

Labor Editors Look At the CP Discussion

By BEN HALL

The *Labor Leader*, published by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, comments on the fight inside the Communist Party in its November issue. It sees nothing particularly new, for "factionalism has long been associated with the development of the Communist Party in any country." If this fight is somewhat different it is only that for the first time "the orthodox position to which all must conform has yet to be defined."

This analysis, it should be noted, stems from a total failure to grasp the real depths of the crisis in the CP.

Take for example this: "Within the resolution [Convention Draft Resolution] itself, the key issue is the role of the party in the future. About the only thing that all three sides agree upon is that the party has a future."

But this is a simple misunderstanding of the basic lineup.

There are, as the *Labor Leader* indicates, the outlines of three groupings or tendencies:

(1) Foster, who proposes that the party go on exactly as before, no more no less, after making due deference and obedience to Khrushchev.

(2) Dennis, who also would continue as before but who knows that the 20th Congress has made a "new look" necessary. But for him it is only a new look and not a new substance.

(3) John Gates and the *Daily Worker* staff: here it is a matter of another kind.

The Gates tendency, first of all, is beginning to understand one fundamental fact: no socialist movement can succeed in the United States if it functions as an apologist for Russia; it still looks upon Russia as a "socialist" community; but it has become critical of it and to that extent is moving in the direction of independence from it.

Foster and Dennis, then, tend to move toward one another and against Gates. The Gates group has a new view of the role of the Communist Party. And here the *Labor Leader* is dead wrong.

For Foster and Dennis the way out of the crisis is clear; the Communist Party must be strengthened so that it can emerge as the "vanguard" of the working class. But Gates rejects that perspective; in his opinion, the CP is not and probably will never be the "vanguard." **It can, he maintains, make a "contribution" to the development of a new, broad socialist movement in the United States. But only if it makes fundamental changes in its policies.**

With this compressed summary as a background, consider the *Labor Leader's* conclusion:

"In the final analysis it may not matter which side emerges triumphant, since the spoils of the victor will quite probably be merely the corpse of the party, its last gasps having been spent in contradicting itself."

But in our view it matters very much who wins out. And not only in our view, for the outcome of the fight in the CP is important to every trade-unionist, regardless of his point of view.

The Communist Party, in the course of its history, has gathered together thousands of union militants who were attracted to the party because they thought it represented the liberating ideals of socialism, democracy, justice, brotherhood. But in the party their ideals were twisted and distorted so that they became mere apologists of a totalitarian dictatorship. Now, with the fight in the CP, they are beginning to revert to the truly inspiring goals that first drew them to the movement. It is only the beginning; they have a long way to go, but they are on their way.

Whatever our views, and any other's, it is encouraging to see thousands breaking away from blind attachment to Russian dictatorship to take their place inside the labor movement on a platform of defending the interests of the working class. We may disagree, as doubtless the *Labor Leader* will, on how to promote the best interests of labor. However, when a group takes shape inside the Communist Party on that platform, and genuinely so, the labor movement, and

not bureaucratic dictatorship, is the gainer.

NO LONGER MONOLITHIC

This brings us to the November issue of the *Black Worker*, published by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and edited by A. Philip Randolph. In an editorial entitled "Communists Woo Socialists," it comments:

"Since the movement of de-Stalinization initiated by Nikita Khrushchev . . . the Kremlin has begun another Trojan Horse derby. Efforts are now under way to seduce socialists to enter into an ideological marriage with Communists."

Since the 20th Congress, it is certainly true that the official Communist Parties throughout the world have sought a respectable cover from the devastating blows inflicted upon them by their de-Stalinization campaign. The Fosters and Dennises the world over would like a "united front" with socialists while they recover from the shock and continue on the old line of Russian apologetics. But that is not the full story.

In each country, especially in the United States, individuals, groups and tendencies are moving toward democracy. It is no longer enough to talk of the Communist Party as one monolithic piece; it is beginning to divide into antagonistic wings.

The labor movement should reject, utterly and without hesitation, what Foster and his friends would continue; but at the same time, it should not be indifferent to those in the Communist Party who are beginning to fight for democracy.

PURE STALINESE

It seems hard to believe, but a tragic example of utter stultification and total inability to break away from totalitarian dictatorship occurs among CP auto workers in Detroit.

At a conference held at the end of September a resolution was adopted proclaiming "That there can be no question as to the continued existence of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. as a political party, basing itself on Marxism-Leninism as applied to the American scene, and it be emphasized that our mistakes stem from a superficial understanding and application of these principles, rather than from a weakness in the principles themselves."

This is pure Staline (or Khrushchev) for a continuation of the basic line with trivial modifications. *

The road to democracy in Detroit is now via China: "We use the CP of China as an example in developing organizational measures to combat this [inner-party] bureaucracy and strengthening inner-party democracy." So far, they have learned only to substitute Chinese for Russian "democracy!"

But all is perhaps not lost. The conference took place in September. In October and November, the Hungarian revolution cracked world Stalinism. Let us hope it affected CP auto workers in Detroit.

NEW LINE ON REUTHER

In this context, we note that Sam Wellman of Detroit, whom we do not know, reported to the Michigan State Committee of the CP under the heading: "Eliminate Left Sectarianism in Ap-

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proach to Auto Workers." Wellman functions under the handicap of his own illusions.

He thinks that the answer to his problem lies in some minor tactical shift inside the UAW; but the CP has been defeated, for good, because UAW militants recognize that in all its twists and turns one guiding line dominated: the interests of Russian policy as applied to the U. S. scene.

This fundamental fact has yet to penetrate the wall of Wellman's mind even slightly.

As he puts it, the recent line of "left-sectarianism" maintained that "The main enemy was Reuther and Reutherism, and we called for his isolation and defeat. Objectively, this line obscured who was and how to meet the main enemy of the peace and democratic forces—namely, auto monopoly. Ford, GM, Chrysler."

But now he sees it clearly! Not Reuther but the auto companies is the main enemy of auto workers! To reach this brilliant conclusion which everyone, except the deluded members of the CP, always took for granted, Wellman must have spent the last four years in a post-graduate course on labor problems. Or perhaps he merely attended a brief lecture on Post-Khrushchevism.

At any rate, he is cured: "The last remnants of our left-sectarian approach to the UAW leadership must now be eliminated. The Reuther policy has gradually changed from 1953 to date in the direction of a more consistent middle-road progressive course." And now, the "objective of the Left in the UAW" must be "placed in the context of a united UAW cooperating from top to bottom to solve these questions in the course of struggle against the companies and extreme reaction."

But what about the CP line during the war, before Reuther became UAW president? That too comes in for "re-consideration." Fourteen years after, Wellman lets out what everyone realized at the time:

"We impermissibly supported piecework, while ignoring war-profiteering; neglected the united front of struggle on shop grievances by methods short of strike action; and were satisfied in merely tailing behind FDR and Phil Murray."

And what was the basis for these "mistakes?" It is simple: "Our correct win-the-war line was executed in a wrong way, due to the rightist policies of Browder." Poor Mr. Browder!

We cite these reports from Detroit as examples of old-line Stalinist breast-beating upon command from above. While the CP is plunged into a crisis of fundamentals, while the relation between it and the Kremlin dictatorship is re-examined, Wellman is busy with new tactical devices. It will do him no good!

It is not a matter of "left-sectarianism"; it is not a question of "Browderism"; what is at stake is the underlying motive of any and every policy. CP auto workers must reject the basic line of supporting Kremlin dictatorship. That will be the start of a genuinely new period.