

The Working Class and the Two-Party System

(Draft-Program Discussion)

By John Swift

"The two party system remains the form through which the overwhelming majority of the American people now express themselves in politics" (*Draft Program of the Community Party*).

THIS IS A FACT which can be hardly disputed. But it is important to know why it is so.

The allegiance of the masses to the two-party system is not something new. It has been with us for decades. Can one reason therefore that nothing new has transpired in the political thinking of the masses? After all, exactly thirty years ago, in 1924, the organized labor movement did support the third party candidacy of Robert M. LaFollette and helped roll up the imposing total of nearly five million votes—the equivalent of over ten million votes today! Is this not, as the lawyers would say, "prima facie evidence" that the labor movement since then has gone even backward politically?

But if this were true, what then is the practical possibility of realizing the immediate political tasks outlined in the Draft Program? Certainly these cannot be fulfilled if the masses have gone backward or if the nature of their attachment to the two-party system has undergone no change.

It is the purpose of this article to discuss this question, to explain why the masses, especially the labor movement, are still tied to the two-party system, and what is the actual present day level of political consciousness.

Some of the historical factors which have operated as brakes upon the political independence of the working class were dealt with by Engels in one of his letters written to Frederick Sorge in 1893. He wrote:

It is not to be denied that American conditions involve very great and peculiar difficulties.

First, the Constitution, based as in England upon party government, which causes every vote for any candidate not put up by one of the two governing parties to appear to be lost. And the American, like the Englishman, wants to influence his state; he does not throw his vote away.

Then, and more especially, immigration, which divides the workers into two groups: the native born and the foreigners, and the latter in turn into . . . many small groups, each of which understands only itself. . . . And then the Negroes. To form a single party out of these requires unusually powerful incentives. Often there is a sudden violent *clan*, but the bourgeoisies need only wait passively, and the dissimilar

elements of the working class fall apart again.

Third, through the protective tariff system and the steadily growing domestic market the workers have been exposed to a prosperity no trace of which has been seen in Europe for years now. . . . (*Letters to Americans*, p. 258).

To what extent do these factors still hold? Let us discuss the last one first. Conditions since 1893 have greatly altered the world position of U.S. capitalism. But the factor of "prosperity" cited by Engels has undoubtedly remained. Comrade Foster, in his recent article on "Marxism and the American Working Class," points out that "the rise of American imperialism as a world power, especially since the period of World War I . . . has produced economic and political effects which have definitely checked the growth of Socialist perspectives for the working class" (*Political Affairs*, Nov. 1953, p. 6).

Over the long stretch, this factor of relative prosperity has been undoubtedly the *main* historic cause for the political lagging of the American workers behind their European brothers. But this is not the only explanation for the failure of a third party to develop in recent years.

In the first place, a third-party movement, under present-day conditions, would tend to be more specifically anti-monopoly than anti-capitalist in general. In fact, all strivings toward third parties in recent times

have been mainly anti-trust in character. The LaFollette third party in 1924 was not a socialist movement. Its ideology was petty bourgeois; its goal, "trust-busting." In 1924, the labor movement which endorsed the La Follette third-party candidacy was far from socialist consciousness. It was a labor movement made up largely of the most skilled and best paid workers, the "aristocracy" of labor, and led by dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries such as Samuel Gompers.

The labor movement of today is far in advance of the labor movement of thirty years ago. In the past quarter of a century we have witnessed the growth of the trade-union movement from three to fifteen million. And while there is no straight line or mechanical one-to-one relationship between the level of trade-union organization to that of political consciousness, there is nevertheless some relationship between these two.

Trade-union consciousness concerns itself only with defending the economic interests of the workers under capitalism, not with replacing capitalism. It is, therefore, still part of capitalist ideology. But can anyone deny that trade-union consciousness, especially today, carries with it important political elements? It represents the embryonic, instinctive wrestling of the workers for class unity and class understanding. Furthermore, while the American workers are not yet anti-capitalist, in ever growing numbers they are opposed

to the economic and political power of the monopolies and view them as their enemies. It is in the past twenty-five years that American labor finally has broken through the citadel of trustified industry and achieved the organization of the majority of the workers in the mass production industries. This tremendous quantitative surge forward of the working class has carried with it certain qualitative elements of enhanced political consciousness.

