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SECOND
DISCUSSION
ISSUE



Dear Reader:

We have the second full discussion issue here: while we appreciate the articles included, our complaint of the last issue still holds. There is not yet a discussion of the situation and needs of our country. Perhaps we are impatient; perhaps we tend to cut short the necessary discussion of the past and the present. We hope that this delay in dealing with the future is due to the hard work entailed in grappling and studying, as creative Marxism demands we study, the hard specific facts of our country, its economy, politics, movements, traditions and experience, tasks and problems.

It seems to us, however, that a program must start to emerge. We don't expect any one person to produce the analysis and the program. If each of us works on a small section of this program, and begins to point ahead for our Party, we will be able to begin to put together our program.

Another ingredient needed for this discussion and for leadership out of our present situation is political initiative. Unfortunately, this is not as evident or as widespread as it should be.

One thing that makes us proud is to see the way Marxists the world over are thinking through and reaching positions on the new problems posed by the new world picture, and the XXth Congress discussions. It makes us feel very good that our own Marxist paper, the *Daily Worker*, last March arrived at the position more recently developed by Togliatti, the French Communists, and the British. True, the *Daily Worker* didn't produce the kind of well-made product that Togliatti presents. But, all things considered, some of our American Marxists did well, and are earning our confidence. A ribbon for the *Daily* staff, and its Editor-in-Chief, Johnny Gates.

We are also impressed with the fact that Gil Green's book, written before the XXth Congress took place, and even before our own discussion got under way, places many of the problems and answers that are now being discussed. It would be helpful indeed to have him, and Henry Winston, and Gus Hall and Bob Thompson with us now; and of course the many others now in prison and excluded from these decisive discussions.

Much of our discussion, and of our application of our new program that will come out of it, will suffer because of the unconstitutional Smith Act and the continued harrassment of Communists, just as American freedom is curtailed by such measures. The fight for amnesty, judicial revocation, and legislative repeal must still go on, despite discussion and vacations.

We pass along an idea that will help get more ideas printed in PV, and stimulate the probing and thinking now going on. Have someone take notes at your

meeting (club, section or committee), write them up, and send them in. Some very fine discussion is being lost now for the rest of the Party because it is confined to small meetings. You don't need names. We'll print it.

In this discussion period it is still our aim, and we have so far been able to achieve it, to print all the material that comes in if it is addressed to the problems of our Party and is honestly intentioned. It goes without saying that the views are those of the writers, and not of the Editors. We believe that all such material deserves to be printed and we will continue to do so, no matter how far these views differ from ours, the State Board's, or the national leadership's views.

Please get your ideas, your club's or committee's, down on paper and in to PV.

The Editors.

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The Status of Our Party

(Excerpts from a report by the State organizational secretary on the New York State organization, given to the National Committee.)

IN THE course of discussions during the past number of months, an often raised question goes along the lines of "would we have such a review today if not for the 20th Congress?" I believe yes, we would have the need for such an agonizing reappraisal of the Party's work. We have been drifting deeper and deeper into a crisis, not like anything we have ever experienced in the Party's past history. This arises from the fact that the American scene is much different today from what it has been during the height of McCarthyism and the Korean war or in any other period of the history of our Party. Yet, our isolation continues unabated.

What are some of these new developments that we can take note of?

1. McCarthy has been defeated and McCarthyism is going.

2. Geneva has taken place and the relaxation of war tensions is felt in every home.

3. Struggles of the Negro masses are at the highest point we have known since reconstruction days.

4. A mass united labor movement exists today with big plans. Some are already being put into practice.

5. Rising moods of struggle among the workers to defend and extend their economic standards.

The objective conditions today are favorable for our Party to work and become part of these tremendous developments. Yet, why haven't we? I believe in this question lies the nature of our crisis. Also to be considered are:

1. "Where are we and where are the masses?"

2. How do the people view the Communist Party and the participation of Communists in these movements?

On top of all of this there is no doubt but that the 20th Congress and the revelations of Stalin which flowed from this Congress and the 2nd Khrushchev report sharply aggravated an already bad situation and has added a moral crisis in the Party. Incidentally, constant changes in the leadership of the national center and lack of coordination nationally on industrial and organizational questions have been most harmful. Am I concluding that our Party is disintegrating, that there is no hope? No! We are still the largest single party for socialism in the U.S. There does exist prestige in some circles of the country for the courage of our Party and its historic contributions. There are many Communist members in trade unions in positions of influence in the mass movement. But what is the state of affairs in the Party today, at least as I find it?

In New York we have just completed our Party registration for a 2-year period. Here are some pertinent facts that this registration presents:



1. Over the last 10 years we have lost more than two-thirds of our membership. . . .

2. Of our present membership one-third are industrial workers.

3. No more than 30-35 per cent attend meetings even on irregular basis.

4. No more than 20-30 per cent engage in sustained activities.

5. Our Party keeps getting older—two-thirds of our present membership are over 40 years old, with no recruiting taking place.

6. Our dues payments have been from fair to good with an 85 per cent dues payment of the year 1955 for the state as a whole, and 62 per cent for the first 5 months of 1956.

Now I would like to address myself to the question of why these losses and why the low percentage of participation.

1. *Objective conditions.* There is no question but that the attacks leveled against our Party in the first instance and the nation as a whole has been the greatest single reason that affected Negro and white membership of the Party, our working class and middle class comrades, every social strata of our Party. Fear of deportation, firing, indictment, expulsion from unions, was compounded by their isolation. These people in the main remain friendly. We find that many of these former comrades have found their form of participation of struggles through their shop, their union or mass organization, but refused a formal organized relationship of Party membership. Our sights must be constantly directed at these former comrades, not necessarily from the viewpoint of bringing them back to the Party because if that alone is our reason for the relationship, I

believe that at this point we will fail. We should encourage every section and club to remain in regular contact with these people and attempt to involve them in activities.

2. *Our mistakes.* Now turning to the area of our weaknesses, it is my judgment that the Left sectarian adventurist errors of our Party in shops and unions, in electoral work, in Negro work, in mass work generally contributed greatly to the position of isolation we find ourselves in today.

a. Many, many hundreds were expelled unjustly, thereby also weakening confidence of thousands who remained in the Party.

b. Many instances of comrades in shops who stepped out (pushed out by adventurous policies of leadership) on different policy questions and then were cut down either by the boss or the union leadership, found themselves expelled from unions and many times thrown out of a job. This, too, had its effect on those who observed what happened and still remained on the job.

c. For "security reasons," we also dropped a few thousand members, and so exaggerated the fascist danger by this and other security measures, that we actually menaced the continued existence of our Party.

d. Losses of Negro membership—it has been severe, mainly due to the same objective conditions that affected the Party as a whole. But the Left sectarian errors in the Party had its particular affect on the Negro membership. In the Negro communities, we were way out in "left field" in every conceivable "left center." Our particular estimates of work in the established organizations of the Negro people as well as our estimate of "all class unity" vs. "working class hegemony" played havoc with our Party's work. All of this harmed our ability to give leadership to our members in the new rising moods of struggle that at that time were already developing. We contributed further to this by gross distortions in the fight against white chauvinism in the Party. This tended to create an unreal estimate of rampant white chauvinism in the Party. What Negro would want to associate with such a Party? This line also had the effect of firing

up the "nationalism" of many wonderful Negro comrades in such a distorted manner that a number finally left the Party, declaring white chauvinism drove them out. I do not doubt that some left the Party because of a particular white chauvinist occurrence. This is by far the smallest feature of the total problem.

Now the problem facing us is what has been happening to the remaining membership.

Progress in the Fight for A Mass Policy

We have gone a long way in correcting and overcoming our Left sectarian errors and developing a basis of influence and overcoming the severe isolation that confronted us after the 1952 elections. For three and a



half years, since the presentation of the draft resolution by the National Committee, we have been in a constant ideological and practical struggle to anchor our membership in the trade union and the mass movement, and to develop as the main emphasis of work of all party committees mass work through the people's organizations. What have been the results?

We estimate that one-third of our community membership now have ties with masses of people in the mass movements. It has already proven a most correct and successful direction for the entire party membership, expressed in the contributions that many of our comrades have made as a result of their activity:

1. The anti-McCarthy struggles of 1954 and 1955. Here we stayed out of the movement because the liberals said they agreed with McCarthy's aims, but not his methods. When we entered the anti-McCarthy movement, we were able to help it in a modest way.

2. Many new experiences of Negro and white unity has flowed from the mass movement in which our comrades have made important contributions, particularly around the May 17th celebrations of the Supreme Court decisions on desegregation, both in 1955 and 1956, in the struggles around Till, and generally aid to the new level of developments in the South. New high levels of Negro-white relations have been reached, especially between the NAACP and labor and other mass organizations. The garment center rally, many AJC rallies, the Garden meeting, are a few examples.

3. New recognition in our Party for the building of the Negro people's organizations. Through our influence workers have done outstanding work in building the NAACP in the unions.

4. Political action—where labor committees have begun to play a part in Congressional elections.

5. Israel question.

For many years in the past, we had a wrong line on Israel. We did not appreciate and understand the deep feeling of the Jewish people concerning the Middle East and the con-

tinued independent existence of the State of Israel.

If we have been able to bring our line to conform with the feelings of the Jewish people, it's a result of the influence on the Party of those comrades active in the Jewish mass movement.

6. Greater number of industrial membership actives in union committees.

We have overcome the feeling that many of our people had after our splits with union leaders, that we could not function in the union channels. Our people have once again become active in the union committees and organizations.

7. A new experienced cadre is arising in the Party. A cadre trained and experienced in the appreciation of the application of correct tactical measures in the fight for general policy. These comrades are developing new enthusiasm and perspectives as Party members. They should be given a greater voice in the policy-making bodies of our Party.

8. *Industrial Results.* The main emphasis of our work in our Party in New York in regards to industrial work has been placed upon the workers in the industry, not on the development of outside concentrators who have a limited contribution to make, or shop paper distribution. The important feature is that we have a Party organization in the industry, not one looking in from the outside.

During these last few years, hundreds of comrades appreciating the importance of industrial work and in agreement with the objectives of the Party in New York to build the Party in industry undertook to become in-



dustrial workers. We can say today that we have an established Party organization in every major industry in our state. They have already made modest or significant contributions to the workers in their economic and political struggles in their shops and unions. This direction has also benefited us in rebuilding the Party amongst old-timers in many of these industries who had drifted from the Party but who now saw new interests on the part of our Party to do industrial work by infusing "new blood."

This has had a stimulating effect on the general work of the Party upstate where new experienced cadre were introduced into the general work of the Party and have improved the Party's mass work a great deal.

Conclusions

The policy of mass work is a correct one and pays off. We must have the necessary patience and confidence in the estimates of the comrades who are today in the mass movement. Our objectives should be, after the summer months, to reinvigorate the campaign in our Party to convince additional hundreds to become more active in their natural people's organizations and trade union movement.

Why haven't we been able to convince even a larger number to become active in the mass movement? I want to discount from this a large number of older Jewish and other language group comrades, many of whom are doing fine work in their Left-led organizations and should be encouraged to stay and build it. But what about the larger number? We still have with us some small pockets of continuing resistance to the fight for a mass policy. These comrades present themselves as active and vocal fighters "from the left." The arguments usually run along these lines: We liquidated the Party by giving up left centers. We cannot depend on Negro "reformists," etc., etc.

But for the mass of uncommitted membership, the problem is somewhat different. It stems in my opinion from a basic lack of confidence in the masses and the ability of our policy today to unite and win masses, there-

fore these comrades figure, "I'll sit it out and see what happens."

Another area of this problem which I believe is one that we have yet to fully appreciate, are the grossly exaggerated objectives undertaken by the National Committee and our State Committee in regard to mass work and organizational objectives.

1. This was dramatically expressed in our 1954 election policy, where we undertook objectives far beyond the capacity of our Party, such as to help get 50,000 votes for the A.L.P., to inspire the defeat of the Dewey Administration, the defeat of certain reactionary McCarthyite congressmen and the re-election of New Deal type of congressmen, plus the Flynn campaign. It was not within our capacity to do all this and it is true that the Flynn campaign, while an important objective in the '54 election, tended to crowd out the major objectives—the defeat of the Republican administration and the most reactionary McCarthyite congressman in the state of New York.

2. Finances—the size of our fund drives and the time that it takes to complete them is creating undue hardships on our membership and weakens the ability of our Party to engage more consistently in the fight on major political questions. Three-quarters of our total budget is spent on the following three items: Administration which includes wages to full-timers, support to the *Daily Worker* and Party defense.

These total expenditures are an impossible load for our Party membership to carry. We must consider many drastic cuts in the full-time staff in the state and in the counties to the barest minimum and learn to increase the



total participation in the work of the Party amongst non-full time comrades.

3. These exaggerated objectives plus many others that can be listed do not take into account the real status of our Party and tend to distract and divert us from the main line of emphasis of our Party work which is to, and through, the established mass movements.

4. In all these questions the main stumbling block in our attempt to push out on to the field of mass work had been the lack of a basic review on a number of important policy questions, such as:

- a. A review of the economic situation in this country.
- b. Industrial work.
- c. Negro question.
- d. The war and fascist danger.

And I would now add two new questions that flow from the discussions of the 20th Congress and are now making the rounds in our own Party:

- e. Form and structure of our Party—Party democracy.
- f. Socialist perspectives, U.S.A.

We have been somewhat drifting into change; change is good, but drifting is not satisfactory. It is not sufficient in the fight to win the membership to a full appreciation of the errors in each specific area of work. Also, it is not being lost on the membership that there are important differences in the leadership on the specifics in each field of work. The leadership is not writing and the membership is questioning. This tends to create a new problem—a moral problem amongst the membership in regards to its leadership.

