

Recent Political Developments and Some Problems of the United Front

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COMRADES: This report is not a general survey of our political tasks. I am taking up very briefly some current problems of the united front, with an introduction to register the typical features of the new developments since our January Plenum. The reason for this is clear. It is the same reason for which we placed the report of Comrade Stachel as the first and main report on the order of business at this meeting. The reason is that, although we can register some considerable political successes and a broad expansion of the political influence of our Party, we cannot say that to the same degree we are consolidating this influence among the masses, that to the same degree we are organizing them and securing guarantees for the continuance of this influence. This is the main question facing us. What I have to say, therefore, must be considered in the nature of a continuation of yesterday's discussion, connecting it with the main, new, political features and some current problems of the united front.

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE LAST PLENUM

First of all, we must very briefly give a characterization of the developments since the January Plenum. I have listed some seven fields in which we must take note of changes in the situation.

First, in the international arena we have in this period since January the extreme sharpening of the international antagonisms, expressed first of all in the March 16 announcement of Hitler fascism of its complete rearmament and reintroduction of conscription. This Hitler proclamation places imperialist war on the immediate order of the day. This determines the whole international situation. This is the key fact determining the development of the world today. Together with that, and of the same general signifi-

cance, is the Italian aggression against Ethiopia which is important, not only because it involves an imperialist attack upon one of the few remaining semi-independent small countries, not only because it is an imperialist aggression against a Negro State, but because of the special significance of the movement—the sign of removal of all restraints from imperialist appetites, the development of the whole atmosphere in the imperialist world that the time has come to grab what can be grabbed.

Of the same general significance is the renewed penetration of Japanese imperialism in Northern China, with the result of Japan's taking over of the Nanking regime, which formerly was the stronghold of American influence. Directly in connection with the loss of position in the Far East by American imperialism, we must also record the American naval maneuvers in the Pacific. Generally this phase of the world development is characterized by the armament race in which the whole imperialist world is rapidly speeding up.

As against these menacing factors in the international situation, we must register new and significant victories for the Soviet peace policy. The most important are the mutual assistance pacts entered into by the Soviet Union with France, Czechoslovakia and Rumania. These pacts bring the Soviet peace policy into very active influence upon the whole development of the world attack.

We have already analyzed the political significance of these pacts in the *Daily Worker*. We shall continue this analysis in the *Daily Worker* and in *The Communist*. We must emphasize here, I think, not a detailed examination of this point, because we cannot take time for it. Now we must emphasize the extreme importance of every *leading* Party member, if not every Party member, really understanding this, studying this question and making it understood by the broadest masses of the workers. It is precisely on this point, one of the greatest victories of the world proletariat, that the reformists, the social-fascists, the renegades, and particularly the Trotskyites, are making their most vicious attacks against the Soviet Union, the Communist International, and the Communist Party.

The isolation of the center of imperialist aggression in Europe—Hitler—constitutes an important victory for the world proletariat. This breaks the solidarity of the imperialist camp and establishes rallying points in every country for the mass urge for peace. Precisely this is hailed by the Trotskyites, the Socialist Party Old Guard, even Norman Thomas, as a defeat of the working class, as the surrender of the Soviet Union to the imperialists, as a betrayal by the Communist International of the revolutionary class struggle. And we must take advantage of precisely such questions further to

complete the isolation among the masses of such counter-revolutionary agents of capitalism, to meet them on these issues squarely among the masses. We need have no doubt that the masses will respond when we give them our clear explanation of these issues.

The third feature of the development of these past months is the victory of the united front, the progress of the united front, and its results in the various countries. Before all, this means, of course, in France, where the formal national pact between the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, their joint mobilization of the masses against the rising wave of French fascism, has reached significant victories. The municipal elections recently concluded in France, which increased the hold upon municipalities by both the Socialist and the Communist Parties, with the Communists making the largest gains, is the result of the success of the united front before the elections in giving serious check to the development of French fascism.

On a small scale, but of the same general significance, is the development of the united front in England with the I.L.P., which, in spite of the sabotage of the I.L.P. leaders and their efforts to move to the Right, is moving definitely towards the establishment of the united Communist Party in Britain.

PRESENT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEPRESSION OF A SPECIAL KIND

Fourth, we must say a few words about the economic trends of this immediate past period. The main feature has been the continued fluctuation of all the economic indices, up and down, without an established long-time trend, although now going down again. At the time of our last Central Committee meeting, we took note of an upward development of the industrial index in this country and in most of the countries of the capitalist world. Now again, the course of this economic index is downward, both in the United States and in most of the capitalist countries. The characteristic feature of these ups and downs in the capitalist world is that they take place within the limits of the low and high points of 1933, that is, emphasizing again concretely that characteristic of the depression of a special kind which has become well known from Stalin's analysis a year and a half ago.

A new feature of the present economic situation on a world scale is the approach to a new financial crisis. We are coming rapidly again to a period which we can compare with 1932 and the beginning of 1933, when the financial system cracked and when country after country went off the gold standard. A new financial crisis of equal, if not greater, magnitude, is rapidly maturing at this moment. For the United States this means also the stimulation of

the inflationary trends which are growing rapidly from the inner forces of capitalist decay in this country, but which probably will come to full expression under the blows of the international financial crisis. These inflationary trends in the United States already have demonstrated their overwhelming control of the House of Representatives and a majority of the Senate. It is only the executive power that staves off uncontrolled inflation in the United States at the present time.