This is most strikingly evident in relation to the second factor mentioned by Engels—the division of the working class into separate and frequently hostile groups of native and foreign born, of white and Negro, and of skilled and unskilled workers. The American working class is still divided ideologically and organizationally, but tremendously important headway has been made toward its homogeneity. No longer is organized labor made up exclusively of higher paid, native-born, white, skilled workers. It is no longer true that “the bourgeois need only wait passively, and the dissimilar elements of the working class fall apart again.”

Likewise, never before has organized labor so concerned itself with political problems and with what it calls “political action.” The network of Political Action bodies which criss-cross the labor movement and which flare up with renewed activity before election time is now a permanent feature of American trade unionism. Much of this political action

consists of using labor to help elect boss-controlled politicians. It does, however, at the same time, represent the recognition on the part of the workers of the close relationship between the economic struggle and politics, and from an organizational point of view at least, the need for independent political action.

The present generation of trade unionists does not expect labor to “stay out of politics.” In fact, even if the workers are still tied to the two-party system, and more particularly the Democratic Party, an increasing number of them tend to view this allegiance as something flowing from their first loyalty to their elementary class organization, their trade union. This represents an important new development from which great new advances are possible.

In dealing with the economic factor of “prosperity” we also must keep in mind that the past quarter of a century has included a full decade of tough times for the workers—the period of economic crisis referred to as the “Great Depression.” In this period, illusions about permanent prosperity and American “exceptionalism” received some hard blows on the hard anvil of bitter experience. Unrest and dissatisfaction were rife, taking the form of a great mass upheaval—one which left its indelible mark on all subsequent developments and on the mass consciousness. It was this period which finally culminated in a whole number of political victories and in the

emergence of the labor movement as a powerful majority movement of the industrial workers.

Yet the turbulent thirties did not produce a new third party, not even a repetition of the brief 1924 experience. (The 1936 Lemke third-party movement was not a progressive but a reactionary development.) This occurred despite the fact that the economic position of the workers and farmers, of the city middle classes, and particularly of the Negro people was indeed precarious and frequently desperate. Surprisingly enough, the great political upsurge of that period took another course. It expressed itself in a mass shift of these groups to one of the two old parties, the Democratic Party. So overwhelming was this wave that it swept the Negro vote out of its traditional Republican column, swallowed up the socialist vote, which fell from 880,000 in 1932 to 187,000 in 1936, absorbed the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota, and completely wiped out the Progressive Party of Wisconsin.

Why this development?

A clue to part of the answer can be found in Engels' remark that the American worker "wants to influence his state," and "does not throw his vote away."

But was this not also true in 1912 and 1924, in which years some five million votes were given to minor party candidates? The difference can be explained in but one way: the worker was ready to dump the old parties *only* when he was convinced that there was no appreciable dif-

ference between them. So long as he thought that there was something to be gained from one or the other major party he refused to "throw his vote away."

We may disagree with the wisdom displayed. We may point to the treachery of labor leaders who misled the workers into frequently seeing a difference in substance where there was only a difference in shadow. But we cannot deny that this thinking on the part of the worker greatly explains the way he voted. We must not quibble with facts. Fault finding is never a substitute for fact finding.

There was one major "exception" to the trend in the thirties. This was in the state of New York, where the American Labor Party was born in 1937-8. The A.L.P. arose in revolt against the entrenched, reactionary, corrupt Democratic Party rule in New York City. It was made possible because in New York there was a strong bloc of independent and progressive voters and an important Left-wing influence. But the above two factors were not sufficient to establish the American Labor Party.

It required still another—the special feature of the New York election law which enabled the formation of *electoral coalitions* between different parties and party groupings. In New York State, contrary to most other states in the nation, cross-filing was permitted—that is, a candidate was permitted to run on more than one party ticket at the same time. This peculiarity of the New

York election law enabled the independent voters in New York to form a new party without thereby endangering the election of those major party candidates who in their eyes still deserved support. In practice, this performed the function of delivering an even larger vote to the Democratic Party presidential, state and congressional tickets. This "exception," therefore, even though it brought about the defeat of the Tammany machine in New York, did not contradict the national trend, it only served to strengthen it.