Form and Structure

1. *How are policy making bodies constituted today?* In most instances on a state level they are made up almost exclusively of full time functionaries. The exclusion from policy-making bodies of trade union cadre and comrades from the mass movement has been a distortion that has developed in our work. This has created the condition where some of the most competent and able comrades who have the closest links to the



masses of people have not been involved in the decisive work of policy making bodies. Therefore, we must conclude that we must put an end to this practice and bring about the fullest combination of functionaries plus trade union and mass people on all policy-making bodies, starting with the national leadership and down to section committees.

2. *Political initiative and decentralization.* In regard to this question we should more clearly state what is a proper relationship between the state and the counties and the counties to the section. Because all too often in the past we have found that the state in its relationship to lower bodies has stifled local initiative, that is, the proper application of general policy to the specific conditions in every locality. I believe that in the state organization and similarly in the counties the following should be a general guide for proper political relationships.

- a. To give leadership on overall political questions.
- b. To adhere firmly to the specific concentrations.

c. Whatever differences may arise in regards to policy to be fought out in the respective lower bodies and not by small staff or secretariats.

In other words, specific policy to be made by each particular sector of our Party. We can relate today that in the overwhelming majority of instances in the industrial part of our organization, policy for a particular industry is made by the comrades in that particular industry. This has

brought about a general improvement in our overall industrial work.

3. In the course of the last few months stimulated by the discussions flowing from the 20th Congress a number of new questions have been projected into the discussion, such as:

- a. Is it correct and do we need a monolithic Party today?
- b. Should our Party affairs be governed by democratic centralism?
- c. What is meant by a new party of socialism?

I believe these are valid and legitimate questions for examination. Let me add my views.

1. We did take lock, stock and barrel, Lenin's "What Is To Be Done," for building an American Marxist Communist Party. In other words we have been attempting to construct Lenin's valid concept for his time and country for a communist party on the American scene.

- a. That is a party not faced by wars and revolutions.
- b. A Party operating in a country with a long established history of democratic organizations and democratic practices.

c. Democratic processes are burned deep into our people even though not yet fully available to the Negro people or other minorities.

Monolithic Structure

In my judgment this is not synonymous with democratic form. Monolithic structure for a party organization clashes with democratic practices. For example, when a higher body

concludes on some question of policy and then prepares to discuss such a policy with a lower body, the principle objective must be that through such discussions such policy questions would be either enriched, modified or changed. But this has not been the practice of relationships of higher bodies to lower bodies in the Party. This style of work creates rigidity and a high degree of formalism in the acceptance of decisions.

Democratic Centralism

We need majority rule and those features of centralism that express themselves in the minority carrying out the rule, that is the decisions of the majority. But also with this we need the fullest airing of differences, so that the full process of the development of "thought" is presented to the membership, thereby giving the membership the ability at all times to properly assess its leadership, to recall improper leadership and at election time to properly select the leadership—by the record.

Further, by majority rule I mean the fullest expression of democratic rule. We should be a model of such procedure. That means living by our adopted constitution, even though I believe a proper assessment of this constitution will prove that there is much to be changed to provide greater guarantees for democratic practices in our Party. We did not abide by the Constitution in the impermissible way in which the membership dues a few years ago were increased in the most unilateral, autocratic method, or the way people are put into posts and never elected by the membership, and a hundred and one other instances of lack of democratic procedure in our Party.

New Party

Formally, we have many legal avenues for struggle. We should take full advantage of all of them. Practically, though, we are "illegal" in the shops, in the mass movement and among the masses generally. There are literally only handfuls of communists even in a big city like New York who are in positions to identify themselves as communists to their

neighbors or fellow workers without suffering undemocratic persecution. This brings me to the question of how clubs function in upstate cities or even in New York City. Upstate we have shop clubs, a few industrial clubs and community clubs. All the community clubs are functional clubs. The entire party upstate is forced to function as if it were illegal. It is true many party members are known as "left wingers," but to identify themselves any further would jeopardize their jobs, homes, etc. In the shop clubs where our comrades are doing good work in the general economic struggles in the shops or on the job and at times find the opportunity to advance general political questions, they find no opportunity to identify themselves as Communists. To do so would mean immediate dismissal, sometimes from the union, most times from the job itself. In a discussion held with groups of these comrades only recently in testing out whether they could identify themselves as Communists, the immediate reaction was "What are you, crazy?" These questions are furthest from the minds of these most valuable, wonderful comrades. They are well insulated, making friends, generally advancing the line of the Party and everything seems fine, except when you probe the question comes out, "how long can you keep up an existence like this?" In another industry close to 75 comrades were interviewed. Not one contact could these comrades turn up, although they are fully involved and are able to involve others in greater participation for the program and activities of their union.

In another upstate city, after a group of workers were dumped out of their shop (after a McCarthy-type hearing), their wives who were members of a community organization, were brought up on charges for expulsion. This is the nature of things, upstate generally and industry specifically. It is somewhat different in New York City but not a helluva lot. In the shops except for one or 2 industries it is the same as the rest of the state. In the mass movement, you cannot proclaim yourself a Communist, much as you would like to. Expulsion would be automatic, and thereby create a disruption of nor-

mal relationships, with neighbors and friends. (There are one or two exceptions to this general situation.) So, we have functional clubs in New York City as well. They work and they should be encouraged and increased. We also have community clubs made up of the remaining membership. In the main these comrades do not belong to a mass organization. I described the problem earlier in this report. We have attempted to give these clubs a particular concentration to do mass work, and also carry out tasks around the independent role of the Party. These are the clubs unfortunately that are floundering because these comrades as all others are not able to identify themselves, and worse, are not yet ready to work through the mass movement and join the general struggles for democratic advance.

So, in one way or another, the problem presented here is a general one for the entire party. I believe that this problem, particularly for our trade union comrades, does not alone arise out of present day conditions. There is no doubt that the attacks on our Party, the ability of the bourgeoisie to pin the "big lie" on us, plus the 20th Congress revelations on Stalin have aggravated our situation. But this was pretty much so in the best days of the 30's. We have had very few Communist spokesmen in leadership of the trade union or mass movement.

Therefore, it seems to me we must take a much more fundamental look at this problem.

Now, to turn to the question raised in the Dennis report—the reorganization of our Party on a new and broader basis. I want to present a few ideas in searching out the direction towards a new mass party for socialism, U.S.A.

1. Basically it must present itself in a legal and acceptable form that can unite with much larger numbers of non-communist but socialist-minded workers, farmers and Negro people. The national leadership should be able to present a number of such possibilities by the time of the National Convention.

2. To open up public discussion in our ranks now on new ideas of democratic structure for our Party.

3. To cast off to positions of greater independence of policy and public expression from positions we have held in the past in regard to our relationship to the Soviet Union and other lands of Socialism. The new position should be along the lines of those expressed first by the *Daily Worker* and now by the Italian, French and British parties. Our comrades look upon the *Daily Worker* with new pride, for its courage and boldness in leading the movement in

the direction of this new, necessary change.

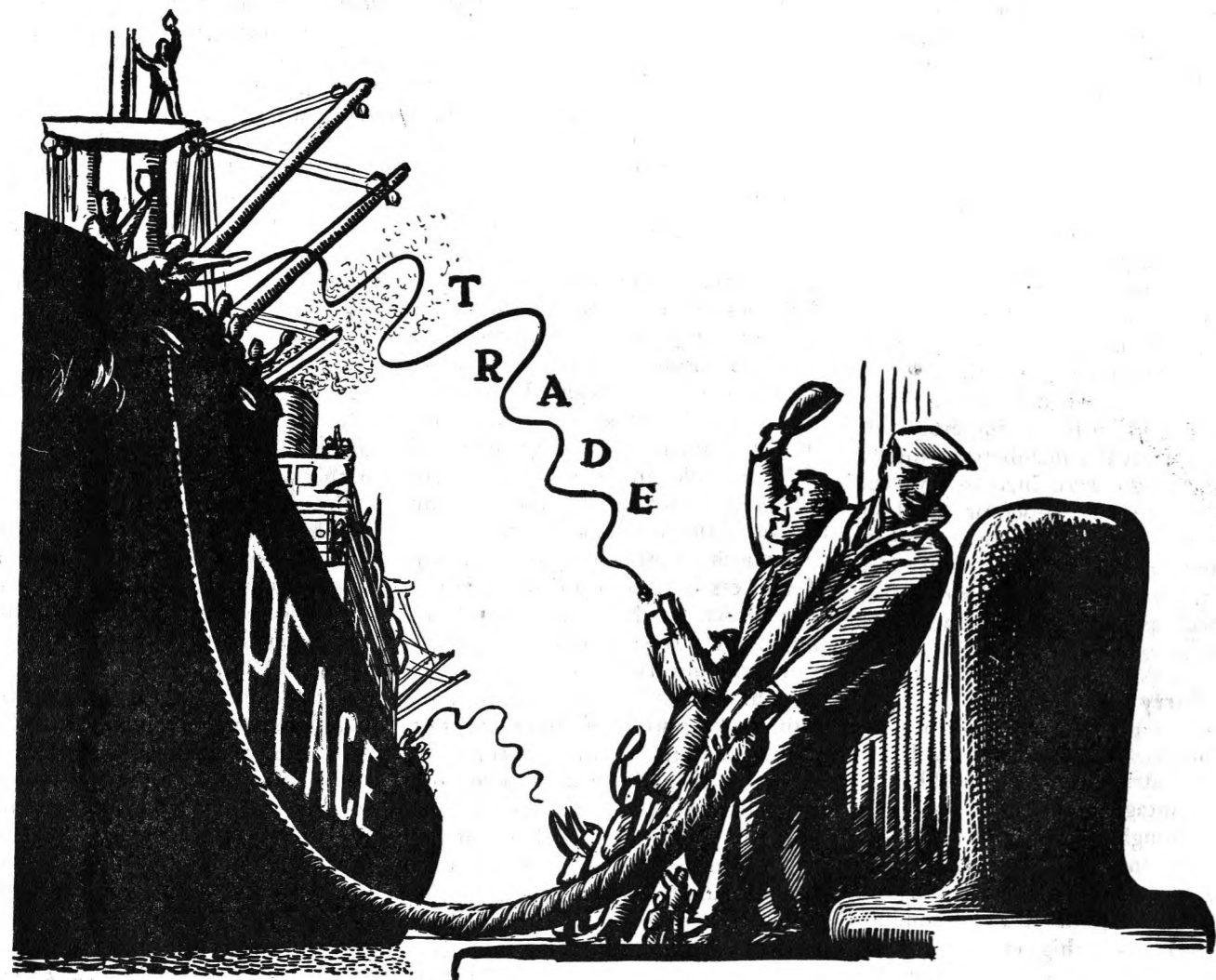
This can go a long way towards destroying the false charge of "foreign agents" hurled at our Party since its very inception, and if boldly grasped can lay the proper foundation for unity of socialist-minded workers for a new party of socialism.

When the Draft Resolution appeared three years ago, we took stock of our Party. Its isolation showed us

we were in a crisis. We launched then a fight against left sectarianism, and for a mass policy, as the way out of this crisis.

Aided by the Draft Resolution, the Swift articles, the Draft Program, and lately by the Dennis and Schrank reports, we have made significant progress, as this report tries to show.

This estimate that Left-sectarianism is the main danger in our Party still holds up. The fight against it must continue.



A Rank and Filer Speaks His Piece

By "FOOD WORKER"

I'M AN American Communist. I don't want to be a Russian Communist. And, not only that—I'm an American working class Communist.

And when I talk, I want to talk to the workers in my shop in the American language they understand. And, even when fellow Communists talk to me, I want them to talk to me in the kind of language I understand.

I realize that there are special philosophical words. They can and should be used in a philosophical talk. I mean words like nodal points, semantics, polemics, pragmatic. But I don't think Communists should go into shops and talk about semantics. I don't even want to hear about semantics in the shops.

Then, there's *our* talk, that's not philosophical, just left-wing talk: left sectarian, right opportunists, democratic centralism, formulate, concretize, formalize. When we're talking about people who are "right opportunists" in a shop, why couldn't we say, "sell-out artists"? And couldn't we make *statements* sometimes, and not be formulating all the time?

It shows real high-handedness to go around using either specialized or jargonized words to people who don't use them, don't understand them.

This kind of left talk is just one of the things that shows we have not really begun to look at the American scene, listen to the American people, and be a real part of American life.

The Fight for Negro Freedom

Now, let's just take a look at two approaches to the fight of the American Negro people to be free and equal citizens. There's the left approach, shown in the Willie McGee, Trenton Six and Martinsville Seven cases. In the Scottsboro case, of course, there was broader support among the

unions and the churches, in another period. But even then, if we'd concentrated on a fight against the brutalities practiced against the whole Negro people instead of putting dramatic emphasis on these particular young men, we would have begun to build a solid movement. We dramatized the case of Willie McGee in Times Square, but there are 10,000 Willie McGee's down south, and we forgot about them.

Now, let's look at the way the NAACP fought the Moore, the Gus Courts and the Autherine Lucy cases. The NAACP for some years has been building a fight on the following issues: desegregation of the schools, of public transportation, and for the right to vote. They dramatized the *issues* that affect *all* the Negro people. And when we speak of the actions and events in Montgomery, we speak of the Montgomery Boycott. We don't speak of the Rosa Parks case, nor do we focus on the leadership of Rev. Luther King, and E. D. Nixon, trade unionist who works with Rev. King.

But the left has worked in a fire brigade way. The NAACP has worked consistently on issues.

The point of this is not that the NAACP is a perfect progressive, people's or even Negro people's organization. And as we all know, it is only in the past few years that the NAACP

has begun to get the participation of Negroes in all walks of life. Up until fairly recently, they concentrated on legal fights almost exclusively. But it isn't a question of comparing this organization with that organization—it's looking at a method of work. And that method was to fight on *issues* among the people, so that with real support their excellent legal work in the courts has won great victories.

