation of Labor unions on November 1, will place before the workers of the state the question "Shall a Labor Party be Organized in the State of Connecticut?"

The poll was decided upon at the recent convention of the State Federation of Labor in Danbury. The man who led the Labor Party forces to victory, in the face of the opposition of old-line professional politicians was J. Nicholas Danz, then president of the Connecticut State Federation of Labor.

Behind Danz were one hundred progressive delegates who represented the demand of the majority of the membership of the A. F. of L. unions for the formation of a Labor Party in the state.

As Danz himself said, the progressive forces "came out of the convention with a hatful." Although a conservative slate was elected, the progressive candidate for president received 96 votes. The resolutions for industrial unionism, organization of the unorganized, for real unemployment insurance, for prevailing union wages on work relief, against Nazism, war and fascism, were carried.

Most important of the decisions, was the motion for the Labor Party referendum. In the end, even the conservative forces dared not openly oppose the carrying through of this referendum.

Danz, in his report to the convention, declared that the policy of rewarding friends in the two major political parties was outworn. Labor must have a party of its own, he said, and the most momentous questions facing the Connecticut workers are the organization of the unorganized workers on an industrial basis and the formation of a Labor Party.

Danz is a heavy-set man, with clear, piercing eyes. He is frank and outspoken, impatient of trickery and subterfuge. Danz has a record and reputation among the workers of Connecticut as a highly efficient organizer, a man whose word can be depended upon.

He has been a member of the American Federation of Labor for twenty-eight years. When he was sixteen years old he joined the American Federation of Musicians. Today, at forty-four, he is still a member of that organization. Danz was born in New Haven. His father was Swiss, his mother Irish. His father, Frederick C. Danz, was an active trade unionist in the Molders Union in New Haven, years ago. An uncle, Frank Horan, for years a member of the Electricians'

Union, was president of the New Haven Trades Council of the A. F. of L. In 1914 Danz moved to New London where for seven years he has been president of the Central Labor Union. He is now that body's secretary. Danz is also chairman of the executive board of the Musicians' Union, local 285 at New London.

For years Danz' activities have been wider than his work in the Musicians' Union. He has helped the buildings-trades unions as an organizer. In 1933 he was drafted by the United Textile Workers to help in the organizing work and he soon became Connecticut State organizer. Danz was president of the Connecticut State Federation of Labor until the recent convention. He declined to run for re-election, supporting the progressive slate, which was headed by George Moffatt.

I MOTORED up to New London, in the Eastern corner of the state, from New Haven with the Connecticut representative of THE NEW MASSES, to see the man who is leading the fight in the trade unions of the state for the formation of a Labor Party. He lives in a navy-yard town. Sailors, police, with white S. P.'s on their blue uniforms, parade the streets carrying long wooden clubs. Newly-recruited sailors, in training in New London, walk in and out of beer halls or congregate around the town's movie. New London is also an industrial town. Submarines are made in the shipyards. Textile towns such as Norwich and Bridgeport are clustered around New London.

"What first brought to your mind the need for a Labor Party in Connecticut?" I asked him.

"I was taken in by Roosevelt along with a good many others," Danz replied. "I thought Roosevelt really meant what he said. I thought he would take care of the forgotten man. I believed in the N.R.A. But I was taken in like everybody else. I saw that the N.R.A. didn't bring shorter hours and higher wages. Then came the Supreme Court decision killing the whole N.R.A. And another thing that made me decide for a Labor Party was when I saw what a deal the textile workers were given in the general textile strike. They carried out Roosevelt's wishes and went back to work and didn't get a thing.

"Now the workers have the slimmest pay envelope they've had in the last thirty-five years. The building trades in Connecticut are at a complete standstill. Among forty thousand textile workers in the state there is widespread unemployment. The Labor Party movement is the only means of stav-

ing off fascism. Hoover promised a chicken in every pot. Roosevelt made a lot of promises he didn't keep. We've been see-sawing back and forth from one major party to another. Today all we find among the workers is distress."

Danz himself had to give his house back to the bank a year ago because he couldn't keep up payment.

"What do you think a Labor Party can accomplish in the state?"

"The Labor Party can fight for a program of genuine social legislation and win it. The old-age pension bill passed by the last session of the state legislature is a joke to me. It gives nothing to a worn-out worker until he is sixty-five. The Bible only gives a man three-score years and ten of life. But today the employer throws the worker on the scrap heap when he is forty. The Labor Party would put forward a real old-age pension bill, with the age limit fifty-five or less. And the money wouldn't be raised by a head tax or sales tax placing the burden on the workers and farmers."