This leads us to the point made by Engels about the difference in the American electoral system as compared with continental Europe. In a letter written in 1895, shortly before his death, Engels explained why the British workers were so slow in forming a labor party. The workers, he wrote, have a "socialist instinct" which "is becoming ever stronger." But: "Almost all the labor leaders are unreliable," and "the two big bourgeois parties stand ready, money bag in hand, to buy up whomever they can." At the same time, continues Engels, "a periodical costs a tremendous amount of money, as does a candidacy for Parliament.... Hence anyone who does not sell himself to one of these parties finds it hard to become a candidate." On top of all this, adds Engels, "there is no second ballot, the relative majority or, as you Americans say, a plurality being sufficient for election. Everything is arranged with *only two* parties in mind; a third party can at

most tip the balance one way or the other until it is as strong as the other two" (*Letters to Americans*, pp. 268-9).

It is as if Engels had written of the United States today. Here, too, the workers have a basic class instinct, which is becoming stronger. Here, too, most top labor leaders are unreliable—to put it mildly. And there is no country in the world where such a Big Business monopoly exists over the press and all avenues of communication, (radio, TV, etc.), and where such shamefully large sums of money are poured out to buy elections.

In the U.S. there is also no second ballot and a plurality is sufficient for election. What this means in practice can strikingly be seen when contrasted to other countries. In France, for example, it is possible to vote for a first-choice candidate one week and then, if no candidate has received a majority, to switch to a second choice in the final election the following week. Thus there is less fear of a "lost vote." Weaker parties can run candidates, strive to get a maximum vote for these, and then, if necessary, form a coalition with other groups on the second ballot to defeat the most reactionary candidates.

Furthermore, in European countries, including Britain, national administrations are elected by parliament and not by direct popular vote as in this country. The American system has the appearance of being more democratic, actually it is less so.

Where administrations are set up and responsible to parliaments, they can be forced out of office by a "lack of confidence" vote. Hence they must be more responsive to the popular mood for they do not automatically stay in office for four years as in this country. Also, minor parties, through their votes in parliament, can help elect, maintain, or defeat an administration and can form coalitions within parliament corresponding to the issues of the time and the exact correlation of class forces.

In the United States—starting with the way an Administration is elected, to the way in which Congress organizes its work and sets up its committees, all the way down to each election district—it is the two-party system which is given precedence, preference, and, not least of all, patronage. Electoral laws are stacked against minor parties. New restrictive moats are dug constantly to fortify the two-party structure and shield it from popular assault. Even the victory won by the Populists and Bull Moose movements, in compelling the establishment of the direct primary system for the selection of candidates has helped bolster the two-party system by increasing its elasticity. It has provided a first and second ballot arrangement, but one that is contained within and helps buttress the two-party arrangement. And since then, state after state, particularly the most highly populated industrial states, have erected new barriers for getting on the ballot as, for example, they frequently demand

that the independent candidates file before the result of the Primary Election is known, and prohibit or restrict the nomination of the same candidates by different parties. This is now even true in New York State, where the election laws have been amended to prevent independents from filing in other party primaries and where the right to cross filing depends on the prior approval of the county political bosses.

Thus, "everything is arranged with only two parties in mind," everything is done to impress upon the voter that anything short of a vote for a major party candidate is a "lost" vote.

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If all this has been a deterrent to the formation of a mass new party, it is by no means sufficient to prevent one when the people are determined to make the break. When that day comes, these impediments will be swept away like brushwood in a flood. All that is required is what Engels called "unusually powerful incentives."

Have there not been "powerful incentives"? There certainly have, especially during the "Great Depression" decade. Why then did large masses think they had nothing to lose from taking a third party course in 1912 and 1924 but thought otherwise during the crisis '30's?

The correct answer to this question is of great importance. It will enable us to grasp that which is *new* in the political life and understanding of the working class of this generation.

In 1924, to take that year as an example, the independent voters did not believe it made much difference which major party won. As between John W. Davis, the Democratic corporation lawyer, and Calvin Coolidge, the Republican Boston police strike-breaker, many millions of workers and farmers saw neither a lesser choice nor a lesser evil. To them it made little difference which reactionary candidate or party won.

In the '30's, something changed. Large masses became aware of a new danger, the danger of *extreme reaction*. This fear of extreme reaction arose from two vital experiences: the economic crisis and the rise of fascism.

