Working Class Political Unity

by Morris Hillquit

The immediate importance of the political cooperation resolution has been overestimated in some quarters, in which it has been interpreted as a concrete step toward fusion with other political parties; and, on the other hand, there seems to be a tendency to underestimate its significance by interpreting it as a mere move to shelve the question without action.

Neither of the two theories is quite correct. The resolution was not intended to break down the present policy of political non-collaboration. Before any change in that respect can be accomplished three important steps will be required:

1. A favorable recommendation by the NEC.

2. Endorsement of the recommendation by the next national convention.

3. A ratification by the membership on referendum.

On the other hand, the direction of the NEC to make a survey of the conditions and disposition of the radical labor movement was not meant for purely statistical purposes. It has a practical object. If, within the next year, a large volume of radical sentiment should develop among the workers of this country, particularly under the pressure of unemployment, wage cuts, open shop cam-paigns, and judicial and political repression, and the NEC, upon a careful canvass, should find that large sections of organized labor and other radical movements are ready for united political action of a distinct and uncompromising working class character, and they are inclined to cooperate with the Socialist Party as an independent factor, so that such cooperation will not involve the sacrifice of principle or the surrender of the party's independence, the Socialist Party will be called upon to take definite action on the situation.

What will that action be?

That, of course, can only be answered by the party membership. Personally, I believe that under conditions above outlined, the Socialist Party should cooperate politically with the workers of this country upon a plan similar to that in vogue in England. I think upon such plan, if adapted to the conditions of the United States, each component party would, at least for some time, continue to nominate its own candidates for Governor of the different states, in order to preserve their official standing as political parties. Candidates for other offices would be distributed among the different cooperating organizations with regard to their respective strength in different political districts.

As to myself, I should advocate the greatest liberality on the part of the Socialist Party in the apportionment of such candidacies for the object of cooperation on the part of the Socialist Party would not be primarily to secure more public offices for its members, but to come in closer touch

with the toiling masses of America, to work with them, to educate them, and to spread the propaganda of Socialism among them.

The Socialist movement, all over the world, is progressing in tremendous strides since the war. Socialist activity today, if it is to count at all, must manifest itself on a large scale. It must acquire an immediate, practical, and vital importance.

To continue as a movement of the select few, as a small priesthood charged with the duty of keeping the sacred flame alive and protected from the profane gaze of the multitude, is not an object which in our agitated days will commend itself to the workers of this country. We must have the workers with us, if we are to succeed and we must go to them if they do not come to us.

On the other hand, of course, if it should be found that the American workers are no more ripe for independent working class politics in conjunction with the Socialists than they have been in the past, the Socialist Party will, of course, abstain from any attempt to create a new movement artificial in origin, ephemeral in character, and compromising in result.