I mentioned E. D. Nixon a few minutes ago. He's been active in the Pullman Porter's union for many years, and he's well-known in Montgomery as a fighter for full American citizenship for the Negro people.

It was Nixon, together with Rev. King, who made an organization out of the spontaneous bus boycott. It was only after the organization had caught on in the Negro community that they were able to get the support of the NAACP, trade unions, churches and other popular organizations.

The NAACP is doing a good job now. But, since it's at best a temporary defense organization, its importance will tend to diminish as the roots of the fight go deeper into the church and the trade union movement. Churches and unions are solid and basic parts, not only of Negro life, but also of all American life.

The Marshall Plan

Speaking of methods of work, I'm reminded of the first trade union convention I attended in 1949. The job of speaking against the Marshall Plan was undertaken by two well-known left-wing union leaders.

They did. They started talking to the 1,000 delegates. These are some of the shouts that ordinary delegates hooted through the hall: "Sit down, you Commie b...d," and "Shut up, you black b...d." Then came the boos and the cat-calls. It got so bad



the chairman, out of respect for parliamentary procedure, had to pound for order. I wish I could say that the disturbance was created by right-wing goons—but the remarks came from ordinary delegates.

Oh, our comrades were brave. For that we must give them the greatest amount of credit. Each of them talked for over an hour. They were disciplined. I don't know whether or not you could call them disciplined idiots or what, but they certainly were disciplined.

How and why did any sensible Party leadership let anybody undertake that? It isn't just that it wasn't a very bright idea. We've got to look at the policy behind it. Because this kind of thing has happened many, many times, in many, many unions.

This was the kind of explanation that was given by the leaders:

"This is a principled fight. To bow before the anti-Soviet policies of the American capitalists would be to desert our vanguard post as leaders of the American working class, to be guilty of right opportunism, and of expediency."

But, exactly what was happening to our two trade unionists standing up there so bravely before those 1,000 delegates? They were speaking against the Marshall Plan in a particular kind of America. The entire press, radio, Congress, State Department, and popular little Harry Truman were telling the people that the Marshall Plan was necessary to fight the Soviet Menace, and to help underprivileged peoples. They were saying that anyone who was against it was an enemy of America. No matter how right we were about what the Marshall Plan really was, our two delegates looked to the other delegates like defendants of Soviet foreign policies, and not of American interests.

I have no crystal ball to gaze in, but is it possible or is it right politically, for us to expect a leader of a local union to spearhead a fight against American policy as such? And to do this without a widespread development of facts and figures which prove how these policies affect the bread and butter issues and interests of all American union members?

I agree we should have fought the Marshall Plan. But I don't agree that we should have expected our trade union leaders to stand up and fight these things single-handedly, without support even from their own membership. What this meant in practice was that we, ourselves, handed the right wingers a whip by which they drove our unionists out of leadership, and, in fact, out of many industries.

I can't say, now, exactly how we could and should have expressed opposition to the Marshall Plan. But it is beyond argument, now, that the way we did it defeated its own purpose.

And we have followed other self-defeating policies. For instance:

We have asked many times, at Party meetings, "Why have so many Negro comrades left us? Why do we have so little influence among the Negro people?"

Well, for one thing, for a long time we've criticized, villified, attacked or damned with faint praise the leaders of Negro organizations—the NAACP, the churches, fraternal organizations. We have called some of these leaders of well-established groups, phonies, sell-out artists, Uncle Toms, etc., etc. It is only recently that there has been something of a trend toward recognizing these organizations as important to the Negro people. And there's been a good deal of resistance to that, even so little and so late as it is. And from both Negro and white comrades, each for different reasons.

Time and time again, we've tried to set up counter-organizations to those already established among the Negro people. (National Negro Labor Council, Civil Rights Congress, etc., etc.)



And, even when we've joined the existing organizations, we've made two glaring mistakes. One, of trying to take over. And two, trying to force the organizations and their leaders to take positions so far to the left that they could no longer call themselves Negro organizations, but left organizations.

American Traditions

In starting this report, I made the statement that I'm an American Communist.

I've been reading "Labor's Untold Story." And, in reading it, I've begun to get a greater understanding of the struggles of the American working class, events we learn little or nothing about in the public schools. I've been reading about our labor heroes and martyrs, the organizing drives, the fight for the 8-hour day.

The American workers fought and won important victories in the 30's, for instance—social security, minimum wage laws, organized the unorganized. Communists played an important part. But, we did not develop a real Marxist theoretician in our country.

We did not do and have not yet done, what the Chinese Communist Party has done. They took Marxism-Leninism and related it to the specific conditions, traditions, and realities of Chinese life. If there *was* any cohesive, organized body of specifically American Marxist theory in the 30's, I have never studied it.

Why is this so?

True, the Jefferson School has offered courses on the history of the American trade union movement, and the third party movement. But in the leadership courses I've attended I have not studied these things in relation to my work. It's not that some study on these questions wasn't offered—it's been a matter of emphasis and orientation. I do know a bit about the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks, the Bukharinites, and about Dimitroff's views on the United Front.

I know that there *was* a Farmer-Labor Party out in Minnesota, and that it elected a whole state slate in the 30's. I know that it was the most successful third party movement our country ever had in the 20th century.

But I don't know anything about its organizing days, its problems, its forces. And if there was any theory involved in its success, I've never studied it.

Now, we've always said that the American working class is long on action and short on theory. The brilliant and brave fights of our working class have been an inspiration to the working class in every other country. And everyone does know that May Day is an American, not Russian-originated holiday.

I have never studied much about Eugene Debs. I never heard him discussed in any detail. Our Party clubs have never even had educational discussions on him—although he organized the broadest Socialist movement America ever had. Was there some theory, or the roots of some theory that we need today, in Debs' work? I don't know. And I should.

I do know that if we had developed theory somewhere along the line, we should be studying it now. That's one of the reasons we're all floundering around looking for a path. If we had a body of American Marxist theory we wouldn't be set apart from all that's important in American life today.

Going back to Jefferson, I do know that Jefferson, Adams and Tom Paine did develop a pretty respectable body of American theory, not socialist theory, and not working class theory, but bourgeois democratic theory. The American revolutionists both borrowed from and inspired the French who had probably the best body of bourgeois democratic theory in the world.

While these Jeffersonian theories are neither working class nor socialist, they have become part of the consciousness and attitudes of the American working class. And no Marxist theory in America will be truly representative of American life unless it is as real and typical of our people as the work of Mao Tse-tung and Liu Shao-chi are of Chinese life.

I have gone to the Jefferson School. But I have not yet had a class on how Jefferson's theories relate to the specific realities of American life today—nor how they affect me.

Why don't we have brilliant and important theoreticians in our Party? (With all due respect for Foster's contributions.) For one thing, American workers are not socialist-oriented in the way that other workers are. There's no other country, for instance, that produced an organizing struggle like the CIO without socialist slogans. The British workers are nearly all some kind of Socialist, and so are the French and the Italians.

But surely there's another reason—and one we can lay right at our own doorsteps. And that's the slavish dependence we've had on everything Soviet—culture, philosophy and theory. Not, of course, that I'm saying we shouldn't have read and studied them.

But, the History of the CPSU has always been required reading in the Party. Has the same ever been true for Jefferson's work? For a history of Debs, or of the American trade union movement?

If we're going to study the history and philosophy of any other country, it makes much more sense to focus on France than on the Soviet Union. Because the ideologies of France and the United States were intertwined in the two most successful bourgeois democratic revolutions in the history of the world. The slogan, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, is rooted deeply in both French and American life. Not that there aren't significant differences in the subsequent development of these countries. But we could learn a lot from a study of the French Party. And both parties could learn a lot from the histories of both peoples.

On the Negro Nation Concept

When we consider American theoreticians, it's interesting to look at our theory about American Negro life. We do have one theoretician on the Negro question who has based his life work on the realities of American Negro life—Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois.

Our Party philosophers took Stalin's theory of nationhood and set it down like a cookie-cutter on American

Negro life. They did not consult the Negro people or their leaders about it. About two years ago Dr. Du Bois was asked to write an article for *Freedom*. He agreed to do so if he could present his own point of view.

And he wrote about the concept of the Negro people as a nation. He disagreed completely with the ideas of our Party theoreticians.

To this day, he has not been answered publicly. I do understand that on the top level there have been discussions on the article, with majority opinion agreeing with Dr. Du Bois. But this has been only in the past few months.

The Du Bois article was a public document, and it should have been answered publicly. Refusal to do so is cowardly, evasive and dishonest. And since his views have never been publicly refuted, the implication stands that he was right, but that an admission of this was ignored to keep from losing face. And it certainly showed a lack of respect for a man of Dr. Du Bois' stature not to recognize his views by discussion.

And how did we go about forming this nationhood theory, anyhow? We didn't ask the leaders of the Church, the unions, the NAACP, the Elks or the Masons about it. We didn't even ask our own members, we told them.

Why? Because we thought we had all the answers. And why did we think we had all the answers? In great part because we thought the Russian Communists had all the answers and all we had to do was to get it from them.

And this is true about the trade union movement and the farmers as well as the Negro people. Do we speak for *any* section of American life today? Do we even speak for any important part of the labor movement, the farmers or the Negro people?

No, we do not. And we are not in any position today to be holding conferences and laying out programs for any group. What we must do is listen to the people who *do* speak for these groups, even though we may disagree with many things they have to say.

We tried to hand "nationhood"

to the Negro people, which always implies separation from the main nation no-matter how you slice it, with the slogan of "self-determination." There has never been anything in the main stream of American Negro life to indicate that they wanted any kind of separation from any part of American life. Both the Liberian and Garvey movements were rejected by the Negro people. Every other fight has been toward winning the rights of American citizens.

I do not, and in fact, never have, agreed with this nation theory, from either a practical or theoretical point of view. Stalin's theory of nationhood may be fine for the Ukraine, but not for the Negro people in the American South.

What was responsible for this completely idiotic position?

We were living our lives, to some extent, vicariously, as Soviet citizens. That's how we were able to come up with an idea that has no relationship to 300 years of American Negro struggles.

Oh, I know, when people asked about the fact that the Negro people have always fought for integration, and wondered how this could be fitted into the nation idea, the reply was usually that gimmick of "self-determination." That they could be a nation within the American nation if they wanted to.

But where did we ever get any evidence that the Negro people have ever been anything except an integral part of the struggles and aspirations of the main part of the whole American nation? That was true even before the American Revolution.

I don't say that this nation theory was advanced with ill intent on any-

one's part. I truly believe that such comrades as Ben Davis, Ed Strong, Pettis Perry, Herbert Aptheker and William Z. Foster, all meant well.

I'm convinced that they believed this slogan was right and would advance the position of the Negro people.

But—presenting a concept so at odds with reality opened us to the charge that we were trying to Sovietize the South and victimize the Negro people. That was the unfortunate result.

And only the other day, Thurgood Marshall, chief NAACP counsel, let loose a blast at the Communists. He says we've been trying to set up a 49th state.

If we'd opened up a debate on Dr. Du Bois' article, two years ago, we might be in a better position today, in relation to Communist Parties all over the world, and to our own countrymen. Because this would have tended to open up many other questions about Party policies. And we would not now be caught in the position where everything we do looks like a reflection of the Soviet Party's 20th Congress.

I have deliberately not mentioned the 20th Congress until now. The main lesson of that Congress, it seems to me, is that we must think of ourselves. We must look first, hard and squarely, at all the realities of our own country.

We cannot do that unless we begin to learn how to listen to the people with respect, and to learn from them. Without this we will not be able even to make the necessary changes in our Party. We must start by listening to the rank and file members of the Party.

I hereby propose that the December Convention take the form of a

trade union convention. That every section of the Party—trade union, farm, community, be asked to make recommendations. And that each resolution or recommendation be printed, not carried to the convention by word of mouth, or by a note scratched on a pad.

I propose that the Convention be divided into panels on each major question. That the printed resolutions be studied to draw up reports for floor discussion. In the event of two or more opinions on any question, minority or dissenting reports be drawn up. All significant points of view should be presented on the floor of the Convention for a vote. Majority vote after full discussion should be the line of the Party in the coming year.

It seems to be that only if this kind of policy is followed, to encourage the thinking and initiative of Party members on all levels, that we will have an organization of the Party, by the Party and for the Party, and that we will not perish from this earth.

Langston Hughes was speaking the deepest aspirations of the Negro people in his poem, "Let America Be America Again." But the lines carry a prophecy for the whole American people, of what our country can and will be:

"O yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me.
And yet I swear this oath,
America will be!
An ever-living seed,
It's dream
Lies deep in the heart of me."



PEPPERY COMMENTS

By MAGGIE G.

THE June issue of *Party Voice* took up a lot of my time but it was well worth it! I read every article twice and I now uncover my dusty typewriter to applaud the Brooklyn Section Organizer whose remarks are published on p. 19. How I enjoyed his article! I second every word of it.

When my husband was a Section Organizer he was busy practically every night of the week. Comrades in his groups were all engaged in mass work—PTA, ALP, Tenants' Councils, etc., but he never had a moment to spare for membership in a mass organization. So you see we start at the lowest level of leadership, isolating the most responsible comrades from their normal family and community groups. This gets even more pronounced as we rise to the higher echelons of leadership with contacts becoming incestuously restricted to Party leaders of the same or related 'castes.' Then, since our top leaders have what amounts to lifetime tenure, our Party cannot avoid a bad case of hardening of the arteries—the life blood of mass work and struggle simply cannot get through to them. Our Party and our leaders are victims of organizational forms unsuited to an American party of Socialism.

Now I would like to refer to *Problems of Art and Literature* by S. F. on p. 28, also in the June issue.

As a cultural worker, I have been aware of the almost complete absence of any mention of cultural progress or problems in P.V. The State leaders are evidently not much interested in us.