The economic crisis was a period of powerful mass struggles from which the masses learned much. In the first place they learned that this crisis was different than preceding ones in both depth and duration. It led not to a new prosperity but to a new economic plunge in 1938. Instinctively they sensed that henceforth they could expect even less security than in the past. American capitalism was no longer what it had been cracked up to be. From the seething sea of ferment—from bonus marches and hunger marches, from street demonstrations, sit-down strikes and picket lines—there arose the ever more insistent demand that the government had a responsibility to guarantee the people with jobs and livelihood, and the determination to judge parties, Administrations, and the economic system as

such, by their readiness to accept this yardstick.

The demand for jobs and security was met head-on at first with brutal ruling-class violence. But the very strength of the popular movement, in time, compelled a change from repression to concession. The switch, under mass pressure, to a policy of concession and reform was not new for the bourgeoisie. Traditionally, capitalism rules by either the method of repression or reform, and in democratic countries most frequently by a combination of both. This was how the ruling class in previous periods of difficulty was able to "get off the spot" so to speak, and to prevent any permanent upsets to its two-party system of rule. In the instance of the '30's the policy of agreeing to reforms had advantages for the ruling class. First, it still had ample reserves from which to make concessions. Second, through such a course it could, temporarily at least, save the two-party system from the threatening rise of powerful independent political forces and likewise replace old illusions with new ones about a "democratic capitalism."

There are always differences within the ranks of the ruling class as to which method is preferable for dealing with the masses. In the '30's, however, these differences began to assume a new significance. The dominant monopolies were violently opposed to a policy of concessions. They saw in the emerging "New Deal" something exceedingly dangerous and sinister. They recognized that

due to the chronic nature of the crisis which capitalism was facing, due to the new level of mass struggle and consciousness, even small concessions could prove dangerous for them. Small concessions would not solve much and would only feed the demand for larger and more substantial ones. This was a Pandora's box which when opened could start a process threatening their entire empire of loot and plunder.

Both these factors—the new vitality and breadth of the popular movement for change, as well as the two-fold ruling class reaction to this new development—finally made possible the emergence of a loose kind of alliance between the labor movement, the Negro people, and other democratic and pro-reform sections of the population. The Democratic Party, which for partisan reasons required a broader social base to transform itself into a majority party, allied itself with these independent political forces and became their electoral vehicle. The 1932 elections represented a swing from the “ins” to the “outs,” but by the time of the 1936 elections the new alliance had become a fact.

Thus, in the eyes of many, the Democratic Party nationally became associated with a policy of reform, of being ready to intervene in the economic process to aid the “little people.” The Republican Party, on the other hand, by its vociferous opposition to all progressive “New Deal” measures, by its branding these as “creeping socialism,” became identified as the party of privilege.

The coming to power of fascism in Germany, the experience of the whole anti-fascist world struggle, the rise of the Liberty League, the America Firsters, and pro-fascist demagogues such as Father Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith also left their imprint on the thinking of the people.

Thus the fear of extreme reaction became a new factor with which to contend.

Were the masses justified in this fear? They certainly were. Our Party played no small part, especially from 1935 on, in teaching the masses the meaning of fascism. We taught that, in this period of capitalist decay, powerful forces of monopoly were seeking to wipe out and destroy the very democratic liberties which capitalism had brought into being when it was still a progressive force. For these bourgeois democratic liberties, given new life and meaning by a great and aroused movement of the people, could lead to important people's victories.

The danger of extreme reaction and fascism did not end with the victory in the war. In certain respects it became even more menacing. American imperialism had emerged from the war as the most powerful economic and military state in the capitalist world. Thus it was “prepared” to embark on a new course to solve its market problems and its need for maximum profits—the course of achieving complete world domination. The drive toward reaction and fascism, as our Party and

its leaders, Comrades William Z. Foster and Eugene Dennis, repeatedly pointed out, became the hand-maiden of the drive toward a new world war for world domination.

