
New York Experiences

by Charles Krumbein

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In September 1923, a conference was called in the name of mostly members of unions (WP [Workers Party] not mentioned on call) where FFLP [Federated Farmer-Labor Party] was organized. Delegates from 40 local unions, 47 branches Workmen's Circle, 11 branches Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Fund, and 18 miscellaneous. Fraternal organizations were present, representing about 90,000 workers.

A large representative council was decided upon by the conference. One meeting of this council was called, but only about 15 showed up. Second meeting was never called. An Executive Committee of about 15 was elected — made up of almost all WP members.

FFLP Local New York entered campaign in fall of 1923, putting 6 assembly and 4 aldermanic candidates on ballot. (Here allowance must be made for shortness of time.)

During campaign, 4 indoor meetings were held, averaging 250 in attendance. Average seating capacity of halls was 900. Speakers were, amongst others, [Moissaye] Olgin, [Benjamin] Gitlow, [Ludwig] Lore, and [Julia Stuart] Poyntz. Open air meetings few in number. Two leaflets issued in English and Jewish [Yiddish], 50,000 all told. Badly distributed. \$842.23 raised during campaign. Expenses about \$1500, difference paid from WP. Of the \$842 contributed, \$295 was from 22 organizations.

Average vote for assembly candidates, 197 — for aldermanic, 110. All this happened during admin-

istration of the FFLP enthusiast Comrade [Benjamin] Lifshitz. From above it appears that membership was not enthused about campaigns. This is an important factor.

Now between 1923 and 1924 campaigns.

Lenin Memorial Meeting arranged on Feb. 4, 1924. The preliminary arrangements were made by Lifshitz. So lacking was the understanding of united front that he called the meeting in the name of one "Lenin Memorial Committee." 60,000 leaflets, 1,000 posters, and 19,000 tickets were printed and well distributed *on which the WP was not mentioned*, meeting being under auspices of Lenin Memorial Committee. Publicity went out in same name to our own press until my arrival here, when it was immediately stopped and thereafter all publicity that went out was in the name of the WP. This was called to attention of DEC [District Executive Committee].

During campaign for June 17 [1924] convention, we organized in New York and New Jersey FLPs. This was done using FFLP. Executive Committee was called together twice a month with 5 to 7 WP members of committee appearing. FLP of New York was organized with ourselves and close sympathizers; those that supported us in recent campaign. NJ FLP organized on moment's notice, through instructions from CEC by mail, the result of the conference attended by WP branches and 4 or 5 outside organizations, none of which were unions.



†- Benjamin Lifshitz, a supporter of the Pepper-Ruthenberg faction, was removed as DO in District 2 (New York) upon the motion of William Z. Foster in the Organization Committee, Jan. 19, 1924. He was replaced by Krumbein, a long-time Foster supporter.

An incident during conference in Schenectady on May 18, 1924, where New York FFLP was organized. We were instructed by CEC to affiliate state parties with national FFLP. Purpose of organizing state parties, as I understood, was to strengthen FFLP for June 17 convention. In committee it was learned that Hopkins, representing NY Progressive Party, who was there with 3 delegates, would split if we affiliated NY party with FFLP. I was for affiliation, regardless of split with Hopkins' outfit but stood alone in conference of leading comrades. Lifshitz, Lore, [Will] Weinstone, Poyntz, and others being against affiliating if it meant a split. Result: no affiliation.

Now for the recent WP campaign. My understanding of our objective in this campaign was to popularize the Workers (Communist) Party. This, as the facts will prove, we accomplished. First we put the national and state ticket on the ballot. This required 22,000 signatures with a minimum of 100 signatures in each of 62 counties. This cost money, but we raised it. We had 1 Gitlow meeting, 2,000 attendance; 2 Foster meetings, 6,000 attendance; 12 Cannon meetings, average attendance 500; 1 Olgin meeting, attendance 800. Averaged 30 to 40 outdoor meetings a week during the campaign. Six Red Nights where we concentrated our forces in 6 different sections of New York City — trucks, red lights, etc., holding 6 to 12 meetings on each Red Night. Many of these open air meetings were mass meetings of from 200 to 1,200 in attendance. Indoor meetings, best political meetings ever had here. †

Nearly 1 million pieces of literature distributed, included leaflets, pamphlets, posters, stickers, and 85,000 *Daily Workers*. Raised *nearly \$16,000 for the campaign*. \$2,322 of this was contributed by 25 local unions, 18 branches of Workmen's Circle, 49 branches of Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Fund, and 16 miscellaneous fraternal organizations. 5,500 votes for our national and state tickets and in the 6 Assembly Districts where we averaged *197 votes for the FFLP, we averaged 225 votes for the WP*.

In October [1924] we took 180 new members, which is about 60 more than the average for the last 10 months. Response of the membership, as compared with 1923 campaign, financially, in the distribution of literature, etc., showed that the campaign helped towards building a mass CP. They were enthused, \$16,000 proves that, and the party acted as a unit as never before.

We reached the masses as never before and I am sure better than we ever could through a FLP. Many members stated they were glad they could make the fight out and out as against a camouflage, as our FLP was known and called by all our enemies. An incident in one of the large bakers' unions here when the fight took place to endorse the WP candidates, it resolved itself into a fight to endorse the WP as such, which was finally done.

Whoever says we can't go to the masses in our own name, but must use a "false face" in face of above facts has another guess coming.

†- Krumbein, who hailed from Chicago, would not be the first person to ask about something like this, putting it mildly.

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