The agrarian crisis, especially in the United States, has been sharply accentuated in this period both through the policies of the government, the A.A.A., the results of which are now known, and through the renewed drought and the soil erosion. The capitalist influence which has been degrading agriculture over a long period is now coming to a head as a result of the special circumstances of the crisis in the dust storms of the last weeks. This must be explained as a phenomenon of capitalism, not a natural phenomenon. That is exactly what they are. They are exactly of the same significance for America as the floods in China for that country. These disasters are the signs of the breaking down of man's established control of nature through the breaking down of the existing social, economic system.

We must add to this the crisis in the relief system, the general lowering in the living standards of the whole population that is accompanying the transfer of relief from the cash relief to work relief on the basis of the Roosevelt starvation scale.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE COLONIAL COUNTRIES

It is necessary to note further the deepening crisis in the colonial countries of the world. These last months have witnessed a sharp speeding up of the revolutionary struggle in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. This has not been merely the result of the rising wave of the revolutionary struggle of the masses, although that is basic, but has been enormously stimulated by the weakening effect upon the economy of the colonial countries exerted by the policies of imperialism. American imperialism, for example, which has been helping to try to stabilize the Nanking regime—Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-shek rule — in China, furnishing airplanes, bombs, aviators, military instructors, etc., has counterbalanced all of the aid they have given to the Nanking regime by carrying through a currency policy which has given a smashing blow to the Nanking regime. The bidding up of the price of silver simply has thrown all economic arrangements in China into the most complete confusion. In the United States this is one of the features of an inflation policy. But the effects on China, India and other countries on the silver standard

has had the most serious deflationary effects with extreme dropping of prices. The result has been to deny to the colonial world the stimulating effects of inflation, which the capitalists are applying to their own system.

In connection with this we must note the phenomenal successes of the Red Armies in China, and the successful shift of the base of Soviet power in China, from Kiangsi province to the province of Szechwan, a military and political movement which is without parallel in history. The successful carrying through of this tremendous maneuver has also served to shift relations of power in the Far East, and has been one of the main factors in relieving for the moment somewhat the danger of imperialist attack from the East on the Soviet Union.

In the colonial world, of great significance at this time were the events in Cuba—the general strike, the armed struggles that have taken place, the reactionary terror organized by the U.S. Ambassador, Jefferson Caffery, which is attempting to drown the Cuban revolution in blood. These events in Cuba must be understood not as a strengthening of reaction. They are signs of the cracking of the whole base of imperialist rule. The fact that the revolutionary forces in Cuba have suffered a momentary defeat must not lead us to understand that the revolution is now ebbing in Cuba. Quite the contrary. The defeat of the revolutionary forces in the past months is merely one of those stages in the preparation of victorious battles—the road to successful revolution has never been a course travelling from one victory to another, but has ever been, superficially considered, a series of “defeats” leading up to the final victory. In Cuba we must understand the events in that sense. Fundamentally, it is one of the stages of hammering out the iron forces of revolution which will successfully establish Soviet power in Cuba. At the moment in Cuba, however, we should call attention to the whole Party that the Communists have put forward the slogan of a People’s Revolutionary government, an anti-imperialist government. The Communists have proposed a united front with the Cuban Revolutionary Party and Young Cuba, the parties of Grau San Martin and of Guiteras who was assassinated by reaction a few weeks ago, to be established on the basis of anti-imperialist slogans, slogans of Cuba for Cubans. Does this mean that we are discarding the program of Soviet power in Cuba? Not at all. We have no guarantee that a people’s anti-imperialist government will actually come into existence. It may or it may not. But if it comes into existence, it will be an interim government leading towards a Soviet Cuba. We have published documents on this question. I mention them now, not to go into an elaborate discussion, but to emphasize

the importance for the American Party to understand thoroughly these questions, to know what is going on, because the Communist Party in the United States is taking an active part in developing the policy—our task as well as the task of the Communist Party of Cuba. In fact our Party has jointly initiated the negotiations, or attempted to establish negotiations, together with the Cuban Party, with the Grau San Martin forces.

THE GROWING MASS DISCONTENT WITH THE NEW DEAL

We now must take note of the shifts in bourgeois alignments and policies in the United States, and the signs of disintegration in the bourgeoisie, the splitting up and factionalism emphasizing bourgeois political instability.

Underlying all these developments is the growing discontent of the masses with Roosevelt, and the consequent failure of Roosevelt to carry through his move to the Right, and to consolidate the former Right opposition to the New Deal, as his base. This failure is demonstrated by the growing mass resentment against the New Deal, and by the general loss of prestige of the New Deal, and especially of Roosevelt personally.

At our last Plenum we noted a certain persistence of Roosevelt's personal popularity even in the days of the continued discrediting of his policies one after another; but today we must say that the personal popularity of Roosevelt is rapidly disappearing. It is against this that must be measured the growing fire from the Right against Roosevelt. The two are directly connected. From the Right we not only have the fire of the coalition of the Republicans and Democrats, which we examined at some length some months ago, but today we have the official spokesmen of the capitalists, the Chamber of Commerce, openly breaking with Roosevelt, followed by the Steel Trust.