This danger was all the greater for still another reason. New illusions had dulled the instinct and corroded the thinking of large masses. These illusions grew out of the full employment which came with war production. For the older generation the fear of economic crisis was still acute, but so long as they had jobs and steady incomes, they closed their eyes to the seamy side of events. They refused to see those things they did not want to see. In this they took their cue from the top labor leadership. While the workers were dissatisfied with the Truman Administration, they nevertheless held on to the belief that he was a continuer of the Roosevelt policies and a barrier, even if weak, to the political dominance of the extreme reactionary anti-labor forces. As for the young people, the depression decade was entirely out of their ken—something they heard about or vaguely remembered but had not actually experienced. The fact that the U.S. was on the anti-fascist side of the Second World War also made many Americans completely insensitive to the aggressive, reactionary character of post-war U.S. foreign policy. All of these factors strengthened illusions in the progressive nature of American capitalism.

Thus the fear of extreme reaction carried over into the postwar period

—especially for the workers and the Negro people. What the progressive minded masses failed to comprehend, however, was that the new anti-democratic threat stemmed directly from the country's reactionary foreign policy. The Truman Administration was no barrier to this virus; it was its carrier. Truman's policies were undermining the victories won in the '30s and '40s, were demoralizing and dispersing the progressive majority of Roosevelt's day, and thus paving the way for the victory of extreme reaction.

The failure of the working class, the Negro people, and other progressive social forces to see this *new* situation explains what happened to the Wallace third party vote in 1948. It had great vitality and potentiality in the early part of the election campaign but evaporated into thin air by election day. This was especially true after Truman put on his special election duds, styled after F.D.R., and appealed to the peace, labor and Negro votes. Many workers agreed with the criticisms of the Progressive Party but feared that by taking the plunge in a third party direction they could lose all that had been gained under the "New Deal." They feared that by voting for the greater good they would wind up with the greater evil.

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Thus, through all the vicissitudes of two decades of rich political change, the alliance of the workers, the Negro people and other low income groups with the Democratic

Party has remained intact. Nor is this likely to change now that the Republicans have taken power. On the contrary, the rise of McCarthyism has made the menace of fascism both grave and imminent. While both major parties have McCarthyite forces within them, there is no question but that the Republican Party at this time is its main incubator. Also, the fact that the Republican Party is in power as the new economic crisis unfolds, feeds the illusions that the Democratic Party is an anti-depression party.

This already can be seen by the results of the 1953 off-year elections. Of special interest was the election in the 9th Congressional District of Wisconsin. Here, a predominantly Republican district, which never before had gone Democratic but which had been in the '20s a hot-bed for LaFollette Progressivism, did not go in a third party direction again, but instead went Democratic for the first time. This was made possible by a sweep of Republican farm votes into the Democratic column which together with the labor Democratic vote, clinched the election.

Likewise in the South, where new Negro and white independent electoral forces are emerging with great vitality, the struggle is centered within the primaries of the Democratic Party. This movement may become rapidly transformed into new state parties where the Dixiecrats cannot be dislodged from control, but that is not its orientation at this time.

Had the Democrats won in 1952, the approaching economic crisis would have resulted in a strong mood in the ranks of organized labor for a new party. It also would have brought about a more sweeping shift to the Republican Party, particularly to its extreme McCarthy wing. This wing, because of its special type of demagoguery, could best take advantage of the economic crisis.

Hence the Republican victory *prior* to the outbreak of an economic crisis has two consequences. It strengthens the immediate danger of extreme reaction, holds up an earlier crystallization of a national third party, and continues the illusions of large masses in the Democratic Party. On the other hand, it guarantees that the Republicans will be held responsible for the crisis by wide masses, even if the McCarthy faction will attempt to hold both the Democrats and Eisenhower responsible. That is one reason among others why the McCarthyites, from a tactical point of view, want to be able to separate themselves from the failures of the Eisenhower Administration while at the same time pressing upon it to carry out more and more of their program.

A mass national third party led by labor is not likely to develop, therefore, until the immediate menace of fascism is defeated. For labor and its allies will not break away in a third party direction so long as what Engels said still holds true, namely, that "a third party can at

most tip the balance one way or the other, until it is as strong as the other two."

Does this mean that the perspective of a new nationwide party, a farmer-labor party, is now out of the picture or relegated to the far distant future? It does not. Given the defeat of McCarthyism by a popular majority "so strong that it not only changes Administrations but imposes on a new Congress and a new Administration a new course in domestic and foreign affairs" (*Draft Program*), many new alignments will begin to shape up. For the nature of the problems confronting the nation is bound to sharpen up differences inside both old parties and bring them to a head.

