

# The Story of the Conventions

TO report two conventions at once and part of a third is a task possessing some difficulties, so the reader must have patience with all our shortcomings. In view of these difficulties it will perhaps be best to treat of certain phases or episodes of the convention of the Forty-Eighters, rather than to attempt a running story of what presents itself as a series of dramatic incidents, fraught with the qualities of pathos, hopeless ineffectualness, personalities revealed in unexpected lights, unworthy and worthy but mistaken ambitions shattered, hopes destroyed, and the reduction to atoms of a political machinery built up by men devoted to principle according to their lights, and others who to less worthy ends had connived, contrived and conspired.

To these latter a word in season. There is no way to the minds and hearts of men that winds in devious paths. There is no way even to enduring personal success, if that be the thing desired, that does not lead through the main highway. The lanes and alleys do not take us anywhere, but end in a *cul de sac*.

Honesty is the best policy even in politics. It does not pay even if the sole wish is to gather votes,

"To bend the pregnant hinges of the knee  
That thrift may follow fawning."

To those of the Committee of 48 who are honestly desirous of bringing about a new and better condition through political action, and who are by instinct and conviction, pronounced individualists, a word also. They cannot hope by amalgamation with diverse elements to form any enduring political union. As oil and water will not mix, neither will individualism with the economic philosophy of socialism which would restrict it. The coming together of these elements produces a violent reaction. This is why the hope of the Committee of 48 was from the beginning an "iridescent dream." What is left is a party of socialism, a class-conscious party with a programme that will appeal to all the socialistically inclined. It has swallowed up those elements of the Committee of 48 which have a natural affinity with it, and it has spewed out of its mouth the men whose individualistic economics are inconsistent with the purely Marxian programme of the new party.

## ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM NOT COMPLETE WITHOUT THE SINGLE TAX

To those gentlemen and ladies that remain clinging to the wreckage of what remains of the Committee of 48, let us say that the individualistic philosophy is not complete without the knowledge of the Single Tax. Such knowledge enables us to clarify in our minds the conception of what are the true functions of the State and where the operation of State activities begin to encroach upon what is the true province of the individual's inherent rights.

## TO SINGLE TAXERS IN THE COMMITTEE OF 48

To our brother Single Taxers it is necessary to say a word. The lesson is now complete that the Single Tax must no longer be preached in the way it has been, that we must come out into the open. It is inconceivable that they can require further experience of this kind to convince them.

But a truce to preaching. Our readers will want to know about the Conventions.

## OPENING HOURS OF THE CONVENTION OF THE FORTY-EIGHTERS

Come with us therefore to the Conference of the Committee of 48 on Saturday morning, to which we hasten after a short session of the Single Tax Party Convention. We are all of us accredited delegates to the Conference of the Forty-Eighters. Allan McCurdy is making the "key-note speech." It is a great speech, and the audience rises to it. His reference to "economic privilege" is frequent and these references receive great applause. There is no attempt to define economic privilege, and the speech is lacking in this regard, but it is well delivered and the speaker is in deadly earnest. We never heard Mr. McCurdy to better advantage.

It is a splendid assemblage for the most part. Sincere, earnest minded men and women are here. There are many Single Taxers of various shades and depths of conviction. Here is Charles H. Ingersoll, who is enjoying himself hugely, and who is a good deal of a philosopher; George P. Hampton, editor of the *Farmers' Open Forum*; Ben Marsh, whom New Yorkers will remember; Harry Willock, who saw the avalanche coming and dodged; Will Ross, and many others. They were there trying to put over another experiment—that of inducing the Committee of 48 to put a real Single Tax plank in the platform. They were here for that purpose, primarily and with no selfish motive—most of them, at least. They were one with the Single Tax Party men at heart, and their co-operation was of value at times.

## THE SINGLE TAX PARTY MEN THE REAL CRUSADERS

But from what group came the splendid insistence that their issue was paramount and should take precedence of all others in the platform? The Single Tax Party men. Who *nearly* carried the day, and who, had there been a few more of us, could have averted the disaster that came to the Committee of 48? The Single Tax Party men. Who demonstrated to the Convention their whole-hearted devotion to the principle of the Great Restoration and won the respect of the best elements? The Single Tax Party men.