In spite of the heavy proportion of the fight-back against McCarthyism carried by cultural workers in recent years, we continue to think of cultural groups as "trimming" to be added and attended to if there is time. This in spite of the fact that many important leaders in the Communist Party have been cultural workers.

Almost without exception, every cul-

tural worker in the groups with which I have been associated is a leader in mass art organizations. That is why I do not agree with S. F.'s assertion that no effective defense of the American democratic and cultural heritage has been carried on by progressives. Past and present Marxists, working isolatedly it is true, continue to fight tenaciously and with effect for humanist tendencies in the field of painting, through mass organizations and in the schools and universities where they teach, and they have successfully resisted all efforts to establish a blacklist.

However, as S. F. says, it was a grievous mistake to dissolve the forms necessary to bring cultural figures together. All of the work being done now is a result of the clarity gained in previous periods by creative discussion and study. We were certainly not consulted about the change-over to new forms and the strong resistance expressed at indignation meetings of the dissenters went unrecorded. I, personally, well remember being vigorously slapped down at a division convention when I asked for the floor to point out that we were being confronted with a "fait accompli" and that to ask for discussion was hypocritical.



Coverage of cultural work in *M & M* and the *Daily* is embarrassingly poor. We would certainly not dare to mail to, or call the attention of our fellow artists to recent criticisms of art exhibitions that have appeared (and rarely at that) in the *Daily Worker*. I can specifically mention, to illustrate my point, the case of a woman artist reviewed on the same level as a recognized artist who has spent a lifetime developing a fine talent, when her work so far shows only the effort of a serious student. Undoubtedly she is reviewed because someone thinks she is some one to be encouraged. This is a misuse of our paper and it backfires.

S. F. writes in his article: "... Neglected and even scornfully attacked by the leadership was the equally important task of instituting and encouraging a battle of ideas in the realm of culture, a battle of creative work."

The last great battle of ideas in which I participated was one sparked by Zhdanov's criticism denouncing all forms of art other than that of socialist realism. Some of us agreed with him, others did not and were very vocal about it. A thesis of disagreement was written and that's when the bubble burst. No organ of our press would print it. That ended all large scale discussion up to the present time.

If only in those days we had had a "Speak Your Piece" in the *Daily* or a *Party Voice* truly open to serious collective or individual disagreement, plus an approachable cultural leader visible to the naked eye! At any rate our "New Look" will exorcise the ghosts of the past that keep returning to plague us.

For my part, any talk of "wasted years" just enrages me by its stupid shallowness. Where else but in the Communist Party, imperfect as it may be, would we have found outlet for the best in us—our desire to be useful, to fight for a better life and to extend democracy.

One Essential in the Fight Against Left Sectarianism

By DON LESTER

(From the discussion at the State Committee Meeting)

THE awareness of the Left sectarian character of our errors over the past decade has been steadily gaining acceptance in the Party since John Swift singled this out as the main danger—implicitly in “Some Problems of Work in the Right-led Unions”—explicitly in “The Struggle for a Mass Policy.” What then was a “voice crying in the wilderness” is now the generally recognized basis of our errors and much of our isolation from the main stream of the labor and people’s movement, judging by Comrade Dennis’ report and the majority opinion reflected in the national and state committee discussions of his report.

Personally, I fully concur with the main conclusion of the Dennis report that “most of the erroneous analyses and tactical mistakes our Party has made since 1945 have been chiefly of a left sectarian character.” Further, I fully agree with his admonition that “if we don’t understand this, we will understand nothing about the main causes and effects of our isolation in this period.” And I equally agree that without this understanding “we would be unable to draw the necessary conclusions to enable our Party to move forward and exercise the great political and organizational initiative and leadership of which it is fully capable—and which the times call for and make feasible.”

Precisely because I feel so strongly the essential correctness of Comrade Dennis’ thesis, I find it necessary to

take issue with the narrow basis upon which the fight against the Left danger is mounted. It is my firm conviction that any effective struggle demands a re-evaluation of the so-called “Browder period.”

At the outset, let it be carefully noted that I hold no brief for Browder—the crass opportunism of his final period of leadership is quite obvious to all as well as those defects of character which prevented him from recognizing the obvious errors of his “Teheran thesis.” Nevertheless, throwing out the baby with the bath is hardly a measure of our maturity.

Take the question of Marxism and the American tradition. It may well be that Browder was guilty of bourgeois democratic distortion and of a one-sided approach to this question. But I think it is undeniable that Browder made the first serious effort to apply Marxism to the American scene and to relate it to the American past and future. If today we address ourselves to this question—after a decade of neglect—it would be rather immodest to assume that certain distortions and one-sidedness will not characterize our initial efforts.

Or take the question of the peaceful transition and the American road to Socialism. To one familiar with the stimulating discussions of the late 1930’s, it comes as rather a rude shock to be told that the first considerations of these questions were in a page or two of Foster’s in 1941 or the writings of Foster and Dennis, 1947-48. What of Browder’s report to the Tenth Convention of our Party? What of Alex Bittelman’s stimulating and provocative essay in the 20th Anniversary issue of *The Communist* (September 1939), comparing the history of the CPSU and the CPUSA—to recall only a couple of instances from that period?

Comrade Weiss in his report to the National Committee, quite correctly insists that we evaluate Comrade Stal-

in in the light of the totality of his work. He buttresses his argument by pointing out the Marxist evaluation of Plekhanov, despite the latter’s betrayal of socialism in the later years. One is therefore doubly disappointed that the ensuing paragraphs, “instead of calling for a re-appraisal of Browder and the Browder period restate and condone the one-sided estimates of the past decade. (Or is the sharp edge of our criticism now to be directed primarily against Russian, Hungarian and other leaders of the European parties?)”

Why is the re-evaluation of the Browder period essential? Because, in my judgment, there can be no effective struggle against Left sectarianism, no serious effort to apply Marxism creatively to the American scene with all of its special and unique features and peculiarities if every such effort is, or can be, by reference to the voluminous writings of Comrade Foster, characterized as “American exceptionalism,” “opportunism,” “Love-stoneism,” or “Browderism.” Furthermore, such a re-evaluation of the Browder period is equally necessary in the struggle against Right opportunist distortions. If the past decade reveals the inadequacy of fighting Right opportunism with Left sectarianism, the period 1943-45 revealed the danger of Right opportunism inherent in the application of a broad, united front line as Dimitrov warned against in projecting the tactical re-orientation in his Seventh Congress Report.

Consider a few examples: It is generally agreed that the recapture of the American tradition—so neglected



in the period since 1945—is an essential element in the fight against sectarianism. A beginning was attempted by Comrade Montgomery in an article in *Party Voice* a year or so ago. While I am no defender of loose formulations, the intent and direction of the Montgomery article was crystal clear. But Gannett and Jerome, obviously with Comrade Foster’s acquiescence, “lowered the boom” on this effort as “a slander of the Communist Party and its members and *must be condemned and rejected*” in the guise of guarding against Right-opportunist distortions!

Or again, in elaborating an American road to socialism and associated problems one element will certainly

entail the relationship between bourgeois and proletarian democracy. How will this be adequately done in the light of Comrade Foster’s approving references in “History of the CPUSA” to Comrade Gannett’s strictures on Avrom Landy and Max Gordon in which in the name of Marxism-Leninism she erects a Chinese wall between bourgeois and proletarian democracy?

It is no secret that sharp differences within the National Leadership and between the National Leadership and New York State Board have existed since Swift and others began the struggle against our sectarian line and errors in 1952. These differences were around the question of making

major corrections of our Left sectarian errors—for which the New York State Board fought. National leaders at that time, and some even now—resisted these changes. It is equally no secret that in the name of a fictitious “unity” the line and policy of our Party became more and more one of a compromise character. At this critical stage in the history of our Party, compromise will serve no useful purpose.

Comrade Foster charged in 1945 that Browder used the “fear of factionalism” to stifle opposition. We need equally to fight the “unity of the Party” slogan being used to force compromise and the capitulation of the majority to the minority.



RESOLUTION ON THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCUSSION

According to reports in the *Daily Worker* and *Party Voice*, differences developed in the National Committee in discussion of the Dennis report and in the State Committee in the discussions of the Dennis and Schrank reports. Our club feels that in order for us, the membership, to fully participate in pre-convention discussions, it is essential that we know all the divergent opinions of the leading bodies of our Party, so that we can properly evaluate our past work and play a positive role in formulating Party policy. We believe that it is the responsibility of the respective committees to make these opinions available to the membership, and it should not wait for the individual comrades who differed, to write their opinions.

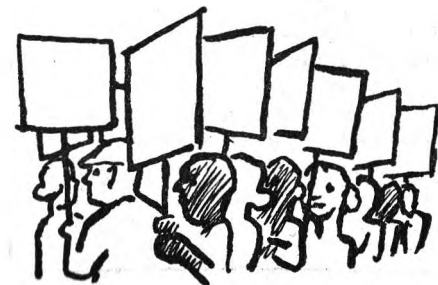
East Harlem Club.

THE present discussion in our Party is an historic turning point. It represents, to my mind, the emergence of our Party into the status of maturity. Whether we find the complete answers to every tactical and organizational problem is not decisive. What is important is that we are trying to throw overboard the heavy weight of *doctrinairism*, the shackles that have made much of our theory and practice harmful. We are discovering the Marxist-Leninist method of dealing with our problems, a willingness to face the realities of American life and orientate ourselves based upon these realities. With such an approach the solution of our many complex problems will come in time.

I think that the reports of Eugene Dennis, Max Weiss and Norman Schrank are valuable contributions in helping to correctly orientate our Party in its present difficult period. They should inaugurate a far-reaching process of examination, research and bold, creative thinking on many questions opened for discussion. However, as we do this, I think we should guard against destroying or minimizing the many constructive contributions our Party has made in the past to the working class and the Negro people. Despite serious errors and mistakes we have contributed much to the welfare of the American people. No discussion of our errors should obscure this fact.

What we should be trying to do, I believe, is finding the root causes for our Left-sectarian line, which has plagued us ever since our inception and has prevented us from making a *much greater contribution to the American people*.

A good deal of our sectarianism stems from the history of the Marxist movement in this country; the me-



ON PEACEFUL TRANSITION

By H. G.

chanical application of European experiences; the molding of our movement in the image of foreign parties; a lack of study of the concrete attributes of American working class history in relation to democratic traditions, forms of struggle and organization, etc. A really thorough and scientific job has still to be done in regard to some of these matters, gathering together much that is valuable from non-Marxist sources as well as our own.

One of the basic questions that must be resolved for our movement relates to the long range perspectives on the course of development to an American socialist society.

The course of development to socialism is important because we must mold our policies, methods of work, tactics, organizational forms, etc., according to our estimate of the course that will be followed by the people.

I think that because we have lacked a mature estimate and outlook on this question many of our Left-sectarian errors were inevitable. And unless and until we hammer out with our Party a correct basic outlook on the general line of development of our country to a Socialist form of society, and draw the necessary implications and conclusions as far as program, policies and tactics are concerned, we will continue to make the same mistakes we are now criticizing. I think this question must be resolved in order to break out of our isolation and find our way back to the main streams of the people's movements in this country.

The great contributions of the 20th Congress of the CPSU to us American Communists has been the bold projection of the proposition that peaceful, parliamentary transition to socialism is a practical possibility for many capitalist countries. The writings of Max Weiss in helping to develop and explore this question have been of great service to our Party. We need a lot more discussion and deepening

of this question and its programmatic and tactical implications.

Our Party has *advocated* a peaceful, constitutional course of development in our program and policy statements since 1947-48. But we have not established the validity of this course of development for our country. To establish such an outlook

means to change our thinking in relation to many problems:

1. Relationships with other Socialist groupings, Social-Democracy, reformists, liberals, etc.
2. Attitudes towards and relationships with churches and religious groups, that, incidentally, embrace the great majority of the American people.

