

# Sinclair's Candidacy and the Issues in California Have National Importance for the Working Class

By Sam Darcy

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On Sept. 20, in Sacramento, the California State Conventions of every political party were held as required by law. The center of the stage was undoubtedly occupied by the Democratic Party. The entire electorate of California and much of the rest of the country watched to see what would be the outcome of the "fight" over the platform between the old-line Democrats of the McAdoo machine and the Sinclaires.

## The Sham Battle

The "fight" between these two was really only a sham battle conducted in the newspapers by newspapermen only, and not by Sinclair or McAdoo. At the Sept. 20 convention, Sinclair completely surrendered to the Democratic Party and openly announced that he was "merging" the Epic with the New Deal program. A careful re-reading of the "merged" program clearly shows that there was no merging at all, but a complete surrender of whatever was different in Sinclair's platform from the platform of Roosevelt. As a matter of fact, this was not a very difficult surrender, because Sinclair's Epic platform in essence was the minimum subsistence plan of the Roosevelt administration, but couched in extremely radical phraseology. The McAdoo machine even eliminated most of this.

However, in his speeches, Sinclair still talks as he did prior to the primaries in radical sounding phrases about "re-opening the factories," "re-possessing the idle lands for use," etc. This demagoguery has fooled many people who do not take the trouble to examine the detailed circumstances under which Sinclair proposes to re-open the factories or re-possess the land. Actually, his proposals aim only to re-establish the old discredited barter system.

## Sinclair's Tower of Babel

The only way the tower of political Babel that constitutes the Sinclair movement can be held together, is by playing these varied tunes at the same time; an old line

Democratic party platform to hold the recipients of Federal patronage, upper middle-class elements and bourgeoisie; and the radical speeches of Sinclair to attract the unemployed and underpaid workers, and the small farmers who are losing their land or groaning under the burden of public utilities rates and taxation.

The Sinclair movement includes at one pole some of the richest exploiters of the state, such as the head of the C and H Sugar Refinery and at the other pole it includes thousands of unemployed workers, some of whom participate in Communist-led demonstrations and strike movements, but are inclined to give their vote to Sinclair because "the Communists haven't a chance to get elected, and Sinclair will be a tremendous improvement over Merriam."

## Sinclair's Promises

With the promise of an old-age pension of \$50 per month, Sinclair has attracted the votes of about 400,000 retired farmers, mostly emigrants from Iowa now in Southern California to spend their old age. These people eked out a living from their precarious income from small mortgages, small stock and bond holdings, etc. The crisis, however, made the largest part of them destitute, and Sinclair's promises of old-age pensions have brought their votes. It is interesting that this very same element were the ones who made up the largest part of the Ku Klux movement which achieved such large organization in Southern California only a few years ago. The most vociferous part of the Sinclair movement are thousands of tired radicals and old Socialists, most of whom are frankly cynical and openly say that they are in the Sinclair movement only to feather their personal nests.

The Sinclair movement also includes all the liberals; that is, a peculiar California brand of liberal whose political complexion in New York would approximate the ideology of Al Smith. Needless to say, all of the A. F. of L. fakers and racketeers of every description in the state, plus the Technocrats, Single Taxers, Social Credit followers, Silver Shirts and Utopian So-

ciety. From all over the country huge contributions to Sinclair are being received from these elements.

## The Utopian Society

This last group is undoubtedly the most demagogic of all. Before an applicant becomes a member of the Utopian Society, he goes through "five cycles." The first and second cycles are really dialogues in Greek drama form performed by Hollywood actors and witnessed by the applicants. These show the bankruptcy of the industrialist, landlord, merchant, banker, and in fact, the entire system. The third and fourth cycles outline the Utopian program to the new applicant. This approximates the Utopia of Edward Bellamy in "Looking Backward." It also tells the applicant that Utopia can be achieved by an "expression of will," and without any violence or political agitation. They are extremely vague on this point, excepting that they specifically speak against the need for doing anything at all except "expressing their will" by paying \$3 for membership fees. The fifth cycle is a secret initiation of the applicant into the society, where he is given his organizational instructions of what is to be expected of him. In fact, however, the entire content of the fifth cycle is nothing but an effort to mobilize the new applicant to get more applicants at \$3 apiece. The whole atmosphere created is that their program is for abolishing capitalism in favor of a Utopia. Before people enter the Shrine Auditorium, which is their meeting hall, they are faced with a huge picture of Upton Sinclair. This entire Utopian movement is part of the Upton Sinclair agitation.

