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# The American Socialist Party and the Farmers.

by Alexander Trachtenberg

A document in the Comintern Archive, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. XXX, ll. 139-140.  
Written during the second half of 1922.

*Note: To translate into Russian or German and to turn over translation to Comrade Zinoviev's secretary.*

## ***For Comrade Zinoviev.***

The great loss in members which the Socialist Party of America suffered during the years 1919-1921 consisted in the main of proletarian elements. At the 1921 convention [Detroit: June 25-29, 1921] a resolution was passed which was later affirmed by the convention of 1922 [Cleveland: April 29-May 2, 1922] giving state and local organizations of the party the right to enter into alliances with radical and labor organizations during political campaigns. These decisions in fact sanctioned what was practiced heretofore in a clandestine way by Socialist Party subdivisions, who fused with non-proletarian political organizations in elections in different parts of the country. Particularly in the North and Middle West the Socialist organizations have combined with farmers' political organizations in exchanging support for candidates on each others' tickets.

In the state of Oklahoma the Socialist Party actually merged into a general farmers' and progressive political party, in which it lost its identity. The Socialist candidates even appeared in the regular primary lists of capitalist political parties through which the farmers' organizations were aiming to secure control of the local or state gov-

ernments.

In the Northwest the Socialists went into the Non-Partisan League, a political organization of farmers which met with great success in several states and which the Socialists helped to organize. There is practically no Socialist organization in those states now.

In the state of Wisconsin, where Victor Berger has built up a strong Socialist organization among the German workers of Milwaukee, the Socialist Party has espoused the interests of the farmers throughout the state for the support which the latter's representatives in the Legislature gave to measures introduced by the Socialists of Milwaukee.

Altogether the Socialist Party has during the past few years made strenuous attempts to secure cooperation among the farmers' organizations of the Western states. In the East it is joining in political compacts with all sorts of progressive political groups, some of which are of distinct bourgeois origin. Thus it participated in a national conference with progressive Republicans who are trying to secure the nomination by the Republican Party of Senator [Robert] LaFollette for the Presidency, with the so-called Committee of 48, an organizations of liberals that favor nationalization of railways, and similar other reform groups. In New York, the SP joined in a political combination in the last election which included even the Single Tax Party.

The political orientation of the SP is now on the one hand toward securing close contact with the reactionary leadership of the labor unions — its only contact with labor — and on the other, with various political and economic groupings of farmers and various middle class reform organizations.

The SP has now officially and openly discarded the anti-fusionist policy which it has maintained up to the last few years. Morris Hillquit, who considered himself an orthodox Marxist, always fought the revisionist Victor Berger, who favored fusion and political trading with non-working class parties. Victor Berger won in his fight by demonstrating political results (control of the city government of Milwaukee, his own election to Congress, and a good minority in the state legislature) through the political trading with the farmers and the progressive Republicans of Wisconsin.

The 14,000 members which the SP claimed at its convention at the end of May [*sic.*] — which by the way is far more than they really have — as compared with about 100,000 members in 1919, had a great deal to do with this new orientation of the SP.

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*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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