## AN UNWORTHY INSINUATION

It is true that there were those who said that the Single Tax Party delegates to the Convention of the Forty-Eighters

were responsible for the wreckage. This is a cruel untruth. The Single Tax Party men would have saved the Convention had it been possible to do so. It must be remembered that they were in Chicago in a dual capacity—as members of the Conference and delegates to their own party Convention. At no time did they act as obstructionists. They supported the chairman in his admirable rulings. (Parley P. Christensen, who later received the nomination for President from the Farmer-Labor Party, was the efficient chairman, and we take this opportunity to commend his fair and able rulings), and they organized their States with helpfulness. They were no negligible factor in the Convention as was proved by the fact that they won the State chairmanships in six of the State delegations and thus received that degree of representation on the Platform Committee. These might have been increased by two—New York and Ohio—had not the Single Tax Party delegates from both States remained too late at luncheon.

The Single Tax Party delegates were as loyal members of the Committee of 48 as any other, and far more loyal than those who, from motives not yet wholly explained, or through sheer stupidity, led the Convention after its organization into the lion's maw at Carmen's Hall, where the Laborites promptly proceeded to make a meal of them with much efficient neatness and dispatch.

#### AIMLESS IDEALISTS AND PLAIN "NUTS"

We say that the Single Tax Party men were loyal members of the Convention both up to and after that tense dramatic half hour when their passionate protest swept the Convention as the doom of that body was being droned out by George L. Record, as he read the Platform of the Labor Convention agreed upon by the Conference Committees of both Conventions.

We will hurry to the episodes that are of interest. Before doing so let us look at this Convention and ask ourselves if this is the material out of which it is possible to form a political party. For the most part they are sincere, earnest intelligent men and women, but composed of amiable and aimless idealists. There are public ownership men, out-and-out socialists, non-partisan leaguers, I. W. W's, all conceivable factions. Then there are just the plain "nuts." For example, we met in these four whirling days, one man who is a perpetual candidate for the Presidency at the hands of any party, and who was busy circulating a campaign sheet with Washington and Lincoln's likeness alongside of his own; another who looked like a prosperous business man, but who assured us that he was the inventor of an unpatented device that would determine the result of any election—perhaps a political pulmotor; he was not specific about that; he was for Henry Ford. Another wanted Jesus recognized in the Platform—and so on.

#### BEFORE THE PLATFORM COMMITTEE

Monday was passed in getting together the various State delegations. This work was harmonious; it need not be dwelt upon, for it was without incident. Tuesday was our

day—the Single Tax Party men's day—before the Platform Committee. The men selected by our Convention to represent us before the Platform Committee, Messrs. Barnum, of Ohio, Bourgeois, of New Jersey and Macauley, of Pennsylvania, were accorded fifteen minutes each, and all of these gentlemen made effective addresses. They were aided by Dr. T. J. Kelly, of Marathon, Iowa, who ably seconded the appeal for our principle. Dr. Kelly was a member of the Committee of 48 and not yet a member of the Single Tax Party.

On this day Mr. M. C. O'Neill, of Massachusetts, also addressed the Convention, he having been selected by the Single Tax Party Convention to present our issue before the open Convention of the Forty-Eighters. The eloquent and dignified platform presence of Mr. O'Neill is impressive at any time. But he had not been well for a day or so, and had been compelled to wait through many postponements, for his opportunity to be heard. Nevertheless, he made an excellent impression, and the cause was lifted higher in the estimation of the doubting Thomases who heard him.

#### THE DOOM OF THE FORTY-EIGHTERS STAGED

We now approach the final culmination of the events that were to bring about the dissolution of the Convention of the Forty-Eighters, and the wreck of all their hopes. We come, too, to the exhibition of the whole-hearted devotion of the Single Tax Party men, their splendid solidarity, and their final triumph before the Convention in the face of an adverse majority. "Such is the power of truth." In the crisis suddenly thrust upon the Convention they, and perhaps they alone, saw what was impending. To save the Convention, and to save their own minority report on Platform at the same time, they rose as one man. It must be remembered that there had been an agreement reached that our Single Tax Platform adopted at our own Convention should be presented to the 48 Convention as the minority report. What is now about to be described came without warning, yet every Single Tax Party man seemed to know what to do without any previous agreement.

#### THAT DRAMATIC HALF HOUR

The floor had appointed a committee of ten to confer with the political groups. George L. Record was chairman of the Platform Committee as well as chairman of the Conference Committee. He spent most of his time with the Conference Committee leaving the chairmanship of the Platform Committee to another. The Conference Committee had agreed upon a Platform with which to enter the labor groups.