The present old-age pension law, which is hailed by the conservative politicians in the Executive Board of the State Federation as a great achievement, gives the sixty-five-year-old worker nothing unless he is destitute and provides funds by a head tax on all those in the state (except veterans) above twenty-one years of age.

"The Labor Party would fight for real unemployment insurance and for the prevailing union wage on work relief. We would try to get unemployment insurance paid for by a tax on high incomes and on corporation profits. We don't want the cost of unemployment insurance to be kicked back on the workers' shoulders in the form of sales and head taxes."

DANZ backed a resolution in the State Federation of Labor convention which called for a special session of the state legislature to pass such a bill. No one dared openly to take a definite stand against this resolution.

"The Labor Party will work to get the Injunction Law repealed," Danz went on to say.

It seems there is not only no anti-injunction law in the state, but there is an old law under which injunctions can be issued prohibiting picketing.

"I went to a hearing of the state legislature and I heard a representative of the employers say that there was no need for this law to be repealed as it is never used. I got up and said that it was used against me twice. I was served with an anti-picketing injunction under this law in a strike

in Jewett City only a few months ago. But the legislators of the two old parties didn't repeal the law.

"The Labor Party will not only try to abolish injunctions. But we will demand that all militia, state police, hired thugs and other armed forces cannot be used against strikers. Unless, of course, they give the workers the same right. Let them give the workers the right to bring in armed forces against the employers when the employers fire union men or cut wages or bring in a company union or increase hours.

"But try and get that right for the workers," Danz added dryly.

"Who should be admitted to the Labor Party?"

"Every person in the state of voting age. The Labor Party should include farmers, white-collar workers, professional people and the small business men as well as the workers."

"What about the Red scare being raised by The Craftsman in attacking the Labor Party?"

The Craftsman is a privately-owned sheet published in Hartford by a young man named Jack Elliott, who draws his inspiration from Hearst. John Egan, conservative secretary of the State Federation, is Associate Editor and the paper is endorsed by the Federation. Its September issue ran a "Red scare" against the Labor Party, charging that the Labor Party movement in Connecticut was a "Communist plot."

"Twenty-five years ago anybody who had progressive ideas was called a socialist or an anarchist," Dan answered. "Today a new word has been coined, 'Reds.' However, these so called 'Reds' denounced by The Craftsman for supporting a Labor Party and other progressive measures, seem to be the very ones who are bringing forward policies which are of benefit to the workers. The 'Red scare' is being used to try to head off the sentiment for a Labor Party."

DANZ describes himself as an "independent." His last vote was cast for Roosevelt.

The demand for a Labor Party comes from thousands of Connecticut workers, who, like Danz, have been disillusioned with Roosevelt, who have seen that the Democratic and Republican parties were breaking strikes while the workers' pocketbooks have continued to remain empty.

On June 30, on the initiative of leaders of the Hartford Central Labor Union, a conference for a Labor Party was held at Hartford, at which representatives of over 150 A.F. of L. locals, elected by their membership, attended. Forty-one thousand trade unionists were represented, with 165 delegates from 31 Connecticut cities.

The Republican and Democratic politicians who were entrenched in the leadership of the Connecticut State Federation of Labor became alarmed. These politicians include Mayor Murphy, old-guard Democratic mayor

of New Haven, a vice-president of the State Federation and Thomas Shea, a Democratic legislator, now president of the Federation. Egan, himself a Republican, cooperates with the conservative Democratic machine. The big utility companies of the state control both parties and this fact has become quite generally known.

After Danz, then president of the State Federation of Labor, attended this conference as a member of the New London Central Labor Union and urged the formation of a Labor Party, he began to receive the attention of William Green.

Green wrote Danz on August 15, declaring that "the American Federation of Labor has thus far refused to approve the creation of an independent Labor Party." After scolding Danz, Green demanded a full report.

Danz's reply on August 9 contained the following words:

I believe it is my constitutional right as an individual to voice my opinion on any subject and with twenty-eight years experience in the labor movement one of my opinions is that the workers' only salvation is in unionism and a labor party. This I shall continue to advocate.

Green wrote back on August 25. Danz's reply, he said, "is altogether unsatisfactory." Green added: "It is my opinion that you should either resign as president of the Connecticut State Federation of Labor or withdraw from any activity in the formation of an independent political party."

I asked Danz whether there is any law on the books of the A.F. of L. in which the advocacy of a Labor Party is in any way prohibited.

