

---

# To All Labor Unions in Chicago: A Circular Letter Dated Oct. 31, 1923.

by Joseph Manley

Copy in the Comintern Archive, f. 515, op. 1, d. 213, ll. 153-155.

October 31, 1923

TO ALL LABOR UNIONS IN CHICAGO

Dear Sirs and Brothers:

Since the convention on July 3rd, 4th, and 5th at which the Federated Farmer-Labor Party was organized continuous attacks have been made on the delegates who participated in the organization of our Party at this convention, and particularly upon the delegates of the Workers Party of America.

The Federated Farmer-Labor Party has remained silent under these attacks up to this time, hoping that the breach in the united front of labor could be healed and not wishing to put further difficulties in the way of achieving this aim.

In spite of this the misrepresentation in regard to this convention, and of the policy of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party has continued, and therefore the Federated Farmer-Labor Party has determined to make this statement in regard to the convention and its present policy to organized labor in the City of Chicago.

Since the actions of the delegates of the Workers Party have been particularly under attack the Federated Farmer-Labor Party has requested the Workers Party, which is affiliated with the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, to make a statement of its side of the controversy and have received the following reply:

### **Statement of the Workers Party of America.**

“The charge that the Workers Party delegates caused the split with the Farmer-Labor Party at the

July 3rd convention is a misrepresentation of the facts in regard to this convention. The truth is that the Farmer-Labor Party representatives, after making an agreement with the Workers Party left the Workers Party in the lurch and betrayed the convention.

When the Farmer-Labor Party, early in the spring of 1922, proposed to withdraw from the Conference for Progressive Political Action, the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party sent a strong recommendation urging that this action be not taken. In spite of the recommendation of the Workers Party, the Farmer-Labor party withdrew from the Cleveland Conference for Progressive Political Action [Dec. 11-12, 1922], and upon motion of John Fitzpatrick, issued a call for the July 3rd convention to unify all labor political forces.

The Workers Party received an invitation from the Farmer-Labor Party to send delegates to this convention and accepted this invitation. It did not only accept the invitation but it threw all its energy into the work of making the convention a success. Toward this end it also contributed a considerable amount of money to the Farmer-Labor Party for the purpose of enabling it to print and mail invitations to this convention.

From the time the call for the convention was issued until the convention itself there was the closest cooperation between the Workers Party and the Farmer-Labor Party. Numerous conferences were held at the request of the Farmer-Labor Party. A conference just prior to the convention was arranged for the purpose of agreeing upon the plan of action in the convention.

In compliance with a request of the Farmer-Labor Party the Workers Party sent an official delegation to Chicago which met with representatives of the Farmer-Labor Party and discussed the work of the convention in detail.

At this conference it was agreed that if the convention was large enough (and delegates representing a half-million workers was agreed upon as being large enough) a Federated Farmer-Labor Party should be organized and an Executive Committee elected at the convention and certain resolutions containing the principles of the party should be adopted.

The Workers Party did not desire to assume a position of leadership in the convention. It was willing and urged that the representatives of the Farmer-Labor Party take the leadership of the new organization and that the Workers Party would give its support to make the work a success.

The Workers Party received no suggestion that the agreement arrived at in the conference referred to above was not to be carried out until the time of the convention itself. Then it found that John Fitzpatrick had gotten cold feet. It seemed that John Fitzpatrick feared the action the Gompers machine would take against him in the trade union movement if he went through with the program which had been agreed to.

In relation to the convention itself it had been agreed between the CEC of the Workers Party and the National Committee of the Farmer-Labor Party that only bona fide Farmer-Labor delegates should be seated in the preliminary convention of that Party. This agreement was in the form of a letter to the National Committee of the Farmer-Labor Party by the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party, which was agreed to by the Farmer-Labor Party.

In spite of this agreement the credentials committee of the Farmer-Labor Party convention brought in a report to seat all delegates and during the discussion an effort was made by the men who had agreed with the Workers Party that only bona fide Farmer-Labor Party delegates should be seated in this preliminary convention, to seat part of the other delegates and to exclude others.

It was at this point that the Workers Party was compelled to act to protect the delegates which it had helped to bring to the convention and it insisted on the floor of the convention that only the Farmer-Labor Party delegates be seated, or all the delegates be seated.

The resolution for the organization of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party which was presented to the convention was presented to the representatives of the Farmer-Labor Party, including John Fitzpat-

rick, two days before the convention opened. The Workers Party stood ready to discuss and negotiate with the Farmer-Labor Party in regard to this resolution and to modify and change it in any way to suit the Farmer-Labor Party, without sacrificing the purpose for which the convention was called.

During the process of the convention, the Workers Party representatives tried again and again to arrange a conference with Fitzpatrick, who stood in the way of an agreement being achieved, but was refused a conference. During the convention it publicly demanded on the floor of the convention that the Farmer-Labor Party representatives should state what they desire and added that the Workers Party was ready to make any concession except to sacrifice the formation of a Federated Farmer-Labor Party at this convention.

In spite of all previous conferences and agreements, in spite of all the attempts of the Workers Party to bring about a settlement during the convention, Fitzpatrick and his group offered nothing to the convention.

They had called a convention to build a united front of labor politically and then got cold feet and wanted to send the delegates back home without anything being done. They were ready to sacrifice the labor party because Gompers threatened them.

The Workers Party could not be a part of such a betrayal. It was compelled through the Farmer-Labor Party representatives leaving it in the lurch and repudiating their agreement to offer a program for the convention and this program was adopted.

If there was any split at this convention it was not a split caused by the Workers Party. If there was a betrayal, it was not a betrayal by the Workers Party. The split and betrayal were the work of Fitzpatrick and the Farmer-Labor group."

Fraternally,

Central Executive Committee,  
Workers Party of America,

C.E. Ruthenberg, Exec. Sec'y.

While conveying this statement of facts about the July 3rd convention to the labor movement of Chicago, the Federated Farmer-Labor Party at the same time desires to present to the organized workers of this city a program to build a united front of labor politi-

cally in the City of Chicago.

The Federated Farmer-Labor Party would have the right to demand support for itself as the greatest political expression of the workers in this country. However, it is ready to sacrifice any selfish aims for the end of building a united political organization of labor and it proposes that the labor organizations of Chicago place themselves on record in favor of the formation of a united front political party in Chicago in which there shall be united the Trade Unions, Farmer-Labor Party, the Workers Party, the Socialist Party, the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, the Proletarian Party, the Socialist Labor Party.

It urges upon the labor organizations of Chicago a campaign of education to win the support of all existing groups for the formation of such a united political front.

Every labor union in Chicago should adopt resolutions in favor of such action and send them to the Chicago Federation of Labor.

The workers must united their political strength to fight their battles against the bosses. It is only through a united front politically that labor can achieve anything for itself.

The Federated Farmer-Labor Party stands as the exponent of such a united front.

Fraternally yours,

**Federated Farmer-Labor Party,**

Joseph Manley,  
National Secretary.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2005. • Free reproduction permitted.*