3. Attitudes towards American traditions, forms of struggle and organization.

4. The organizational forms and practices of our Party, as well as a host of other matters.

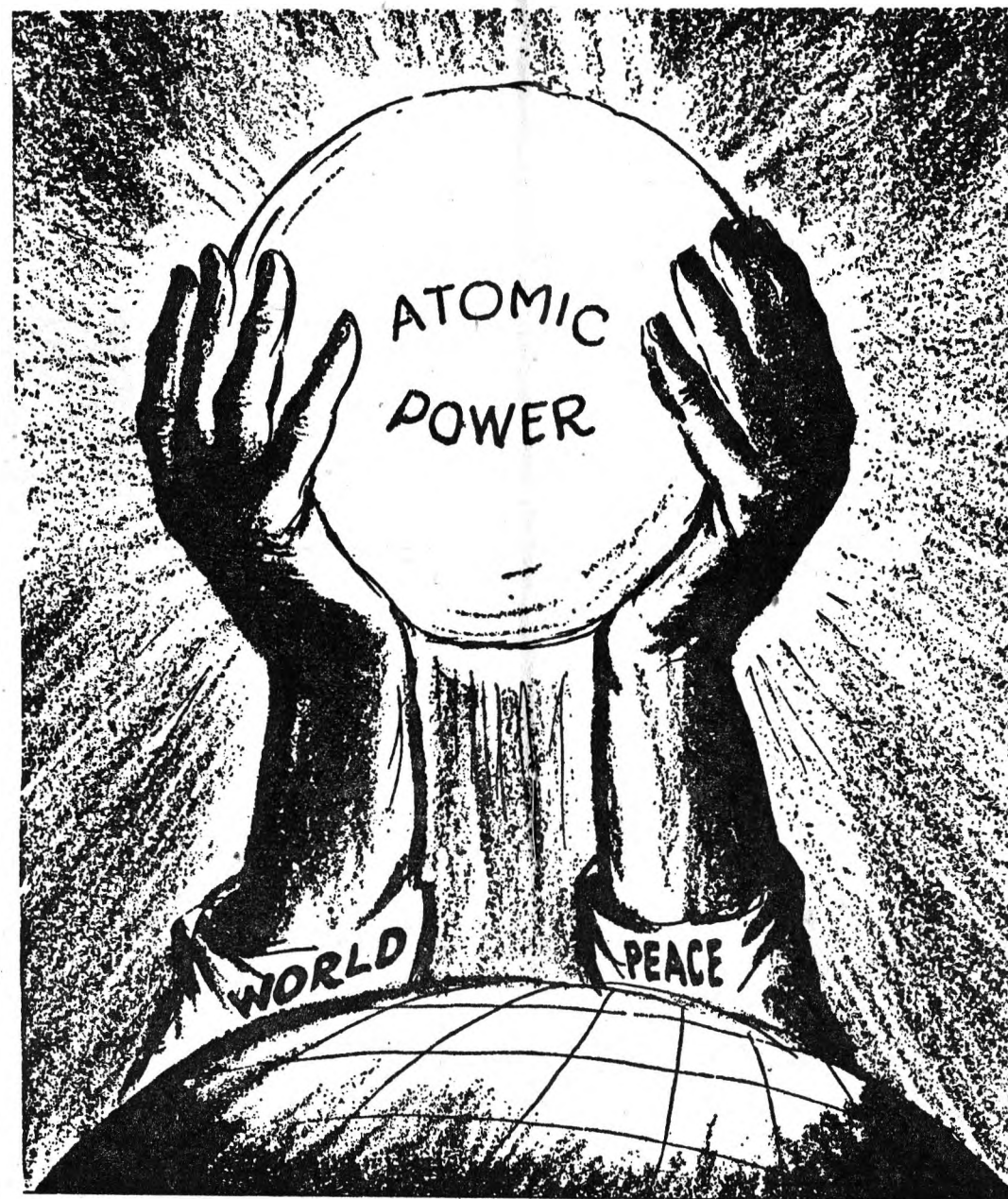
Our Party must develop a program for a Socialist America that will not only spell out the tremendous transformation that will be possible in an atomic age, in terms of the standards of living of the people, the destruction of poverty, disease and all the attendant ills of capitalism, but will chart a course that will show the possibility to realize this transformation through constitutional processes. We have not sufficiently stressed the validity of the peaceful, constitutional path. We have not sufficiently developed this concept in a theoretical way. Once and for all we must destroy the bugaboo of "force and violence" and "Moscow agents." Our Party has never advocated force and violence but we have not sufficiently stressed the validity of a peaceful road. In the minds of many comrades this is a pipe dream, impossible of achievement. They see in it a "revision of Marxism," "reformism," "liquidationism," etc. But I believe that these comrades are not studying the changes in relationships of forces internationally and the changes in relationships that are inevitable in our country.

Socialism will not come to America until the great majority of American workers and their allies among the Negro people, farmers, professionals, small businessmen, etc., are convinced of its necessity. In time they will come to such conclusions. But, as has been pointed out, big changes will take place in our country in the periods before socialism is on the agenda: changes in the relationship of forces between the masses and the big monopolists; changes in the political complexion of the government, the courts, etc.; the ownership and control of the press and radio;

the integration of the Negro people into first class citizenship; the greater exchange of experience between the U.S. and the socialist sector of the world after a period of peaceful co-existence, etc.

These changes will not occur overnight. They will take place through the most stubborn, protracted struggles, issue by issue: in the great economic and political battles of the labor movement for its survival and growth and for more and more of the fruits of its greater productivity in this age of automation; in the broad movements of the people to curb and check the abuses of the monopolies; in the growing struggles of the Negro people for integration and an end to their second class citizenship; in the many struggles to defeat those forces in American life that attempt to destroy the Bill of Rights and the deep seated traditions of democracy and civil liberties; in the battle to preserve peace in an H bomb epoch.

Will these struggles now developing and maturing, be quiet Sunday school affairs? Daily experience proves otherwise. Do the reactionary elements in the country attempt to perpetuate violence? Undoubtedly. But these violent efforts on the part of reaction can be checked by the united strength of the people through their determination to enforce the Constitution and the laws of the land. The struggle to enforce the Constitution can be the *greatest unifying factor* in our country. The most forceful example of this is to be seen in the movement throughout the country for integration and the civil rights of the Negro people, as guaranteed by court decisions and the Constitution. The widest unity of labor and the Negro



people as well as many other broad liberal forces is being welded together in this struggle and is able to defeat and check the violent ambitions of reactionaries.

It is my opinion that in the many struggles ahead the masses will resort to the constitutional safeguards and processes, the greater exercise of their legal and political rights, as the main form of mass struggle. In time labor and its allies will play a more direct role in government and politics, shaping the governing bodies and policies, and gradually breaking the power of the monopolies in government. If we view developments in this perspective, peaceful transition is not really a utopian concept as some comrades may believe.

Much of our sectarianism flows from our efforts to pattern our Party upon the pre-ordained concept that the capitalist class will organize violent civil war as an inevitable perspective for the American people. The concepts of discipline, the highly centralized features of organization, the organizational practices, do not resemble any single American organization in existence. People are scared of us, even if they might agree with a lot of our program. They cannot "take" our way of life. We could list a dozen practices which may seem correct for us, but are strange and foreign to the average American. All of this is explained on the basis that

we are a Party of a "special mold." In promulgating the characteristics of a Bolshevik Party. Lenin was dealing with the specific situation existing in Tsarist Russia, 50 years ago. We are not living in Tsarist Russia, but in the United States, with a long democratic tradition, more than 175 years old. We must extract that which is universal and applicable to us, from Lenin's teachings on organization. A lot of other things are not necessary and even harmful to our development.

Is our perspective one of developing a small, mobile hard core of revolutionists prepared for the eventuality of a ruling class instigated civil war, or is it one of developing a mass party of American socialism, native to our soil, traditions, forms, etc? I think the roots of sectarianism grow from the first concept. It is based on an erroneous view of the course of American history. It does not take into account the realities of life in our country. It is a delusion of the worst kind to think that the American people will ever want to join us in any large numbers, as we are presently constituted. This also applies to the future, when the fascist-like measures such as the Communist Control Act, the McCarran Act, the Smith Act, etc., will be repealed, by the mass action of the people.

If we expect to realize first class citizenship in our country as a bona-

fide, legal party of the American working class, we must fundamentally re-examine our outlook, practices, forms, etc. If we don't we will remain an isolated sect, stewing in our own juices.

Some comrades may reply that this means discarding our "discipline," "liquidating the Party," "revisionism," etc. I think discipline flows from conviction; a belief in what you are fighting for. If conviction is lacking, then discipline is super-imposed, artificial and harmful. We must "get things done," by mutual conviction, by the fullest participation of every member in formulating policy, and by the strictest enforcement of democratic procedures. We must develop an atmosphere where leadership and rank and file have the fullest exchange of opinions on every question.

Let's stop warning about becoming a "debating society." This was never our trouble. If we had had more debates and discussion up and down the Party, we might have avoided many mistakes.

This is not a proposal to liquidate the Party. It is a proposal to look into the problem of overhauling it, so that it is in harmony with the needs and requirements of the times and circumstances and with our perspectives of the possibility for peaceful, constitutional transition to socialism in our country.

LONG STANDING PROBLEMS

By IRV BECKER

VI

ACCORDING to the stories in the *Daily*, the National Committee meeting in May acknowledged mistakes made within the last ten years on the question of imminence of war, defense of democratic positions, etc., and characterized them as left sectarian. The question arises: what analysis has been made as to why these left sectarian errors were made, and how shall we correct our methods of work so as to lessen the strength of these tendencies?

But we must go beyond the confines of the notion that it is only left sectarian errors that concern us. For the history of our Party contains right as well as left errors, and in each instance there are two interlocking causes: the persistence of bureaucracy coupled with shallowness as regards understanding and application of Marxism. It is these persistent factors, then, which require analysis, so as to lessen their power and uproot them, if we are not to go on as a party getting weaker and more isolated.

Let us turn first to some of the experiences of the last ten years.

I am of the opinion that persistent lack of sensitivity to the problems faced by our own members as well as by the working class led us to a number of major errors since the repudiation of Browderism, and that these errors must be considered as stemming from quite another political orientation than Browderism, but having in common with it a continuation of wrong methods of work coupled with shallow Marxist understanding.

Some of these errors were:

1. A number of tactical errors in industry and the trade unions. The

stubborn refusal to recognize for a long time that the Party is illegal in industry, and the stupid leftist formulation that the problem is not one of Red scare but scared Reds. Later on, the tactical positions we took up with regard to the war drive and the war itself were such as simply had to bring us into head-on collision with a number of trade union leaders, including those who, despite their support of the war, were nevertheless also in the leadership of the economic struggles of the workers. All this resulted in unnecessary exposure of many party members, and in general in the further isolation of the party from the basic mass organizations.

2. The serious overestimation of the tempo with which reaction would be able to impose its full program on the American people. The situation at the time of the passage of the McCarran Act and afterwards at the time of the Vinson decision were undoubtedly serious, but there was a general pattern of abandonment of positions which should have been fought for and could have been retained; and this abandonment could only have come about because of a wrong estimate of both the international and domestic situations. An important part of this process with the party was the arrogant position that only ten percent of the membership would stay with us. Later on the position was repudiated. There was also some buck passing as to how it got started, but, officially or not, it started as an estimate out of the na-

tional office, and was all too readily accepted in a number of districts, although not in all.

3. The work around the Progressive Party which certainly resulted in a further weakening of our ties with the trade unions, including the so-called left trade unions, whose memberships were, in the overwhelming majority of instances, looking to the old parties as the avenues through which they could push their aims.

4. The disgraceful situation around the so-called struggle against white chauvinism that took place in 1949-1950. This was a witch hunt. At a most critical moment in the party's history, what it did in the main was divert the party's energies away from mass struggle, especially away from the struggle for Negro rights, into an inner-party heresy hunt. It weakened Negro-white unity inside and outside of our party, and its immediate result was the strengthening of subjectivity, ideological intimidation, and Negro nationalism. The responsibility falls on the National leadership for letting it develop as it did, and letting it last as long as it did. The increase in the atmosphere of ideological intimidation resulted in the further decline in the activity of members and loss through expulsions and withdrawals of a number of good people.

Yet our national leadership should have known better. They had under their belts the mass struggles for Negro and white unity of the CIO and unemployed days, the Scottsboro days, and the sharecroppers union. They also had the experience of inner



* Continued from last issue.

party struggle in the Yokinnen case, to mention but one. This was a campaign of desperation as a substitute for mass struggles for Negro rights.

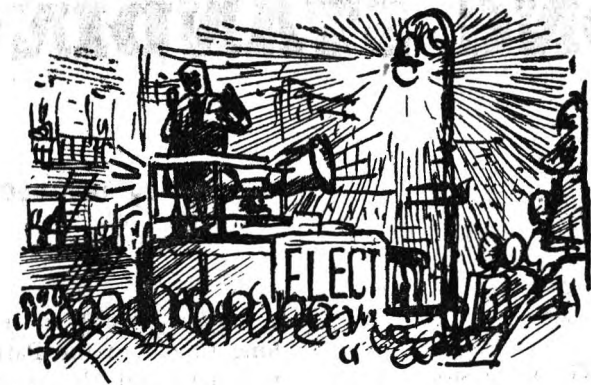
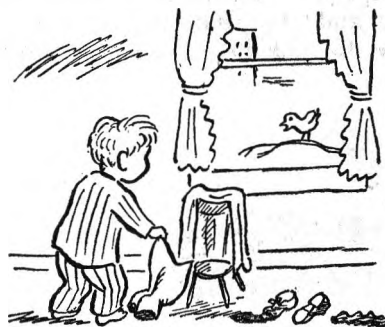
Yet in all these matters there was substantial opposition from the working class section of our membership.

So what emerges is not so much an isolation of our membership from the masses as an isolation of our leaders from both our members and the masses, and the imposition of such policies and such methods of work as to result in the further isolation of our members from the masses, or in the departure of people from the party. Sometimes the attitude was one of patronizing, contempt and arrogance for the members.

Leaders Not Mass Figures

I think that part of this is to be explained by the backgrounds of our leaders. None of them is today a mass figure. There is not a single one of them who is connected with any mass struggle since shortly after the end of World War II. It is true that their own experience has been rich, including trade union, unemployed, Negro people's movement, youth and war experience, but it is also true that many changes have taken place in the working class and Negro people's movement, that the younger generation today is much different than the youth that they knew in their periods of mass struggle, and that in the course of these changes none of our Party leaders has played a role of mass leadership. I think that the Marxist understanding of these people often finds itself the prisoner of past conceptions and past experiences and results in errors in program and planning.

I think that this is sometimes even



clearer in districts than in the national office. In districts the following happens: Sharp clashes occur over matters of mass policy, between district leaders and leaders of mass organizations, or comrades active in them. The word "opportunist" is sometimes used. Mass workers sometimes find they simply can not carry out some of the policies projected. They just don't fit the situation, no matter that they may be dressed up in the fancy words of lifting the masses to a higher level. And the dichotomy between "party leader" and "mass leader" gets aggravated.

Not Responsible to Members

So we find a situation, as was truer of course up to some years ago, where "party leadership" have just no connection with mass problems and mass organizations and concern themselves almost exclusively with "inner party" problems—fund drive, sub drive, literature, etc., etc. Staff people tend to become errand boys, and the D.O., or other organizer to whom they feel themselves responsible, is, in his turn, responsible to no mass body. He does not have to account for his policies to a mass body of workers. However, he may find himself arguing with mass leaders who are responsible to and for bodies of workers, and he may often be opposing them. That does not mean that they are always right and he is always wrong. Opportunism is a very real thing in the labor movement. But it does mean that we have a situation where leading functionaries on district and national levels simply do not have to give an accounting of their activities to mass bodies, or even to lower bodies, but where it

is considered sufficient to give such reports to a higher committee or a higher functionary. This is one of our main methods of work. We acknowledge higher echelons of authority; our leadership does not acknowledge a genuine responsibility to lower echelons or to mass organizations.