The Roosevelt New Deal development more and more conforms to the general outlines of the development of the Bruening Government in Germany. We can draw a certain analogy between the position of Bruening and that of Roosevelt today. We have done that before for certain illustrative purposes. Roosevelt will attempt now again to orientate to the Left, to play up again the New Deal to these masses which have been following the various Third Party movement tendencies. It is not so easy, however, for Roosevelt at this stage to recreate the illusions about the New Deal, no matter how Left he makes his gestures. Today the sharp contrast between words and deeds is more dramatic than ever. Roosevelt may make a temporary truce with the leaders of the A. F. of L.—that is not so difficult. All that is necessary for that

is to promise Green another scapegoat, to save his face, and the appointment of one bureaucrat to a new position in the National Labor Relations Board. But that cannot by any means bring the official endorsement of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy for the Roosevelt wage scales, which are immediately announced thereafter, and which constitute such an outrageous attack against the living standards of all the masses in America that no single bureaucrat, no matter how reactionary he may be, dares to stand up and endorse that proposition. Roosevelt may make considerable advances in forcing into line the LaFollettes, Olsens, Sinclairs, but he cannot absorb into his base the millions of veterans to whom he has just again denied the bonus, in spite of an overwhelming vote in both Houses of Congress for it. Even those features of the New Deal in which there still cling certain shreds of illusions, such as the Wagner Bill, the rejuvenation of the N.R.A., etc., even on these issues we notice in New York that when they called a demonstration strike *for* the Wagner Bill and *for* the N.R.A., even in the capitalist daily press in preparing for this strike they could not feel sure that they would carry it through except by camouflaging the strike as a move *against* the Roosevelt policy on wages.

These things show the extreme contradictions and difficulties involved in the attempted reorientation now going on in the bourgeois camp.

Next we must speak of the changes taking place among the masses during this period. All of the things we have to speak about are continuations of what we examined at the January Plenum; they all confirm the decisions of the January Resolutions on the Labor Party, trade unions, etc. I do not need to go into a detailed examination of these matters, except to catalogue a few items illustrating the nature of this period and the speeding up of the radicalization of the masses.

THE GROWING CRISIS IN THE S.P.

We should note first, under this head, that the crisis in the Republican and Democratic Parties, about which we spoke in January, is spreading into all other camps that base themselves upon the bourgeoisie, upon capitalism, including in that category the Socialist Party, although that must be said with certain reservations. Within the S.P., there is a profound and growing crisis. We have dealt with this in the press, and I only want to add to what we have already published, some quotations from a letter of Norman Thomas which was sent last February to the leaders of the S.P. and which reached our hands a few days ago. I will read some sentences in which Thomas characterizes the crisis within the S.P.:

"It looks as if we had escaped or delayed a split only to fall a victim of paralysis. With a few shining exceptions practically everywhere the Party is losing, not gaining morale.

"Unfortunately, whether they were so intended or not, the actions of the extreme Right wing in New York have brought about widespread conviction that the Party is splitting, that it is futile, and that at any rate, it is an adjunct to Roosevelt, notably in what it has said about the security program.

"Already to an amazing extent, we have lost what I may call the cultural field to the Communists in spite of their appalling mistakes. We are rapidly losing in many parts of the country in the political field to Long, to Dr. Townsend, to Upton Sinclair, and God knows who else.

"Among other things, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, I find it is a virtual impossibility to raise money from friendly sources because of the general belief that we are dead or dying."

Of course, comrades, we would be making a big mistake if we would make the same conclusion as Thomas does, that the S.P. is dead and dying, and think we have only to sit back and watch it die. It is not so simple as Norman Thomas thinks.

This crisis also shows itself in all of the other Third Party groups and movements. Even Huey Long has his inner crisis, and, although we are not close enough to examine all the details of this, we can see that he is going through his ebbs and flows like the others and is having difficulties. The inner difficulties of Coughlin are manifest even though he has no organization to deal with. The Union for Social Justice, he says, is Father Coughlin, but he even has factions within himself reflected in a wavering and unsteady line of policy.

Within the Executive Council of the A. F. of L., this political crisis of capitalist groups also expresses itself in open threats of split. We should not underestimate the seriousness or deep-going character of this, as some of our comrades would. This threat of a new independent A. F. of L., voiced by John L. Lewis, some comrades have said, has no significance for us, because Lewis is as much of a reactionary as Green. Such reasoning is wrong. Of course Lewis is as much a reactionary as Green, but it is time for us to begin to learn that the more reactionary the camp, the more sharp become the contradictions as they begin to develop. In Europe, today, who would try to explain now that Germany and Italy are natural friends because both are extreme reactionary fascist countries? Precisely the extremity of the reactionary regime in each country has brought the relationship of Germany and Italy to perhaps the sharpest contradictions in recent history. So it is within the A. F. of L.