On Tuesday about ten o'clock a motion was made that the whole assemblage go over to Carmen's Hall and merge with the Laborites. This motion was defeated. Later one of the members of the Conference Committee reported that everything had been agreed upon by the Laborites and the Committee of 48, and several speeches were made for the amalgamation in order that the end for which the Convention had met might be achieved—namely, the formation of

an economic political party. Later a motion was made and carried as a result of several speeches that the Committee of 48 meet with the Laborites at 2 o'clock.

Just previous to this, the 48 Platform Committee had sent up a plank which they had agreed to present to the Convention. This was a public ownership plank similar to the St. Louis plank, but slightly modified. This plank was adopted by the Committee and it was reported that other planks would be sent up later.

Mr. Record was introduced as chairman of the Conference Committee and began his remarks by saying that the Platform Committee still in session was hopelessly deadlocked. He asked whether the Convention desired to proceed with action or wait for the Platform Committee to Report. The question was so worded as to elicit a favorable reply for proceeding.

Mr. Record began to read the prepared Platform which had been agreed upon by both Conference Committees, with a few minor exceptions to be determined upon by both Conventions to meet later.

As the reading proceeded a member of the Single Tax Party rushed to the Platform Committee room and informed the Single Taxers that a Platform was being reported to the Convention, while a minute later an emissary from the Convention floor was sent up to the Platform Committee room to instruct the Platform Committee to cease their deliberations and report immediately to the Convention. This was objected to by many members of the Committee of 48, and the chairman ruled that as the Platform Committee was the creature of the Convention it was their duty to follow the rules of the Convention. About this time a motion was made and passed to discharge all standing committees as the Convention was about to merge with the Laborites.

Mr. Record proceeded with the reading of the Platform agreed to by the Conference Committees, which was a straight-out labor platform. He was unable to read smoothly, owing to the many corrections and notations, and had to refer to other members of the Conference Committees for information drawn from their memories.

During the reading of the Platform, Mr. Record insinuated the name of La Follette and indicated that he would run if the Platform could be made to conform to his wishes. La Follette's name was applauded and vigorously hissed, and several protests were made against this method of feeling out the Convention's programme for a candidate at this time. At the conclusion of the reading it was moved that the Platform be adopted.

#### THE STORM BREAKS

As soon as the reading of the Conference Platform was completed and its adoption moved, our fight began. Mr. Oscar Geiger, of New York, obtained the floor to point out that the outstanding feature of the Platform just read were the things that Mr. Record could not read, or the things that he had forgotten, and asked if the Convention could consider such an incomplete Platform. This gained the

good will of the Convention. Mr. Loew, of New Jersey, kept edging up to the platform during the excitement that followed, for the Convention was in an uproar, and literally forced the attention of the chairman upon him. Mr. Loew obtained the floor and read the minority report. It received vigorous applause from all over the house. In this applause Single Taxers among the Forty-Eighters joined. They were being won over by the splendid fight that was being made by the Single Tax Party men. The applause frightened the administration forces, Swinburne Hale, Dudley Field Malone, George L. Record and others seated on the platform. These gentlemen tried to get the floor. Somebody moved that the minority report be tabled. This motion was hooted down. Shouts of "steam roller" came from all parts of the house. The chairman, Mr. Christensen, was plainly disconcerted by these charges, for he immediately turned to recognize some Single Taxer.

It is well to mention here that there had been throughout an evident attempt to preserve harmony at all costs; our fight for a Single Tax plank was the only serious division that threatened the existence of the Convention. Charges utterly unfair and without the shadow of a reason had been freely made that the Single Taxers were trying to break up the Convention, and at least one fistic encounter was threatened. Happily, such unpleasantness was averted.

During the turmoil that now prevailed the chairman recognized Mr. Harry Weinberger of New York, because he shouted, "I am a Single Taxer." Mr. Weinberger proceeded to say that he was satisfied with the land plank in the majority report. Pandemonium again broke loose as Mr. Robinson, of Pennsylvania, asked for the floor on a point of order. After strenuous efforts to gain the floor, Mr. Robinson finally succeeded in making the point that under the rules the first speaker on a minority report must be the one in favor of it. The point was decided well taken, and Mr. Geiger, of New York, was recognized. His earnest plea for the Single Tax carried the house. It was evident that the minority report would have carried.

At this juncture a member of the administration forces moved that the minority report be presented along with the majority report to the joint Convention of the Labor Party and the Committee of 48. This was unanimously carried. It was apparent to the administration forces that the Single Tax plank would have carried—hence the motion. Why Single Tax Party men voted to submit it to the joint convention is explained in an article that follows. We had won the fight. The day was ours. No plank for attenuated Single Tax would be presented to the country by the so-called "third party" as having the support of Single Taxers.