But why this growing entrenchment of wrong methods of work in the past ten years, after the disastrous experience of Browderism? Why the failure to draw in new leaders? Or to heed the every day experience of the Party membership, not to mention the every day experiences of the masses themselves?

International Movement's Errors

Because there was a basically wrong orientation on the upshot of the sharpened antagonisms which undoubtedly existed in the years immediately after the end of World War II. There was a basically wrong estimate as to their inevitable course of development. And this wrong estimate existed within the international movement, as well as in our Party.

Without question, at least a section of leadership conceived of war as



inevitable. With this orientation, the main problem of the Party—in the eyes of these people—was to pare itself down to a core of staunch and reliable cadre. The working class was conceived of as in the vest pocket of the reformist, as corrupted, and therefore it would be impractical to orient on influencing them, much less gaining leadership over them. This basic orientation dictated the scorning of democracy in the party, or any real attempt to influence the masses, or any role other than that of heroic and defiant postures in isolation from all the rest of the American people.

This orientation also dictated that no influence, through the channels of Marxist thinking, should be brought to bear upon the socialist camp to use its considerable power to a far greater extent than it did, so as to prevent the aggravation of tensions. For this orientation, while correctly recognizing that imperialism is the basic force driving towards war, failed to recognize the expanded elbow room now possessed by the socialist forces which made them decisive, in certain moments, for the alleviation or aggravation of situations. (Yugoslavia and Taiwan are instances of both offense and withdrawal.)

The international situation has changed. The possibility of war has diminished and keeps on diminishing. This will help to change the situation in the party. Nevertheless, unless our analyses accept the forms and stages of the struggle of the American masses as a foundation on a par with the needs of the socialist powers in the world, and unless our awareness of the policies of these socialist powers is coupled with an attitude of examination of them instead of automatic acceptance without the attempt to influence them, we will continue to founder and flounder in the drawing up of our own policies, as we have in the past.

VII

Leadership is decisive. The fundamental responsibility for the methods of work in which the lower echelons of leadership and in which the membership have been trained rests on our national



leadership in the first place. It is they who must in the first place make a stern examination of why they have led the party to where it is today.

Some people pass the buck and talk about the inadequate Marxist training of our membership, its failure to study theory. This is sophistry. The experience of all struggles shows that leadership is decisive. And it is all the more decisive in parties which accept the concept of democratic centralism. Continued alibiing that policies are right, but that they are distorted in their application are only to be laughed out of court, and they have been laughed out of court (it is significant that, in the present discussion, this staple argument of the past has not even been raised). For, were such a position to be maintained, not only would it mean the refusal to admit that these policies were wrong in the first place; it would also expose, in all its harmfulness, the deep-rooted notion in our Party, that leadership consists in acting like a Delphic oracle on policy, while refusing to take responsibility for its mass application.

A blunt examination of some of the party's methods of work must lead to the conclusion that they have to be wiped out and that no rationalization can justify them.

Leadership Lagging

What is very disturbing indeed about the discussion as it is going on at present is the almost complete failure of our leadership to go beyond platitudes, or to go beyond admissions that they are actually being forced to make. It is not enough to utter the hoary phrases about the lack of Party democracy, and the need of criticism and self-criticism, and the need to eliminate bureaucracy. And to keep on talking about Browderism is just to try to make a whipping boy instead of looking the whole history of our Party in the face. Our leadership would be doing a real service—and in fact this is what is incumbent on it—were it openly, in the face of the whole Party, to admit that it has trained the Party to be what it is, to work as it does, to think as it does; that it is responsible for the kind of cadre the Party contains; and if it were to examine openly this cadre and these methods of work, and to pinpoint these matters, including the pinpointing of people. If we are to make real changes, the discussion must be taken out of the realm of generalities, and concrete measures taken and abided by for the creation and growth of Party democracy. Otherwise, this storm in the Party too will blow over, it will emerge with less members and influence than before, the old methods of work will not be fundamentally altered, and a corps of cadres who are incapable of change will have weathered one more storm and will go on doing business at the same old stand.

Bad Party Practices

Let us try to pinpoint some of our Party practices.

There is the almost complete failure to develop local leadership.

The common practice is for D.O.'s to come from the center, from the national office. Sometimes, there is an election. The D.O. is accepted by the local comrades. In some instances—a minority. I think—the D.O. is of local origin.

This also happens in big districts on a subdistrict scale, and even on a section scale. Somehow, there just

all too seldom seems to be local talent around. On the other hand, geniuses are always to be found outside of the locale.

Why Not Local Leaders?

Now, it is often true that local comrades welcome the arrival of some one who, they are told, is capable of fulfilling responsibilities which they themselves, it seems, have not been able to take care of. But that is not the point. The point is there has sprung up and become imbedded the practice of a nomadic, non-local leadership.

What does this practice accomplish?

It accomplishes the fact that a cadre of district leaders, of national cadres—in the first place—is created who understand that their exclusive responsibility is to the centre, and that in fact their political careers, that is, their ability to receive “more important” assignments, with greater responsibilities, is tied up with how reliable the national leadership estimates them to be. These cadre do not have it as their major encouragement to operate in depth, to grow to know a given industry or locality thoroughly, and to root themselves in these. The main emphasis is on national campaigns, narrowly conceived — conceived in terms of left forms of work and organization. Thus, the peace campaign was, at one time, conceived of almost exclusively in terms of the Stockholm Peace Pledge. The orientation is inner; this is tied up with the kind of cadre who is accepted; he will mobilize the Party for this kind of orientation, rather than for one in terms of the forms and mass organizations through which the people of his area are moving.

The other side of the picture is that this kind of cadre tends to have a minimum feeling of responsibility to the comrades of his own district. For he is here today and gone tomorrow. And he knows it. And I am not prepared to say that this was not a deliberate cadre policy. I think that our national office was so infused with a bureaucratic outlook that it sought to produce a cadre which, despite lip

service to the effect that there is no contradiction between responsibility to higher bodies and lower bodies, grew to regard itself as needing to answer only to the higher bodies of the Party.

Nomadic Cadre

No one can deny the existence of such a nomadic cadre. And quotations from Lenin on party organization will not justify it. This is a practice not just of the past few years of reactionary attack. Which means that our country, even though it has known some very bitter times in the last forty years, could nevertheless at no time be equated with the conditions which were a constant feature of life in Czarist Russia. And this nomadism of cadre, under the high-sounding appellation of “professional revolutionary,” has, by its inconstancy, by its lack of continuity, hindered, and not helped, the growth of our movement. To give but one example. Take an important district like Western Pennsylvania, which, in a period of almost 30 years, has had more than a dozen District Organizers, of whom perhaps not more than two were of local origin; and even in these instances, none of them was a person who had developed into Party leadership out of the mass struggles of the area.

What are some of the other consequences?

The local comrades are encouraged to have no confidence in their ability to produce leaders, or to deal with their own problems. In fact, original approaches, often based on the necessity of the situations with which they are thoroughly familiar, are sometimes countered with the phrasemongering expression that they are anti-leadership, and even anti-party, for such approaches sometimes conflict with a line that emanates from the national office, or is rigidly interpreted by the D. O.

So district organizers come and go and in the meantime the membership, including a number who are really leaders, go on living in the same towns, and go on bearing a responsi-

bility to the masses among whom they live and work.

Of course, one result is that many drop out. They find the party just does not solve their problems. Because they are able people, many of them become the mainstays of other organizations, especially in trade unions. Thus, the party becomes more isolated from the mass organizations. Most of these people do not even become enemies of the Party; they just lose their respect for it. They pass judgment on it as unable to give them leadership.

On the other hand, within the Party itself, smugness and complacency gain stronger positions. For the immediate reaction to the loss of a number of these people, especially while this loss is going on, is that they are corrupted, that this is part of the “inevitable corruption of the American working class.” It is only much later that the post mortem sets in and a “profound” and “self-critical” analysis is made with vague phrases about our methods of work.

But part and parcel of correct method is to acknowledge local leadership, to build it, infuse it with confidence, build up its prestige in local comrades' eyes, and encourage its independence in every way—in its absorption in the knitty, gritty problems of the districts, and in its participation in the formulation of national policy.

Another consequence is that the enemy takes advantage of the constant shifting of leading personnel and sends in his agents who learn how to adapt themselves to an atmosphere of no independent thinking, of lack of initiative, of carrying out of assignments and campaigns dictated from the top. It is no accident that an Alec Wright worked for years in Pittsburgh, finally becoming a member of its District Committee. This agent stayed put in one place, while D. O.'s came and went.

Another very serious consequence is that the local comrades often draw the conclusion—even where they may not say it outright—that there is contempt for their ability to produce leaders, or to carry out work.

A Letter

By D. V.

A previous letter written some weeks ago has not been published by the *Daily Worker* although it raised some questions which have since become extremely pertinent, i.e., the question of the Stalinist approach to democratic centralism and our evaluation of the American economy.

Nevertheless in this period some things are too important to be left unsaid even if it is difficult if not impossible to find a medium in which to say them.

In my previous letter I characterized the “mistakes” of Stalin as a left-sectarian error based on a dogmatic interpretation of Democratic Centralism. The publication by the U.S. State Department of the speech by Khrushchev elaborating the errors of Stalin necessarily changes the meaning of the Stalin picture and of the whole situation in the Soviet Union.

The bitterness with which those of us who have been part of the progressive movement for many years must view these revelations cannot be placated with simple cliches and apologetic analyses of the causes, revisionism, deviationism, left sectarianism and all the other long familiar phrases.

We felt that in the “party of a new type” even major and long enduring mistakes would be corrected because of the collective democracy inherent in the structure of the Party. Actually, the facts as given to the world not by the CPSU but by the sharpest enemies of Socialism prove exactly the opposite. Neither the Party itself nor the masses of the people in a Socialist country were able at any time to successfully combat the dictatorship of an individual who is now shown to have been fully tyrannical.

Actually theories which had grown out of a progressive concept of social

development tended to support the position of the dictatorship of an individual not of a class. Instead of a party of a new type which should have risen from a correct theoretical approach, the exact opposite arose, the oldest form of party activity known to mankind, the party of a one-man rule supported by demagoguery and a hierarchy.

The dictatorship of the Party and finally the dictatorship of a selected group within the Party is not and cannot become Socialism.

True, the key to this development was indicated by Khrushchev in his statement that the collective leadership had little access to facts and that Stalin was not interested in facts but only in his own conceptions.

For us this key does open the door to a whole series of our own mistakes, in a Party where attempts by active mass leaders to point out the facts of American life were condemned as right opportunism, vulgarization, liberalism, anti-leadership attitudes, lack of confidence in the working class, and what not else. The Party leadership here has not been as much interested in the facts of life as those of us who tried to live American lives however limited by the sectarianism inherent in most Party activities.

The fact is that, with the leadership which we have seen for many years past and such as still exists, the Party in America which did not have

the excuse of Stalinist terror followed, within the limits of its capabilities, an equivalent policy to that of Stalin in the USSR. It was arrogant and denied living facts. It did not fight for facts. After all it had a universal theory which could readily replace serious research and thought.

There is so much more that needs to be said. I, like most other actives, must accept the responsibility for our own mistakes. The very fact that we suppressed our misgivings time and again in deference to the concept of “unity” is a major responsibility for me as well as many other actives. We have been punished by life of course, but not nearly to the degree which our crime indicates. The fact that our activity, whether based on ignorance or lack of understanding, contributed to the existence and development of a savage injustice is a crime that carries its own punishment of self-loathing and disillusionment.

But surely it is not enough to confess to error and to apologies for mistakes when so much damage has been done with our compliance. In my opinion, there is only one course open to serious Socialists, that is to discard completely the theoretical concept which has grown out of the idea of unity, to return to the people, where they will receive us, and to work humbly within the existing mass organizations. Perhaps in a return to the people we will learn the



humility which is the basic ingredient of all leadership. Perhaps among the people we will lose our intellectual arrogance and learn the truth that the Chinese party has long been teaching, that theory comes from life, not life from theory.

That this position calls for the dis-

solution of the American CP should be obvious. What excuse can we have for its continued existence when it no longer has roots either in life or in theory. Possibly in a return to earth we will sink new roots and produce new healthy flowers, not the poisonous fruit of Stalinism. For this

kind of an approach to the reforming of the progressive ranks of America, the rigidities of the CP would be only an obstacle. We need an organization free of doctrinairism and devoted to a democratic approach to the solution of American political problems.



FACTORS IN OUR CRISIS

By SAM COLEMAN

ALL about us are the living signs of our Party's contributions to the American working class and to our nation. It was our trail-blazing fight for unemployment insurance that was in good measure the cause of its passage. The powerful industrial unions in the mass production industries were organized with our Party's important support.

We were pioneers in developing Negro-white unity and the great democratic demand for full and equal rights for the Negro people. Our anti-fascist activities of the thirties and during the war helped bring greater clarity to the anti-fascist and democratic movements of those days.

Many of our fellow countrymen are coming around to a better appreciation of our fight to bring the Korean war to an end through negotiations. Certainly our courageous fight against the unconstitutional repressions of the past period has won us admiration from many. And we have appreciably strengthened the understanding of tens of thousands of advanced people on the issue of the superiority of socialism over capitalism by our activities over the years, like the distribution of the Dean of Canterbury's book "The Soviet Power."

Our value to our people is indelibly written. For those of us (so many of us), who came into the Party during the great social struggles of the thirties, and to some extent, in the forties, they were truly the most fruitful days of our lives. History was being made, and we were right in the thick of things.