"Of course not," Danz replied. "We have state and local autonomy on such questions in the A. F. of L. I would like to know whether it isn't 'outside' activity for William Green to come to the New York State Federation of Labor and indorse the candidacy of the Democratic Governor Lehman. Isn't it 'outside' activity for Green to go around campaigning for Roosevelt and the Democratic Party nationally. If Green can advocate election of Democrats, why can't trade unionists advocate a Labor Party? I would like to know from William Green just how it is a violation of A. F. of L. policies to advocate a Labor Party based on the A. F. of L. unions."

"Do you think the Labor Party question will come up at the A. F. of L. national convention in October?"

"Yes. On October 7 the 55th Annual Convention of the A. F. of L. takes place in Atlantic City. And what is the situation? The workers are worse off than they have ever been in the past fifty-five years. For fifty-five years we have had a policy of reliance on the two old major political parties. There's been a slip-up somewhere. Isn't it time for the A. F. of L. nationally to try something new? Are we to go on for an-

other fifty-five years waiting for the two major parties to give us the social legislation we want and always being disappointed? For fifty-five years the two old parties have been making promises to the workers and breaking them. Isn't it time for the workers to have a party of their own—an independent Labor Party?"

Over one hundred letters have come to Danz in the few days since the state federation convention, pledging support to the Labor Party campaign. He calls them his "fan mail."

NOT only in Connecticut are the workers and farmers pressing for the organization of a Labor Party. Throughout the country the sentiment is steadily growing for the organization of a party independent of the employers' influence. In New Jersey, although the conservative machine in leadership steamrollered the Labor Party resolution to defeat, the Labor Party has the support of the membership. The state building-trades council, three Central Labor bodies and numerous local unions have endorsed the Labor Party movement. Twenty-nine resolutions for a Labor Party were introduced into the convention, held last week in Atlantic City. The resolution for a Labor Party received a tremendous ovation from the floor of the convention. It was defeated only because president Marciane, violating parliamentary procedure, refused to take a roll-call vote.

In Chicago, members of 63 unions affiliated to the A. F. of L. and the railroad brotherhoods have voted for the formation of a Labor Party. In Springfield, Mass., a Labor Party slate, backed by the A. F. of L. unions, is in the field. A Labor Party ticket is also running in Paterson, N. J. The Oregon State Federation of Labor passed a motion at its convention last month in favor of a Labor Party. Throughout the country hundreds of local unions and city central bodies have demanded a break with the ancient policy of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies," within the two major political parties.

The Connecticut unions, by taking a vote in some 500 A. F. of L. locals, will bring before large numbers of workers the message that the Labor Party is on the way to become a reality.

"The principal task now of those advocating a Labor Party," Danz declared, "is to bring the referendum to the attention of all local unions and of all union members. Certainly we cannot expect such Democratic office holders as Shea and Murphy to favor a Labor Party. It is up to all the members of the unions who favor the Labor Party to become active in the referendum, so that the will of the membership is expressed. I am sure that if we are on the alert, the large majority of the A. F. of L. membership will vote for the Labor Party in the coming referendum."

Letters from America

Alabama's Blood-Smeared Cotton

“YOUR time has come, you black — — —!” screeched through the woods surrounding Ed Bracy's home. A few seconds later the gang of vigilantes broke into the house and shot him nineteen times in the neck and head. This was the second killing during the Cotton Pickers Strike. It happened on Labor Day.

Ed Bracy, militant Negro leader of the Share Croppers Union, around Hope Hill, had continued to lead the masses of strikers in spite of terror and murder threats. Sheriff R. E. Woodruff's vigilante gang sneaked in at night, like the cowards they are, to murder another leader. The masses have already answered this attack on leaders—“We are all leaders and we will fight on to victory,” they say. Since August 19, through the most vicious terror the landlords could unleash, the strikers have held their ranks solid. Such determination can only be born of dire poverty, starvation and oppression.

The terror drive continues. As I write this, there is a look-out to warn me of the approach of lynchers. Constant vigil is kept at all times. Sleep is tortured with nightmares of lynching, terror and murder. Food settles in lumps in your stomach. But the struggle must go on! The attack of the lynchers must be answered!

On August 22 they murdered Jim Press Meriwether, a Negro strike leader near Sandy Ridge. He walked by the home of Bennie Calloway, another striker, where Sheriff Woodruff's gang was beating the women. John Frank Bates, a Fort Deposit landlord, shot him down without a word. They found Jim's wife, beat her and hanged her from the rafters of the house for awhile before releasing her. Then they carried Jim to C. C. Ryles' plantation to question him. Getting no information from the dying man, they carried him out on a hillside and riddled his body with bullets.