However, neither should we think that the threat of split in

the A. F. of L. is merely a struggle of reactionaries for dominant positions. It is much more important and deep-going than that. While it is a struggle of reactionaries among themselves, some are attempting to make use of the deep-going currents among the radicalized masses for their own reactionary needs. It is of no little significance that the main issue upon which John L. Lewis let loose his anonymous threat to split the A. F. of L. was the issue of industrial unionism. It is not an accident that very shortly after this, the first new industrial union charter was actually issued. As Comrade Stachel pointed out, for the first time in years John L. Lewis is making a public appearance in New York. Lewis is moving towards occupying the role of a "Left" leader in the American labor movement.

PRESENT EVIDENCES OF MASS RADICALIZATION

Among the features of mass radicalization, let us mention the successes of our campaign for H.R. 2827; the attainment of a favorable report on this bill by the Committee on Labor; the registration of a vote of 52 on the Congress floor for the Workers' Bill, and the unanimous adoption over the heads of the leaders by the Congress of unemployed organizations, led by the Socialist Party and other groups, of our resolutions on unity, even forcing them to withdraw their splitting resolution. The Harlem events of March 19 are of the most enormous significance in the struggle for Negro rights. The development of the strike movement, first of all in auto; the automobile strike, limited as it was and betrayed as it was in the end, was of the most tremendous significance. Highly significant are the developments on the Pacific Coast among the marine workers, the strikes there and the whole development in the marine industry throughout the country. So, too, are the lumber strikes that are taking place today. And when we speak of the strike movement, we must not underestimate the significance of the New York, one-hour, political strike, ostensibly serving to bolster up the New Deal, but in actuality cutting the very ground out from under the New Deal and expressing mass disillusionment with Roosevelt. Nor should we underestimate the significance of the student strike of April 12, unprecedented in history—a strike of 175,000 students. Let us bear in mind, too, the full meaning of the Writers' Congress that was held at the end of April; even the most reactionary literary journals in America had to register the fact that it was the Communists who organized the leading lights in American literature who came together to declare their fundamental adherence to the proletarian revolution.

We must mention among these signs of the times the movement

for a National Negro Congress, which was definitely launched in the recent conference in Howard University in Washington, with such immediate favorable response that even the reactionary Negro misleader, Kelley Miller, had to declare this is one issue on which he had to agree with the Communist, James Ford.

We must mention May Day and the developments of the united front in connection with it, a point which could very well serve for an hour's examination, by itself. Just to characterize a few of the symptoms of the May Day development—that the National Chairman of the Socialist Party speaks on May Day from the same platform as John Williamson, Cleveland Organizer of the Communist Party, in a formal united front. And this happened in many places, that leaders of the S.P. spoke on May Day together with Communists, and Socialist workers marched on May Day together with Communist workers.

During this period a whole series of developments demonstrated the possibilities of growth of the American League Against War and Fascism. While most of the work of developing the American League has been left in the hands of middle class and church elements, we must say they are not doing a bad job despite our neglect. The American League has been penetrating church organizations in America to an extent most of us do not dream of. Speaking of churches, we have to note that a large part of the success of the Youth Congress movement has been that it has gotten the religious organizations of the youth. We have learned that the youth of America are organized, most of them in religious organizations, and we are getting most of them in the Youth Congress; it moves from success to success, and the bigger it gets the stronger becomes the position of the Y.C.L. in it. It is the broadest united front we have ever seen in America.

Just to mention a few more of the most significant items expressing mass radicalization—the vote for Maurice Sugar in Detroit, the victory of the workers' ticket in Southern Illinois, the struggle in Gallup and the response to it by the workers and trade unions of New Mexico and other places. The development within the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota where we have a growing Left wing now, in which we have even a Communist nominated in one of the wards on the F.L.P. ticket.

BOURGEOIS THIRD PARTY MOVEMENTS

There is another feature of the crisis in the third Party movements, shown by the situation of the Epic and Utopian movements in California. The comrades have heard something of what is going on there, but what you probably do not know yet is that the majority

of the actives in the Sinclair Epic movement are for the united front with the Communists. Sinclair's recent convention was almost completely broken down by this issue. Sinclair only pulled through, despite the arbitrarily imposed machine rule, by making serious compromises. Motions passed at this convention were accepted by the Left wing as adoption by Sinclair of the principles of the united front; while the motions are so worded as to take out the whole meaning, the understanding of the convention was that the principles of the united front were adopted. We went into this convention with a few delegates and in the course of a few days we built up a group of 87, absorbing the Townsendites and the Long group, which is trying to penetrate the Epic movement, and the Farmer-Labor Party group which had been organized by Shoemaker of Minnesota—all of the opposition elements were consolidated in our group and accepted our program before the end of the Convention. The issue became clear-cut between two groups—Sinclair with the reactionaries and the Communists with the growing Left wing.

One last word on these features. We should not underestimate the importance of the speech of Coughlin in New York last Wednesday in which he found it politically expedient to go outside of his prepared speech to make a threat against the capitalist system. He threatened, of course, to use only constitutional means to abolish capitalism, that is true, but what is important for us is that Father Coughlin, staunch defender of capitalism, whose every speech since he became a public figure has been permeated through and through with the fighting spirit to defend the capitalist system, finds it necessary, in order to continue his role and keep his followers, to issue a threat that under certain conditions capitalism may have to be abolished. This is a concession to the necessity created by anti-capitalist sentiment among his followers and the realization that he cannot possibly continue his mass influence without speaking along these lines.