Our Problem

Despite these achievements, our Party now stands virtually isolated

from the history being made today: the unification of the giant labor movement, the assault upon the jim crow fabric of American life, especially in the South; the astonishing growth, of organization among the farmers, the mounting size and activity of the mass organizations of the people.

The breakthrough of the peace demands of the American people helped win Geneva and the relaxation of tensions. Millions of Americans acted for peace, in one way or another, through their organizations. Here again, we were relatively isolated from a movement we certainly had influenced in its early days.

We have dwindled to a fraction of our former size, and an even smaller fraction of our former influence and prestige. We are unique among all the Communist Parties of the world in that we have dwindled in comparison to twenty years ago, and to ten years ago. Or, to state our problem in a longer view, out of every twenty-five people

who have ever joined our party, only one remains.

Objective Conditions

Are the circumstances in which we live and work responsible for this situation? The relative prosperity of the past fifteen years, with its relatively high employment and the great power of the Wall Street trusts undoubtedly contribute a special factor to our own unique situation.

Has the anti-Communist assault of the past decade, by government, press, radio, television, movies, employers, trade union leaders and organizations decimated our Party? It has certainly been a contributing factor. But can it be said that fear of loss of job, or of liberty through jailing, has by itself caused the drastic drop in Negro membership at a time when the greatest heroism is being shown by the Negro people in the South in the face of greater terror?

Fear of government or employer persecution was an important factor—but I think more important was that we faced these repressions alone—without support from fellow-workers and masses.

It seems to me that the circumstances in which we live and work might account for a failure to grow, or a drop in membership. Objective conditions, however, cannot explain the steep decline in members, influence, and especially prestige that we have suffered.

The Last Decade

Because this decline took place in the past ten years, this past decade must be the starting point of our



self examination. It seems clear to us by now that the generalizations of the Dennis and Schrank reports are true: our errors of a left sectarian nature are in the main the cause of our precipitous drop. I think that the sources of these errors have only in part been explored. No one source can be singled out as explaining these mistakes, and as the discussion continues we will start to find the full story.

I think that our overestimation of the danger of war and fascism explains many of our gross errors. We felt that so close were we to war that anything less than the full commitment of our forces into a headlong plunge for peace was an opportunist betrayal of our obligation to our class and nation. Beyond that, however, we did act as if we believed war inevitable, and this compounded our heedless plunging ahead.

Schrank points to the false theory that the stronger the peace forces became, the greater was the danger of adventurist desperate gamble by the Carney-McCarthyite forces. This theory of course said that war was coming either way: if the peace forces were weak, then the war advocates would have their way. If the peace forces were strong, then the desperation of the war advocates would drive us into war. Thus war was really unavoidable.

A second proof of our belief that war was inevitable was our outlook that our government was driving for war, and that only the election of a peace coalition could alter the war aim of the ruling class and its Administration in Washington. Now, no one seriously thought that such a coalition could elect an administration in '52 or in '56. In fact, this theory was put forward early in '52 in *Political Affairs* articles, as well as in

earlier articles. And in '52 we supported the candidacy of the Progressive Party—surely no one expected Hallinan and Bass to be elected! Since only such a victorious peace coalition could stop the drive to war, and since we didn't seriously expect such a victory, we must have expected war.

Or take another aspect of our fight for peace. We tended to lump everyone into the camp of war, or war supporters who in any way thought the Soviet Union bore any responsibility for the cold war and the world tensions. Now, even if the Soviet Union bore no responsibility at all, that would be wrong, and was, of course, wrong. But the fact is that the Soviet Union did bear some share of blame for the tensions existing. Mikoyan, at the 20th Congress, and Bulganin in England have stated so. And it seems likely to me that in time there will be a full appraisal of some of the errors of Soviet foreign policy in the post World War II period.

The Two Camps Theory

The Cominform reports divided the world into two camps, the camp of socialism, which was the same as the camp of peace, and the rest of the world as the camp of imperialism and war. The neutralist or third force groups were indiscriminately thrown in with imperialism and war. We also busily divided everyone here into the same two camps: the camp of supporters of the Soviet Union and peace, and the rest in the camp of war supporters, warmongers, or objective supporters of the war. (See Foster: "Organized Labor and the Marshall Plan," *Political Affairs*, Feb., 1948, p. 99.) I simplify this to make my point quickly. Because we thought the war so imminent we felt only the most advanced peace slogans counted. Thus, peace actions and peace struggles took the narrow forms of Left demonstra-



tions in Times Square or Union Square, left peace petitions, left controlled organizations, etc.

And while we were fighting in fine disregard of fundamental tactical considerations, to mention nothing else, the people through their organizations (church and other organizations, but not labor) were beginning to mount a less advanced but powerful struggle for peace. Since we weren't there, or looking there, many Communists were taken quite by surprise at the developments, even as late as Geneva. I think that in this respect the New York State Committee made notable contributions toward correcting this outlook. Pauline Hosek's and other state articles in PV on the fight for peace will verify this point.

The result of this pyramiding of errors was that, in effect, we gave Communists in unions and mass organizations a choice. Either they fought recklessly for peace, fulfilled their "Communist obligations," and thus became isolated from their fellow union members, or they did not respond to the passionate call to fight against America's war drive. (See the main report to the 1950 Convention.) In that case they were not fighting for peace, they were "opportunists," and they became isolated from us. This was the choice we forced upon some of the best mass leaders and workers in our Party. And, confused though the issues might have become in some unions, in essence this was the way it was. In so many cases our people could not stay both in the Party and in leading or strong positions in their unions and organizations. They were forced to choose—either be an "opportunist" and stay with your union membership—or a Communist—apart. Those who stuck with the Party were often expelled from their mass organizations. But these were sort of voluntary expulsions.

The issue was not always peace. It might be economic issues, or the



Wallace or Hallinan campaigns, or the issue of white chauvinism.

Foster put the question of the Marshall Plan thus: "But all these leaders of labor (who support the Marshall Plan), whatever may be their individual motivations, are violating the most fundamental interests of the masses. They are betraying the working class and the American people as a whole into the hands of their worst enemies, the Wall Street imperialists, profiteers, and warmongers" (*Political Affairs*, Feb., 1948, p. 99).

From this position, the statement of the draft resolution (*Political Affairs*, June 1948) for the '48 convention of the Party naturally followed:

"We were slow to recognize and counteract the new political role of the Murray forces in the C.I.O. in connection with the Marshall Plan and tended for a short time to continue the old policy of Left Center unity even after the political basis for it began to disappear."

This is a political platform that leads to voluntary expulsions—based on the Marshall Plan as the dividing issue.

Among the most painful statements I have had to hear in my many meetings with branches, sections, section organizers and other groups is the statement: "The reason I was able to stay in a leading position in my shop (or union, or mass organization) is that I never brought in what the Party asked me to." It appears in the last PV, on p. 27. These comrades found a third alternative because their actions were not in the limelight.

The Past Decade Split

I would guess that the period of greatest decline are the four years,

'49 to '52. These were years of great activity and demonstrative struggles on the part of the Left. The struggles and picket lines around the first Foley Square trial, the Times Square and other actions for Negro rights, around Willie McGee, Martinsville Seven, Mrs. Ingram, Trenton Six, Stuyvesant Town, the electoral campaign of '48, '49, '50, etc., the peace demonstrations, the demonstration against General Clay, the Stockholm Peace petition, the peace demonstration of August, 1950. And there were many more. We were active and demonstrating and giving out leaflets and collecting signatures—by ourselves.

During that period of intense militant activity, we lost the majority of our members.

The past decade is not really one period. I think we must not overlook the fact that we have fought back to regain a small portion of our mass connections. This change came about as a result of the Draft Resolution on the '52 elections, the Swift articles, the Draft Program, and the changes developed in our state by the State Board as a result. Of course, there were errors in these documents, and Dennis points out the errors in the Program of 1954 at such length as to cloud its guiding value. And there were errors in the application of these new policies. But the big thing was that the policies worked out were a fundamental correction and correct, and the errors secondary.

Many of these secondary errors in bringing a basically sound new policy

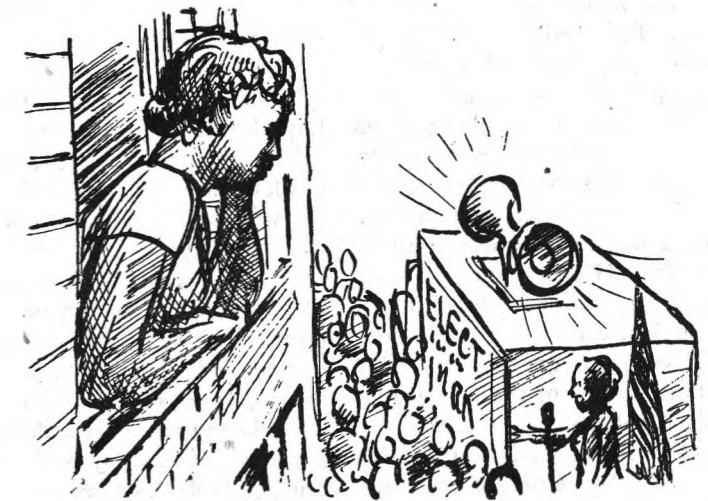
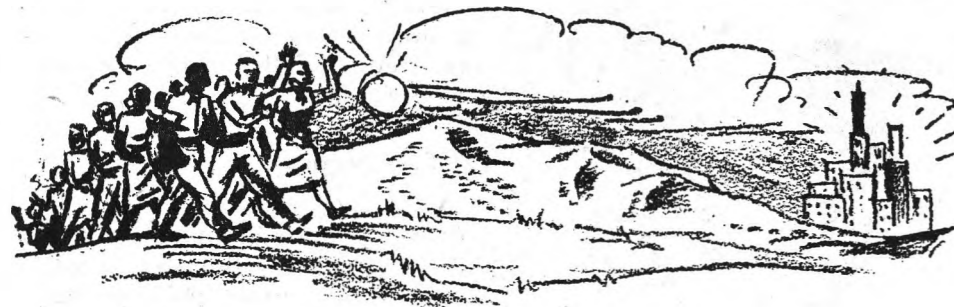
to the party were the result of the extra hardship of trying to present a sharp new departure in policy under the difficulties of '53 to '55. It must be said that these difficulties were aggravated by the resistance of some members of the national administrative committee operating then. Dennis points out that sectarian attitudes in the leadership in part weakened the Draft Resolution's start against left sectarianism. My own experience shows that in fact some members of the national administrative committee fought against the correction of our left sectarianism policies, in the name of fighting the right danger as the main danger.

Some Thoughts on the Sources Of Our Errors

The overestimation of the danger of war and fascism, and the fact that we acted as if war were inevitable, though we denied it in print, is a clear source of the left sectarian errors, as they are to be found in germ in the draft resolution of the 1948 Convention of our Party.

I think that another pressure driving us to the left came from the onslaught on us by the government and all the media of mass communication. Lenin points out that a policy of repression affects the working class movement that way.

It seems to me that the last decade did not spring from nowhere: it started with the end of the war and the aggressive expansionist program





of the Wall Street trusts. At the same time came the reconstitution of the Party and the correct rejection of Browder's views of a benevolent and progressive capitalism.

In our anxiety to purge ourselves of Browderism, an anxiety I shared, we dumped out many of the valuable features of our work of the preceding period. We dumped our start in united front activities, our broad approach to many non-Communist forces, our developing appreciation of our democratic traditions, and the first awkward attempts to make Marxism American, as the Chinese have made it Chinese. And we were quick to retreat from any policy or analysis that might be stigmatized as Browderite, or revisionist, or tainted with American exceptionalism. In reaction to the opportunism of the concept of progressive capitalism, we swung way over to the left, and continued to batter away at the right danger, as Dennis points out.

Another important source of our leftism of this past decade was the pressure of the international movement. From the Cominform and the Soviet Union flowed documents, speeches, and articles that pushed us to the Left. The outlook was that of two camps facing each other for the final Armageddon: the camp of socialism and peace versus the rest of the world. Left mistakes were made by the Communists in many countries—Greece, France, India, Indonesia, Brazil, etc. Take, for instance, Stalin's speech to the XIX Congress of the CPSU (*Political Affairs*, October 1952, p. 3). I will just quote one small portion that is representative of the whole. "The banner of the bourgeois-democratic freedoms has been thrown overboard. I think that you, representatives of the Communist and

democratic parties, will have to pick up this banner and carry it forward if you wish to rally around yourselves the majority of the people. There is no one else to pick it up."

I approved of this when it appeared. But does it not falsify the situation, in our country? Were we the only ones, or even the main force, in the fight against McCarthyism? Was there "no one else to pick it up?" Did this not foster the leftist position on the danger and imminence of fascism, and our "go it alone" policies?"

In most cases, fundamental corrections began to be made early: the French in May of 1952, the Indonesians in the same year. Our own Draft Resolution appeared at the end of that same year. We were hampered by the jailing of our national leaders, and the hardships of the system of leadership then. I think that it is also true that we had graver problems because we were in the country of aggressive imperialism, with all the attendant circumstances. But we also have grave subjective weaknesses in our Marxist understanding that go way back.

Sectarianism

We have had the character of a sect throughout our entire history, even when we made our greatest achievements, and developed great influence. These sectarian features were weaker during the period of right opportunist errors, as during the latter war years, but we nevertheless still retained them so that they could readily be developed. What are some of these features?

Let us take some of the features of our work: Is it not true that we have had a dogmatic attitude toward others that we alone knew the true gospel? Engels, in describing the sectarianism of the early Marxists in our country, said of them:

"... I consider that many of the Germans there have made a grievous error when they tried, in the face of a mighty and glorious movement not of their own creation, to make of their imported and not always understood theory a kind of "allein selig machendes" (alone bringing salvation) dogma... Our

theory is not a dogma but the exposition of a process of evolution, and that process involves successive phases." (Letter to Mrs. Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky, Marx and Engels: *Letters to Americans*, p. 164.)