Night riders, carrying Negro strikers out from their beds to beat them almost to death and throw them in the swamps. No sleep, no rest, but always watching for the terror gang. More than six strikers were carried out to be beaten. Some of them were unable to wear clothes on their back because of their wounds.

The search is hottest for me. Charles Tasker and James Jackson, Negro workers of Montgomery, were arrested on August 30. They were questioned continually about where I am. Later an I.L.D. lawyer secured their release. Detective Moseley carried them to the county line and told them to “Keep going and never come back!” They are forced to leave their homes and families.

The strike spreads. Montgomery, Tala-

poosa, Chambers, Lee and Randolph Counties are out solid now. The masses are willing to struggle, willing to sacrifice.

The small demands of the strike—\$1 a hundred for picking cotton, \$1 for 10 hours' work for wage hands, 20 cents an hour, 40 hours a week with pay in cash for relief workers—are more than 100 percent above the present rates, a grim testimony to the starvation conditions existing in the farming sections of the South. To maintain these conditions the landlords murder, terrorize and beat the strikers. The ugly head of fascism is rearing up in Dixie, in the “Cradle of the Confederacy.”

Strikers hide out in swamps in the daytime to avoid attacks of the vigilante gangs. The night Jim Meriwether was killed the strikers got their guns and waited for another vigilante attack. When the lynchers arrived the strikers sounded the battle cry, it was to be steel for steel on even terms. The lynchers, cowards at heart, turned and ran before a shot was fired.

In the meantime, the landlords are beginning to crack. In lower Montgomery County a landlord is paying his hands \$1 a day. In Reeltown, scene of the heroic Reeltown struggle of 1932, the landlords agreed to pay 75 cents a hundred and two meals for picking cotton. Around Dadeville and other

parts of Talapoosa County the price is rising, but the masses refuse to pick for less than their demands. Only the small farmers, tenants and croppers who pick their own cotton are carrying anything to the gin. The landlords' fields are heavy with cotton that has been ready to pick for three weeks. On J. R. Bell's plantation in Lowndes County, the strikers say “\$1 a hundred or let the cows eat it.”

In the meantime, the Share Croppers Union waits word from the Southern Tenant Farmers Union on the question of amalgamation. Now more than ever before the necessity for one powerful union in the cotton fields rings out. The murder and terror drive of the landlords is a clarion call for unity, for a powerful united struggle against the fascist attacks of the landlords and for raising the miserably low living standards of the southern rural masses.

In spite of all the odds, the strike goes on. It is historic, it is the greatest strike movement the landlords have ever witnessed. It is significant to all labor, it is raising the miserably low-wage standard on which Roosevelt based his wage-smashing Relief Wage Scale. It loosens the spirit of the Negro masses; they are struggling to the bitter end for their rights. It is imperative to America, it is battering down the ugly head of fascism in the “Cradle of American Fascism.”

ALBERT JACKSON.

Secretary, Share Croppers Union.

Law and Order in Kansas City

IT WAS nearly midnight. I was walking alone along a Kansas City, Mo., street. A car drew up ahead of me, two men stepped out and, as I came alongside, halted me.

“Where you going, Bud?” asked one, and the other “Where you been? What you got here?” and he seized my brief case.

I was bewildered, could scarcely speak, tried to push them aside, demanding “What is this?”

“We'll damn soon show you what this is, you damn Communist,” and with that they shoved me into the car.

I protested that I was not a Communist. “You know goddamn well you are,” the one in the front seat shouted and, turning, struck me twice across the head with a blackjack.

“Where you from?” asked the other.

“New York.”

“What the hell you doing out here?”

“Making a survey of the drought area in Kansas.”

“What for?”

“For a play.”

When I continued to protest at their actions, the one in the front seat turned: “When I get you down to the station, I'm gonna give you a working over. We're gonna clean all you — Communists out of town in thirty days,” he shouted, blowing alcoholic breath in my face.

We drew up to the station. I was marched inside and searched. In my brief case were a few copies of *The Farmers' Weekly*, a pamphlet *What Is Socialism*, a booklet *Drouth* and my notes, the result of two months' effort in the drought areas. All personal belongings, including my notes and \$19.18 in cash, were taken from me. While this was being done, the larger of the two detectives—Reddish was his name—was making advances towards an attractive girl who had just been brought in. She told him that she didn't know him, but he forced his attentions with lewd gestures. The boy who was typing my name turned to him. “What you got this man here for?” Reddish stammered something about “suspected Communist activities.”

Reddish led me into a side room, drew a