OUR EXPERIENCES IN PROMOTING THE UNITED FRONT

We have noted what has happened since January. Now what have we learned since last January, particularly what have we learned about the united front? We have lots of experience in this period, economic struggles, strike struggles, the inner life of the trade unions, the unemployment movement, the inner experiences in the Socialist Party, and the sharp divisions that are taking place within the S.P. Especially have we learned a lot from the spontaneous mass upsurge within the S.P. on the question of the Lang articles in the Hearst press. We have the development of the Labor Party movement, top and bottom. At the top, the revelation of the confusions and hesitations of the Congressional leaders as shown in the Wash-

ington conference a couple of weeks ago. We have the developments of the Negro movement, especially in Harlem. Without going into any more examination of the details of these experiences, let us summarize and see what conclusions we can draw from all this.

What can we say about our united front efforts since January? First, the conclusion that I think we can all agree to, that in every case where we organized and prepared the correct approach to the masses and to the lower ranks of the leaders in the reformist organizations, serious advances in the united front have been made. In every case, without exception! And this includes not only the lower functionaries, but also in some cases the higher functionaries. It includes such developments as the steel union, where we swung into the united front every considerable leader of the union outside of the Executive Council, and even split the Executive Council by one man. It includes the unemployed organizations, where we made serious united front developments, including practically the whole cadre of leadership directly connected with the mass organizations. It includes the S.P., where we have many local organized united front efforts, including even individual members of the N.E.C., like Powers Hapgood in Massachusetts. And certainly in the Negro field has there been penetration by the united front idea of many in the top leadership of these organizations, resulting in joint actions.

This is the first conclusion from our experiences. But we must immediately follow it with another conclusion, that *these advances are not general*. They do not take place everywhere throughout the country, but on the contrary they are still the exception.

Which leads us to the third conclusion—that the advances of the united front are so spotty because our work is spotty, and that where the united front has not advanced it has been our fault, the fault of our work—work badly prepared, badly conceived, clumsy.

We must say now that the limitations on the development of the united front are self-imposed, limitations that we put upon ourselves, by our inability to work correctly, our wrong approach to the workers and their lower leaders, and by our lack of confidence in them—that they will respond. Sometimes there is even a refusal to approach these workers on the grounds that we know beforehand that they will not respond.

What is this obstacle?

ROOT OUT THE REMNANTS OF SECTARIANISM

It is sectarianism, a sectarian distrust of the masses, even fear of the masses. It is a lack of differentiation between the masses and the leaders. It is the tendency to lump all leaders into one reactionary mass, not to distinguish between the local and national, or

between the political tendencies of these leaders. It is the failure to differentiate between the various political groupings that are being formed within these organizations. In short, it is sectarianism.

Yesterday in our discussions, several comrades pointed out that we no longer have to talk about whether we have made the turn to mass work or not, or have begun to make the turn, or are beginning to begin to make the turn. We have made the turn. That is correct. We have placed the Party on the road to mass work. We have broken the paralysis of sectarianism. We have broken through the shell that kept us in one place and now we are moving. But the shell of sectarianism, although broken, is still in fragments sticking to our backs. We are moving, although carrying that shell, broken as it is, on our back. It is still a barrier between us and the masses. We have to clear out the remnants of the shell of sectarianism, get it off the back of the Party. That is the task now.

What does it mean concretely? It means we must make a drive in the Party for the united front. We must convince the Party that our united front policy is correct and practical. We must mobilize the Party to carry out this policy, which the Party is not doing yet as a whole. That is the task.

Some comrades might think that this Plenum of the Central Committee is turning all of our energy inward, talking about our inner organizational problems; that even when we come to the united front we speak of the necessity of the campaign inside the Party, and this at a period of the broadest mass movement. But why and how are we turning our attention inward at this moment? Precisely for the purpose of overcoming the inward sectarian tendency, and to throw all our energy to the outside among the masses. Everything we say about our inner problems has that one driving force behind it, really to orientate the whole Party toward mass work. We have learned that we cannot do that merely by the example of the good features of our work. We still have some hard sectarian shell places sticking out, and we have to tackle each one of these pieces and break it off.

We have to re-examine all of our work everywhere throughout the Party. Just as an example, we had a very interesting afternoon's discussion the other day with the Jewish Bureau. Now, the Jewish Bureau is certainly not the most backward language bureau of the Party. If there is one of our language bureaus that keeps abreast of the whole Party policy, it is the Jewish Bureau. Yet when we listened to the criticism of the comrades of the Jewish Bureau, the way they characterize their own work, it was an astonishing citation of evidence of the continuance of our sectarian habits. I am sure that this applies not only to the Jewish Bureau, but to most of the language bureaus.

And if it applies to these language bureaus it also applies to the elected Party committees, even though not in the same degree. The language bureaus have been singled out for some special criticism, and that is necessary. The language comrades should not think some special attack is being organized against them because of that. We know that the comrades in language work are good, loyal comrades, but we know also the conditions under which they work makes it necessary for the Party to give them a jolt and force them to get a new and fresh approach to all of our problems.

