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The Idaho Nonpartisan League was organized in 1917 by Ray McKaig, who had served as secretary of the North Dakota Nonpartisan League before coming here. Started in North Dakota in 1915 to give the farmers there an effective political voice by nominating League candidates on existing major party tickets (through endorsing farmer candidates in the direct primary) rather than by forming any more farmers' third parties (which has proven ineffective), the Nonpartisan League spread to many western states. The League dominated North Dakota for a number of years by controlling the Republican party there, and eventually emerged as the Farmer Labor party in Minnesota. In Idaho the Nonpartisan League took over the Democratic Party in the 1918 primary, nominating a wealthy but sympathetic Republican—H. F. Samuels—for governor. The Democratic state chairman thus was forced to campaign against the Democratic state ticket that year, and most of the Nonpartisan League candidates were defeated in the 1918 general election. To combat the Nonpartisan League the Legislature repealed the Idaho direct primary in 1919. As in Minnesota, the League finally had to become an independent political party after all, and for a number of years before dissolving in 1928, the Idaho Progressive Party (which grew out of the Nonpartisan League) functioned as one of the two major political parties in the state.

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