#### ON THEIR WAY TO THE GUILLOTINE

The modern Girondins filed out of the Morrison Hotel to the Convention of the Laborites, two miles away. Their band played and the State standards were lifted as they proceeded on their way. Mr. W. J. Wallace summed up the situation thus: "This is probably the first time in



history when a group of men and women on their way to execution provided its own band of music."

### AT THE LABOR CONVENTION

Arrived at the Convention of the Laborites at Carmen's Hall, animated now by little more than a languid interest in what was to follow, the Single Tax Party men entered the hall. Mr. Hopkins was chosen chairman. An inexplicable confusion marked the proceedings. Members of the Labor groups were rising from their seats and going from place to place without any apparent purpose.

Amos Pinchot was called upon and tried to speak amid the extraordinary, motiveless and unexplainable confusion that prevailed. He had not removed his clothes for fifty hours, so he said, and looked drawn and haggard. With splendid courage he told this Labor Convention that there was "no place in this country for a class-conscious labor party."

On conclusion of his remarks the noise was redoubled. It developed into a pandemonium. Mr. Hopkins, the natural pallor of his face greatly increased, was unable to continue his efforts to restore the Convention to order, and resigned the chair to Mr. Christensen.

Oh, they are ruthless, these Laborites! They know what they want and how to get it. They are students of parliamentary tactics, and no amateurs at this sort of thing. As for the rank and file, their discipline was splendid. Like a German army they marched to the goose step without so much as winking an eyelash. Mercilessly they did their work.

The motion that finally clamped down the lid on the coffin of the Forty-Eighters was to the effect that all resolutions adopted by the Labor Convention and all the resolutions adopted by the Committee of 48 stand as adopted by the joint Convention. The invisible "joker" in this mo-

tion was that the Convention of 48 had adopted neither platform nor resolutions.

The Labor Party had swallowed up the Committee of 48. The political climbers, the earnest minded men and women along with the self-seekers and political nondescripts comprising the Committee of 48, had all become victims of the amalgamation. Another socialist party was born.

Charlie Erwin, editor of the Socialist *Call*, passed through the back of the hall. One of the Single Tax Party men said to him, "There is another socialist party in the field," and the genial Erwin replied, "We don't care who does our work."

Mr. Hopkins showed the terrible strain under which he was laboring. Mr. Allan McCurdy said to a Single Tax Party representative, "This is terrible. Will you stand by us?" To whom could he appeal save to the men who had stood like a stone wall in that Convention, the undefeated, undefeatable phalanx who alone among all the groups of the Forty-Eighters had remained unbroken and undismayed?

To Messrs. Hopkins, Pinchot and McCurdy who had striven so unselfishly for a new party that should represent the aspirations of those who hope for better conditions and purer politics, our cordial sympathy may well go out. In no spirit of exultation at their misfortunes do we say this. They are indeed humiliated, but not disgraced. They have no reason to regret anything but their mistaken judgment. Their hands are clean, they wrought worthily for what seemed to them a good cause, and they maintained throughout their character as gentlemen of fine and scrupulous bearing through a trying ordeal.

The Single Tax Party men too had deserved the compliment paid to them by Amos Pinchot, who said: "I like you fellows. When you lose you smile, and when you win you do not crow over the other fellow."

JOSEPH DANA MILLER.

## A Review of Our Course at Chicago— The Reasons Therefor

**W**HY did the National Executive Committee of the Single Tax Party decide to hold the Annual Convention in the same city and at the same time that the Convention of the Committee of Forty-Eight and the Labor Party were called for?

The newspaper reports would lead one to believe that the object was to effect an amalgamation. This is not so. And in order that those who were not present may understand the firmness of purpose that animates the Single Tax Party, the reasons that resulted in the selection of Chicago, and the dates of July 10th to 14th, should be now given.

First, of course, was the desire to make it easy for the unorganized Single Taxers to meet with the Party members of the East, so that the work of organization might be

extended. This object was successfully carried out. Twenty-one States were represented in the Convention, whereas only seven were organized previous thereto. Organizations were effected in several of these new States, the representatives of the others promised to do so as soon as they returned to their homes.

The second object was to prevent, if possible, the bringing before the public of an emasculated form of Single Tax by the proposed "third" party. The Executive Committee was determined that this latest attempt to lead Single Taxers up a "blind alley" should be frustrated. The plan of action was this: To write a straight Single Tax plank into the Platform of the Committee of Forty-Eight, or to make a fight on the floor of their Convention which would demonstrate to the Single Taxers taking part in it that their only