The same thing applies to the elected committees of the Party. We find even some of our best Districts carry on a lot of the old bad methods of work which are especially bad in the united front work. We get used to these bad methods, but the moment we bump up against some Socialists in the united front—and they are very keen, some of them, even though you might not believe it from the policies developed by their party—they can often pick out our weak spots much more quickly than we can.

What is our attitude when we come in contact with such Socialists? We too often wave aside their criticism. But we should have an entirely different attitude. We should be very responsive. We should say: "Thank you for pointing out our weakness; we will immediately try to overcome it. We will return the compliment and help you overcome your weaknesses." We can develop the most comradely relations on the basis of the most penetrating criticism if we have the correct approach. Too often our comrades still react against criticism from outside the Party. It is only within the closest Party ranks that we admit criticism. If a non-Party person criticizes us, he is looked upon as an enemy. Even those who have an enemy idea in their heads are not always enemies. When we get that idea out of their heads, they become our friends. This we don't always understand yet in practice. That is why we have not enough of a close friendly approach to the people in the united front. That is why often we will have a temporary united front which, instead of leading to a further growth, breaks up after one action. We curse those fellows and say that this shows they did not mean business, that they were not sincere. And that is many times very true of the leaders.

What we have to do is to create the conditions where it is impossible for the leaders to split the united front and take anybody with them. Can it be done? The youth are showing us how. Every attempt to split the Youth Congress has been disastrous for the ones that tried to do it. How is it that the youth are making greater successes than the Party with one-fourth the strength of the Party?

They make twice or three times the advances in the united front that the Party generally does. It is not that these youths are geniuses. It is not that they are so much smarter than we are. It is that even though they do not know as much as we do about how to work, they haven't got the old bad habits of work, so they more quickly adjust themselves to the tasks of the united front. But we older comrades think we know how everything should be done. That is one reason why we don't get as much done in the united front as we should.

These may be petty things. But it is these petty things that are today the main obstacles to the united front. Unless we learn to clear them away we shall not move forward. Now we have got to make a drive really to educate the Party on these little things, which are really big things, because behind these questions and their solution is the conception of the united front as the building of class unity. It is because we lose sight of the big thing—class unity—that we allow these little things to develop and become such important obstacles.

THE NEXT STEPS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE UNITED FRONT

What are the next steps for the united front? It is clear that the main fields for the struggle for unity remain the trade union and unemployed organizations, of strike struggles and economic struggles generally. The next big fight is around the slogan for the Labor Party, extending the united front into the political struggles of the masses and breaking them away from the capitalist parties. We have little that is new to say at this Plenum on the question.

At this moment we must give the most emphasis to a concentrated drive to win the Socialist Party members to the united front, to bring the Socialist Party officially into a general united front. This is important far beyond the numerical strength of the Socialist Party. It would be a serious mistake on our part to think, because in France the Socialist Party is 20 times larger than the S.P. in the United States, that therefore the importance of the united front with the S.P. here is only five per cent of what it is in France. That would be a very mechanical gradation of the importance of political developments. A successful united front with the S.P. in America—what would it mean in our fight for trade union unity. Would it mean merely adding together the total of our members with the S.P. members? No, a successful united front between these two parties would mean in the struggle for trade union unity a multiplication of our striking power by five or ten times.

Just look at what is happening in France. Before the achieve-

ment of the united front in France, there were defeat and retreat in the ranks of the working class. Fascism was advancing, bold and menacing. With the establishment of the united front and some successful mass actions, it changed the whole situation of the working class, and fascism was checked. In the trade union movement in the U.S. on a smaller scale but still of equal significance, the greatest immediate development would be through a successful united front with the S.P.

The same thing would be true in the unemployment field. If we could once get a united front established with the Socialist Party as they have it in France, we could force the carrying through of unification of all unemployment organizations, and such unified unemployed organizations would certainly be under a Left-wing hegemony.

What would it mean for the Labor Party development? It is clear that if we break through with the S.P., we will hasten the development of a Labor Party manifold.

What reason have we to think that we can successfully carry through such a campaign to take the S.P. into the united front? Well, the experiences since January have made it clear that among all the enemies of the united front, their weakest point is the Socialist Party. We have completely underestimated our potential allies in the S.P. We have been the victims of the idea of spontaneity in this respect. We think we have no allies there because they don't spontaneously come forward and stand by us. But we have not understood our role in leading these elements in the S.P. If we attempted to reach these friendly elements, we would have immediate results. But we don't even speak with them. We still have in our heads the idea expressed in our song books. When we were singing that song "On the Picket Line", the most popular song of our whole movement, there was that line: "If you don't like thugs and Socialists and scabs, come picket on the picket line." We have stopped singing that line of the song and cut it out of the book, but it still has too much influence in our minds. We still think too often that there is something shameful in associating with Socialists.

It is also wrong if we try to explain away all these things about our past. We should speak very openly and frankly. We don't have to say that we are 100 per cent pure people and that we never have made mistakes. Let us talk about those things and admit that they were damned foolishness. Let us admit that we sang foolish songs about the Socialists, that it was a bad mistake, and that we cut it out. We can talk with these Socialist workers about the most far-reaching questions when once we sweep out of the way these little, petty obstacles.