I think that that passage is a very important one for us. Engels uses a phrase from religion, to describe dogmatic Marxism—a dogma that alone can bring salvation to benighted and backward people.

We did not listen thoughtfully to non-Party people. Since we alone knew the true gospel, we rejected their ideas. We could always label those who expressed themselves as petty-bourgeois, or backward, or corrupted, or as intellectuals. We felt that we were annointed, and were unabashedly ready to become experts at genetics, art, philosophy, education, politics, etc. We displayed the arrogance of a sect that is confident that it has the only true road to salvation—and that those who would not listen were eternally lost. A little thought will show that the quality of our attitude was religious, not that of scientific Marxism.

Or take the jargon we use. Pick up our reports, pamphlets or even the Dennis report. Could you read it to some of the militant and active unionists you work with? Even our language sets us apart.

Or take our attitude to dissent in the Party—that any attempt to bring the Marxist generalizations in line with the concrete conditions of our country became heresy. And that toward heretics we were more vindictive and even vicious than toward unbelievers—as is every religious dogmatist.

Issues were, and sometimes still are, solved by the book, by quotations, and not by recourse to a "concrete analysis of concrete conditions." (Lenin called this the "living soul of Marxism.") Some theoreticians were so named (or misnamed) by how many errors they could find in formulations—these formulations had to fit not life, but the texts.

Many, many features of our life and work bore this stamp. And while we have suffered this sharp decline in

membership during the few years from '48 to '53, the fact is that many times more than those passed through our doors since first they were opened. These thousands found that they did not want to stay with us, although in many cases, perhaps even in most, they retain friendly feelings for us and for socialism. About 95 per cent of all who have ever been members have left, despite our accomplishments and our program which first brought them to the Party.

The Roots of Our Sectarianism

I would like to start the examination of the roots of our sectarianism and leftism. I am not exhausting the subject by any means. In my opinion, such an examination is a necessary prelude to knowing what types of changes we need to make.

Our sectarianism is built into our Party as we now stand. Where does it come from?

I. The historic dogmatism of American Marxists, and their leftism (dogmatism can also support right errors, as it did for Kautsky in his opposition to the Russian Revolution).

I have quoted earlier from Engels on this question. Lenin made the same sharp criticism more than twenty years later: "... the sectarian isolation of groups (in the U.S.) of handfuls of Socialists from the proletariat... Whoever forgets these conditions and sets out to draw broad conclusions from American-Russian parallels displays extreme superficiality." The sectarianism of the early Marxists was compounded by the romantic revolutionary outlook of the Left Wing of the Socialist Party that was the largest group in the founding of our Party. Let me illustrate this briefly by quoting an historian of the Socialist Party:

"... The Old Guard proposed to work with pacifist and civil liberties organizations in the campaign for amnesty, and the National Executive Committee made plans for a national amnesty convention of all groups, Socialist or not, interested in the freeing of imprisoned conscientious objectors and political prisoners. The Left Wing condemned the proposed con-

vention as a dangerous cooperation with bourgeois forces of reaction and declared that the only proper way to free the prisoners was through revolution." (David Shannon: "The Socialist Party of America." Macmillan, 1955, p. 135.)

This outlook of an early revolution persisted in our Party for many years, and is in part responsible for our failure ever to develop a sound strategic program for the achievement of socialism. The best attempt to do this—although with weaknesses—was in the Draft Program of 1954.

The streams that came together eventually to form our Party were the foreign language federations, with their weak roots in American life and extreme sectarian and leftist line, the left Socialists of the Reed, Ruthenberg groups who were very romantic revolutionists, and the syndicalist group of Foster, Johnstone, and others. This latter group, in spite of their great role in labor had strong Wobbly currents, an anti-parliamentary tradition, and many sectarian features in their background.

II. The form of the Party was that developed by Lenin based upon a study of the conditions in Czarist Russia and the outlook and needs there. For a backward police state, where even unions were illegal, with a small working class and a very large peasantry, with a high illiteracy, the type of Party the Bolsheviks developed was proper; the outlook there was for a future of war and violent attacks on the revolutionary movement, and civil war.

But we have never made the kind of study Lenin made in preparation for the Bolshevik Party, in our own country. A Bolshevik-type party is not best adapted for our country, with its large working class, its bourgeois democracy, its high literacy, its advanced technology, its large trade unions, etc. We need such a study, based upon our conditions, our traditions, the experiences of labor and socialist organizations, and our outlook of relatively peaceful transition.

The fitness of the Bolshevik Party to be our model already perturbed Lenin, who in his last speech worried about its being "too Russian," based too much on the Russian experience. (*Selected Works*, Vol. X, p. 332.)

But it became even more unfit as it hardened under Stalin, with the elimination of the right to discuss policy within the Party even after decisions were made, and the elimination of inner Party democracy.

This importation of a form unsuited for our country inevitably built in a sectarianism.

III. Our theory was to a large extent based on Stalin's development of Marxism-Leninism. Stalin generalized the experiences of the Russian Revolution into basic principles. Obviously, our situation is quite, quite different, and in part because the Russian Party built socialism first.

But these generalizations of the Russian experience became our bible, even though we now see that some of these generalizations do not apply to us, and others were wrong even for the Soviet Union. Let me illustrate briefly:





Stalin says: "The republic of the Soviets is thus the political form, so long sought and finally found, within the framework of which the economic emancipation of the proletariat and the complete victory of socialism is to be accomplished." (p. 51, Vol. I, *Leninism*.)

New experiences in other socialist lands have modified this already. Or take the single party theory (same book, p. 51). Stalin elevates the question of a single party in the period of building Socialism to a matter of principle. But the fact that only one party existed in the Soviet Union was not a matter of principle, but of accident. The other parties—Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, Cadets—that existed after the October Revolution, were dissolved because they took part in armed rebellion against the Soviet Republic. Lenin points out in "The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky" that this was a Russian matter.

The Chinese have pointed out their experience differs on question of the "main blow." Stalin makes the target of the "main blow" the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, and the parties of the Second International, in other words, the reformists and opportunists in the labor movement same book (pp. 74-75). The Chinese say that in their experience the "main blow" is directed against the "major enemy."

All these theories, and many more, we interpreted dogmatically. They shaped our activity for almost all of our history, with the exception of the democratic front period of the thirties, and the war years. Even in those years, we retained our outlook based on these theories. They inevitably pushed us into a leftist, sectarian position.

IV. Our development of apologet-

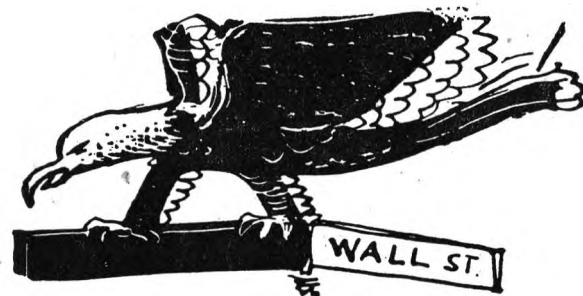
ics to explain how correct all things Soviet were was another feature of a built in sectarianism.

It was right for the party to fight against military intervention against the Soviet Union, and we were absolutely justified in our defense of the Soviet Union. The national interests of our country were served well by this defense. The Soviet Union's tremendous sacrifices in the war against Hitlerism saved millions of American lives.

I am in the first generation of fathers in countless generations of human fathers that can say to my son that any future large war can be prevented, because the Soviet Union has made possible the present world situation. Our support of the land of socialism was fully justified by history and the needs of our own country.

It is another thing, however, for us to have become experts in apologetics for every feature of Soviet life, and particularly some of the ugly features as revealed by the XXth Congress. It was wrong for us to shift with every breeze that blew from there, as if we had no course of our own charted.

Because of the nature of the groupings that founded our Party, and the predominance of foreign born in it, it was possible for a policy to develop that considered the Soviet Union the Fatherland of the workers of all countries. I learned from the prosecution



at Smith Act cases that this was stated in Peter's Manual as late as 1935.

Such a blind and unnatural, national nihilistic following of the Soviet Union stamped us thoroughly as a sect. For we seemed to behave in accord not with the conditions, desires and needs of our nation, its workers and other anti-trust sections, but with the defense of the Soviet Union. This inevitably made it possible for the slanderous charge of "foreign agent" to be used. And this charge has a wide currency among the working people of our country. Among those that are friendly or even neutral toward us, there is the notion that we are spokesmen for, or identified with, the Soviet Union.

Because there can't be basic conflict of interest between our country and the socialist lands, we felt that our defense of the Soviet Union was in our national interest, which it was. We carried this over, however, into a blind support which helped neither the Soviet Union nor us.

Take, for instance, the costly error of the 1939-41 period. Up to August of 1939, we were militantly and effectively anti-fascist, fighting for a military and political alliance of all forces opposed to Hitlerism. We were in a great anti-fascist mainstream, as an advanced section of that stream.

Came the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and the anti-fascist coalition received a shattering blow. Regardless of whether that pact was wrong or right, we might have retained our place in the anti-fascist coalition if we had continued to fight with it for the defeat of fascism.

In fact, we were developing a correct policy on that—making the defeat of fascism the primary aim, and the defeat of the pro-Nazi, imperialist forces here a second aim along

with that. Then came the pressure from abroad, in articles, slogans, documents from the Soviet Union and the Communist International, with which we were then affiliated.

Under that barrage we changed our position to one of opposition to all moves designed to defeat the Nazis. We denounced the war as basically imperialist, which it wasn't. We broke with the anti-fascist stream. We lost much of our moral prestige because we flipped so readily with the Soviet's tactical line.

While we were chanting "The Yanks aren't coming," the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. Although a dozen countries had been occupied, we had simply denounced the imperialist war. Now, on the morrow after the invasion of the Soviet Union, we flopped again. We recognized the war as obviously a war of national liberation. It had been mainly that all along.

This historic flip flop proved costly in our status. We lost members, true; more than that, we lost a large part of our status as an independent Party with moral and intellectual integrity, which we ourselves rate so highly.

Our blind attitude toward the Soviet Union is our responsibility in large measure. That their mistakes and in part, that attitude are the responsibility of the CPSU cannot be denied. It seems to me that to the extent we failed to develop a creative Marxist approach to the relation of our Party to a socialist country to that extent the error is ours.

Our identification with the Soviet Union did not seem to hurt us before '39. It really did then too. But then, socialism had much more attraction



for the workers when there were sixteen million unemployed here. At that time, too, we were also identified as the people who organized the shop, fought the boss when the union was weak and green, put the furniture back during evictions, won relief, fought jim crow in every respect.

Our critical situation now is largely due to the fact that we are, firstly, virtually isolated from the great mass developments, and secondly, we remain therefore mainly with our identification with the Soviet Union. And in view of the revelations in the second Khrushchev report that identification has grave effects within the Left.

It seems to me that we must adopt an attitude of independent support of the Soviet Union. We must get rid of our apologetics in its behalf, and maintain a strong supporting position to it and other countries of socialism. At the same time, it seems to me that such an independent attitude requires also the right and duty to be critical of them when the facts require criticism—as we criticize those we love among our comrades, friends and family.

The Present—and the Future

The new picture of the world drawn so well by the XXth Congress reports, and evident to us even before, has forced reappraisals upon many sections of the world's political thinkers. Socialists of all stripes, Communists everywhere, scientists, ideologists of Wall Street, liberals, labor leaders, leaders of national freedom movements, all, late or soon, are reassessing their opinions and policies in the light of this brave new world, as Fred Fine points out in his discussion article.

Our own reappraisal was begun with the Draft Resolution of 1952. It developed slowly because of the jailing of our national leaders and the system of work then used. It has been speeded up by the powerful results of the Congress of the Soviet Party.

It must be thorough, as objective as possible, as radical as need be,

and based as much as we can do so, on facts, on concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

Our appraisal must naturally appraise the past; that is needed collectively and individually, or else we will not learn what we must learn. Each of us must take part for himself as well as for the Party. If it is agonizing, then that agony will be worth it if it is the price we pay for learning the hard way.

But the appraisal is only part—it can tell us our errors, help us find the sources, and correct them. The full value can only come if the correction is made in the light of the needs of the working people of our country, in the light of our nation's problems, and in the light of the great movements now rising.

There are many militants, stewards, committeemen, board members, and fulltime officials of labor who have a socialist outlook and some Marxist philosophy. There are many in other working sections of our people who hold similar views. There is a need for a regroupment of the Marxists, and the emergence of a new, broader Marxist organization.

We have, because of our achievements, experience, knowledge, devotion, a significant role to play in this regroupment so needed by our country. We will only be able to play that role if we first drastically transform our Party into a creatively Marxist, democratic organization. Then when objective and subjective conditions are riper than now, we will be able to influence such a regrouping.

This appraisal is a necessary first step, but not itself enough. The hard part is the development of a program for the future—hard because this requires that we use our Marxism as it was meant to be used—for the analysis of life as it is and is shaping up, and as a guide to action.



GILBERT
GREEN

The Enemy Forgotten

*The
Enemy
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The author analyzes the class content and relations of popular coalition, with special attention to the structure and policies of the labor movement, the changing position of the farmers in American economy and politics, and the enhanced national role of the Negro. In the process, he clarifies and reassesses some of the traditional viewpoints of the Left. In a final chapter, Gilbert Green discusses socialism as a goal for America, its native roots and its necessity for our national progress, against the background of our own history, customs and political structure.

Down to earth, the book is deeply planted in American soil, enriched by many allusions to our history and literature, and is written in a lively and lucid style, free of the dogmatism and the clichés which have often marred writings of the Left. It is offered by the author as a brief before the court of public opinion. In his own words, he "is leaving for a period of enforced absence and silence." He adds: "How long that period will be the reader will be able to determine more than the author."

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