## Sinclair—A Safety Fuse

What has made the Sinclair movement possible? It can be said without any doubt at all that prior to the period of the end of May, 1934, when the fierce armed attacks on the maritime workers came, and later the general strike itself, that the Sinclair candidacy was regarded as a publicity campaign for his books. Few took it seriously. Creel, Sinclair's opponent, had the nomination fairly well secured. Then Governor Merriam and Mayor Rossi

sent the thugs, troops and police against the strikers, the raids on workers' halls took place, and the wave of resentment throughout the State following these acts was tremendous. Overnight, Sinclair's candidacy took on serious proportions. The accumulated discontent of years burst—tragically, into the harmless safety valve provided by the capitalist class.

Consider for example the longshoremen's union in San Francisco. Here the Communist influence was strong, yet the overwhelming number of longshoremen in the few days following these battles, went down to re-register as democrats so they could vote for Sinclair. The men did not bother to examine the details of Sinclair's platform or the implications involved in his nomination or election. They were motivated by only one thing, the determination to get rid of Merriam as a demonstration against his actions. The whole Merriam machine has smelled badly for years. It has taken over the tradition of Rolph. The bulk of the people of the state were sick of the reactionary prolynch statements of Rolph, the terror in the agricultural fields where workers were murdered for striking against 75 cents to \$1.25 per day wage scale, etc. They were resentful of the sales tax which was the product of the Rolph-Merriam administration. Even within the Republican Party there is a feeling that Merriam can't meet the present situation for them.

Haight, styling himself as a Progressive Republican candidate for governor, has entered the race and will undoubtedly split tens of thousands of votes away from Merriam. At present outlook, unless any startling changes occur, the possibility of Sinclair's election is very strong.

## The Menace of Sinclair

What difference would Sinclair's election make for the revolutionary working-class movement? The hundreds of thousands of workers and poor farmers who are voting for Sinclair have the idea that they are voting for some sort of a "radical" even a "mild Communist." When Sinclair gets elected and the failure of his demagogic program and phraseology becomes evident,

those disillusioned people who voted for Sinclair might become fertile ground for the fascist reaction against militant working-class activity. The success of the capitalist class' line in the use of a type like Sinclair in California at the polls on Nov. 6 will undoubtedly have national influence on events.

The Sinclair candidacy and campaign, therefore, constitutes the most immediate and main danger to the interests of the working-class and revolutionary movement. It represents the up to now largely successful efforts of the capitalist class to turn the leftward movement of the masses into safe channels for itself.

The Communist Party is waging an energetic campaign against this movement with every resource at its disposal, and under the great difficulties imposed upon our Party because of the terror, which is now raging in California. At the present time in at least two, sometimes three, radio broadcasts a week, in hundreds of thousands of leaflets distributed each week, in letters sent directly to 164,000 voters, in mass meetings, in the "Western Worker," etc., our Party has brought the Communist program before the masses.

## Turn Sentiment Into Action

Throughout the state great friendliness is shown to us everywhere. Our speakers are well received. On the Red Sundays, when our comrades go from house to house, they report wide-spread interest and welcome to their visit. The unprecedented vote for an outspoken and well-advertised Communist (against whom Sinclair made many speeches), in the case of Leo Gallagher, who got 205,078 votes, all indicate the friendliness of the masses to our Party. In the anxiety of the masses to get rid of Merriam, the danger is, however, that the greatest part of this vote, despite everything the Party can do, will go to Sinclair.

## The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party, in previous years in California, polled a considerable vote. In the last state elections, the socialist vote was over 60,000. Even that vote represented a considerable come-down from the height of socialist strength.

At one time, the Socialist Party came within only a few thousand votes of electing a socialist mayor of Los Angeles. The City of Berkeley has already had a socialist mayor. This year it is doubtful whether the Socialist Party will poll more than a small fraction of its 60,000 votes of the previous election. They are weakened by the defection of most of their leaders to Sinclair, and of more than one-third of their rank and file to the Communist Party.

This is the first election in which our Party is a legal Party in California. The obstacles to becoming a legal Party in this state were great, but they were overcome. Our Party now has a splendid opportunity to poll a large vote, and establish itself permanently as a legal Party. There is no doubt that failing to do this, the terror against the Party will be increased in a large measure after the elections. For that reason also, this election campaign is the most important campaign our Party has every engaged in, in California. Every Party member and sympathizer, aware of the great importance of it must put his or her shoulder to the wheel and help bring the Communist Party platform to the masses, and win a huge vote for our candidates.

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