QUICK RESPONSE TO THE NEW CAMPAIGN OF DEMAGOGY
MUST BE OUR WATCHWORD

We must have a broad agitation campaign, not only in our Party, but for the masses, to clarify new angles of some of the problems that are coming forward now. For example, there is now, with the shake-up in the bourgeois camp, a new form of the lesser evil theory. What does the A. F. of L. bureaucracy say now about the N.R.A. and so on? They don't defend it as they used to. They say, yes, they are bad, these codes, but if we sweep them all away there would just be chaos and slashing away of living standards. This is a new form of the lesser evil idea. There is also a new way of attack against the Communists, that is, an old way with fresh application. They say, for instance, that against the Wagner Bill there is a united front of the trusts and banks and Communists, that we Communists are making a united front with the extreme reactionary camp, whereas the A. F. of L. leadership stands with the liberal camp. This is nothing new. This is how the old Social-Democracy in Germany prepared the way for Hitler. We must react to these questions as the key problem in the building of the united front. Every such attack, every such question is calculated to obscure the main political question, which is the question of the united front against the capitalist attack today. Quick response, quick answer to every such question, is necessary in order to consolidate our united front efforts. The issues of the united front of immediate struggle, these are the center of the whole problem, these expose most quickly and fully the policies of surrender to the Roosevelt attacks upon the living standards of the masses.

It is clear what these issues are. Fight against the \$19 per month wage scale, for trade union unity, against the Wagner Bill and the N.R.A. The fight for H.R. 2827 is an outstanding slogan. The fight for Negro rights is becoming an increasingly powerful slogan, not only among the Negro masses, but also among the white workers. *For a Class Labor Party!* is a strong slogan; with that the slogan: *Against War and Fascism!* And let us not underestimate the significance in united front work of the slogan, *For Defense of the U.S.S.R.!* Perhaps we have thought that this slogan is not so popular among the broadest masses, that it is only for real 100 per cent Communists or those who are ready to join the Party. The developments in the Socialist Party on the Lang issue should make it clear to us how popular this slogan actually is. It is one of the broadest mass slogans that we have.

Finally, we must raise most sharply the issue (not new in principle, but one we have neglected), the fight against the sales tax

and against the high cost of living. There is probably nothing in America which arouses such universal opposition sentiment, anger, and hate, as this damned sales tax. Even more than the high cost of living generally—the rise in prices which is the real problem for the masses, of which the sales tax is a small part—strangely enough the American masses just hate taxes on goods. An extra penny in tax causes more resentment and hate than a ten cent overcharge that was not expressed as a tax.

I don't know how many of you appreciate fully the full meaning of the hatred borne by the American masses against taxes. But I know out in Kansas among all the poor backward farmers, they are ready to do almost anything to smash a sales tax. They would make a revolution for that one purpose, if they knew how. Lem Harris, a good American, will bear me out on this. We don't take this issue of the sales tax seriously enough. There has been some attempt made. Cleveland has done something about it. There have been some examples of local campaigns, but no general assault down the line on the issue that we could get the broadest mass support than on any other single issue. In Illinois the whole political situation is tied up in a crisis in the fight over the sales tax. It is not easy for the Illinois legislature to stand out against the pressure of the National Government and the main capitalist circles, who threaten to starve the millions on relief, to force the addition of one per cent to the sales tax, and yet they continue to vote it down. This should give an idea of the mass pressure against the sales tax.

Just a word about the question of the importance in united front of quick response to issues. If there is one reason, more than any other single reason, for the effectiveness of the Lang campaign, it was our quick response to the question. We caught these Socialist leaders before they had time to agree upon a common line, on how to defend themselves. We broke up their unity. Confusion reigned among them for a few days and the masses had time to get into action. But if we had been slow, the Lang question would never have become a real mass question. We didn't organize that movement, it was, more or less, spontaneous, but we demoralized the Old Guard, thus giving the masses a change to express themselves.

Why do I speak about the necessity for quick response, for more sensitivity? We generally accept that. But you know there have been signs that our concentration program is being interpreted in some places, as meaning that when some new event comes up that is not in our planned work, we just ignore it, thinking that otherwise we would be allowing events of the day to draw us away from our concentration work. So we make a virtue of failing to respond to new issues of the day. And because we do that, our concentration

work becomes mechanical and sterile and brings no results. Concentration work means that every new issue that comes up shall be immediately seized and carried into our concentration work. Concentration work without that daily, living contact of every new issue is not concentration work, it is bureaucratism.

Let me give a little example of failure to respond, a failure of sensitivity, for which perhaps there will be a hundred explanations brought forward to show how natural it was, etc., but for which there is really no explanation at all. I have in mind our complete failure to get meetings for Bob Minor in the concentration districts on his way back from New Mexico. How can we explain such a thing? We sent out proposals to selected Districts—Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, etc. And in every case we failed; some immediately responded that it was impossible and others told us at the last minute that pressure of more important work made it impossible to organize a meeting for Bob Minor on Gallup.

How is such a thing possible? How can a Minor meeting on Gallup interfere with your concentration work? What is more important than your work in the A. F. of L., and what better way can you find to gather new strength in the A. F. of L. than by bringing forward such an issue as the Gallup case? Some ignore the fact that A. F. of L. members are involved in the Gallup frame-up. Some comrades think it is merely an I.L.D. question. And the comrades don't give serious attention to the I.L.D., unfortunately. We need the I.L.D. very much. It is one of our mass organizations of serious import. We won't talk about it here today.

But here was Gallup, and the fight for ten miners, members of the U.M.W.A., their defense dramatized on a national scale, with the kidnaping and beating of Minor and Levinson, which took the front page in every newspaper in America. In the East, in the South, in Chicago and Cleveland, clear to the Pacific Coast, to San Francisco and Seattle, every paper in this country had Bob Minor and Levinson on the front page. And yet, with all of this two million dollars' worth of advertising presented to our Districts, free, absolutely free, (we didn't even ask for the expenses of Comrade Minor's traveling), the comrades said, "We are sorry, you are asking too great a sacrifice from us on this". Perhaps if it were just this one question it wouldn't be worthwhile getting excited about. But what will happen to all other issues and opportunities if we could miss this one in such a cheerful manner?

And along with this is the question of the bonus. What are we doing on the bonus issue? Well, we are trying to do a little bit in the *Daily Worker*, but we have terrible obstacles to get any kind of action in the Districts on the bonus question. Of course, this is

only an issue that effects two million people directly, and which only involved the problem of whether the veterans as a body will be swung into the fascist camp, or be neutralized and brought over to the workers' side! Only that! Yet, we seem in many Districts to have in practice, although we would never defend it in theory, the attitude of the *Socialist Call* on this question.

SOME POINTS ON THE STRUGGLE FOR THE LABOR PARTY

We shall not underestimate the enormous increase in the fascist danger in America, precisely because we have neglected the bonus issue and did not identify the fight enough with the trade unions and with the Left development of the masses. The fascists made excellent use of it. Every fascist group, every fascist leader and aspirant to fascist leadership, has capitalized this issue.

Concretely, can we propose any new measures of an organizational character, to realize these many questions that we have spoken about?

We have one or two new suggestions. We propose, for example, that in the struggle for the Labor Party we shall attempt to initiate committees for the Labor Party. We shall try as soon as possible to help establish a national trade union committee—a national committee for a Labor Party.

We propose that similar committees be set up everywhere on a local scale. These committees shall be organized as quickly as possible, provided that they are well organized. We do not want quickly established paper committees which have no real existence. We do not want the miscellaneous scrambling together of a few names with no particular significance. We do not want committees composed only of these already close to us. That is no use to us, in fact it will be an obstacle. We want committees that will represent the broadening of the Labor Party movement so that we will be a minority in it—a considerable minority. We don't want a Party majority on anything in this.

These committees should become the centers of active agitation and propaganda for a Labor Party to furnish outside stimulus to the task of getting local unions of the A. F. of L. on record for a Labor Party. It could be argued that such committees be brought together only on a representative basis of those elected from trade unions. But, in my opinion, this would delay progress. We need to get these unions on record for a Labor Party and get them to elect representatives. We need something to speed up this progress because, in spite of the sentiment for it, nothing is being done to organize it. Organizational work must be begun.

Another concrete question is the plan for the National Negro Congress. This is a beginning, it seems, to a real broad united-front

approach to the Negro liberation struggle. I will not go into details, but I want to call upon the leading cadres to have their eyes open, to read every directive sent out, to read the articles which will be published by Comrade Ford, and to guide yourselves accordingly. The next big step in the struggle for Negro rights will be the National Negro Congress.

Then we propose a new approach to the Socialist Party. We propose that this Plenum shall authorize a new letter to the N.E.C. of the S.P., again raising the questions of united front. We propose that on the basis of this letter, we shall in every locality again send letters to the local S.P.—a new organized drive. The principles on which this letter shall be constructed will be along the line I have indicated in this discussion. Already we can concretize a few simple directives for the letter which the P.B. will write in a few days. The Party locally should concretize this, taking the line of the national letter and taking up issues of local concern. We want to break through to the rank and file of the S.P., to carry through to the lower cadres, as well as the higher cadres.

We want to build a strong Left-wing in the Socialist Party and influence its development. We don't want to draw out from the S.P. individuals and small groups. It is of no particular use to us that individuals leave the S.P., even if they announce they are going to enter the C.P. This tends to demoralize the struggle inside the Socialist Party. It tends to create the suspicion that we are interested only in breaking up the S.P. Comrades, the most serious help we can get out of the S.P. is not in these individuals, but in the united front for which they could be of service if they remain within the S.P. There is still a tendency among Socialists to think that the united front is only a maneuver for the purpose of creating demoralization in their ranks, and individual or small group resignations help to support this idea. Those drawn out of the S.P. are not the basic workers who we want with us. Those basic elements we will have to take in great big chunks. We can get them through success of the united front. We want to tie up the Socialist locals in united front pacts with the beginning of struggle, to tie them up with the Labor Party, the Negro Congress, the American League Against War and Fascism, into our defense committees like Gallup, and the I.L.D. cases, Scottsboro, Herndon, etc.

The united front, against the capitalist attacks, is the key question of the day. For the quickest advance in the trade unions, the unemployed organizations, the building of a Labor Party, we must at this moment organize a concerted, energetic campaign to win to the united front the basic membership, and as many of the leaders as possible, of the Socialist Party.