In the Democratic Party, labor, the Negro people, the working farmers and small business cannot for long live in one political house with the McCarran-Farley-Dixiecrat forces of reaction. Sooner or later these antagonistic class groupings must seek divorce. In the last two presidential elections the Dixiecrats refused to support the Democratic ticket and in 1952 threw their support to the Republican, Eisenhower. In Nevada, too, McCarran supported the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate when his own machine candidate was defeated in the Democratic primary election. Thus the outlines of the split in the Democratic Party are more than evident.

The main danger in the Democratic Party nationally at this moment is not its outright capture by

the Farley-McCarran-Dixiecrat forces. It is the Adlai Stevenson policy of *uniting with* these forces and the failure of the labor movement to take the leadership of the fight against McCarthyism on all fronts, including against McCarthy's allies within the Democratic Party. Any appeasement of McCarthyism within the Democratic Party can only demoralize the very independent electoral forces without whom the Democratic Party cannot hope to win.

In the Republican Party, too, antagonistic class groupings must fly apart with the accelerated pace of economic and political events. Even now the only bond which unites these is the pork barrel of federal patronage and corruption. Driven from control of Congress and the Administration, the Republican Party, too, will begin to pull apart like taffy over heat. When McCarthyism receives its first major electoral trouncing its vote getting lustre will fade into its opposite, and many who today support it for partisan reasons will be anxious to dump it. Nor can one exclude the emergence of a new extreme reactionary party such as Col. McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune* has been threatening for some time.

In still another of his revealing letters about the American political scene, Engels, in 1892, wrote:

There is no place yet in America for a *third* party, I believe. The divergence of interests even in *the same* class group is so great in that tremendous

area that wholly different groups and interests are represented in each of the two big parties, depending on the locality, and almost each particular section of the possessing class has its representatives in each of the two parties to a very large degree, though *today* big industry forms the core of the Republicans on the whole, just as the big landowners of the South that of the Democrats (*Letters to Americans*, p. 238-9).

Most of this is still true. But there is also something new. These "wholly different groups and interests" could continue to be represented in each party as long as American capitalism was a rising and expanding system, for then the collision of interests within the "possessing class" and between it and the exploited masses could be resolved without upsetting the ideal arrangement—for the ruling class—of the present two-party system.

The period ahead is bound to be different. It is bound to be a period of sharp class battles and sharper differences within the ruling class as well—differences over how best to hold the masses in check—over which course to pursue in foreign affairs—and, over how to divide up the shrinking profit pie.

In this process old political forms will be discarded and be replaced with new ones. What the exact process will be depends on many circumstances, but one thing is certain. Through it all the *present* two-party system will disappear and the working class will march under its own

political flag as the leader of a great new coalition party capable of leading the entire nation against the small handful of monopolists.

Thus, to sum up, it can be said that the present attachment to the existing two-party system is not exactly what it was in the past. It has a new quality arising from the new period in which we live—the deeper general crisis of capitalism, the new level of mass organization and consciousness, and the dire threat of extreme reaction to destroy all bourgeois democratic liberties. Only by winning the fight against extreme reaction can further headway be made, for losing it means losing all that the American people have won over generations. It means fascism and war.

To defeat McCarthyism and extreme reaction requires a new level of united mass struggle for peace, jobs and democratic rights. It requires a new, more united, more independent and advanced role of organized labor in the political arena and in behalf of the entire nation.

The 1954 elections are rapidly approaching. Their outcome will decide much. At this particular moment there is a grave danger that the labor and liberal forces will not swiftly and energetically enough enter the primary elections with the aim of selecting the *best possible* candidates. By winning primary election victories, labor and its allies can strengthen their political position, perfect their independent election machinery, broaden and cement their alliance,

gain new confidence in their own political strength and save themselves from the dilemma of being compelled to choose between greater and lesser reactionary candidates in November.

In the unfolding struggle ahead the role and responsibility of the Communist Party is great. While concentrating on the immediate struggle it must see the whole line of march, the present difficult terrain

with its marshes and pitfalls as well as the distant peaks still to be scaled. The Draft Program helps our Party to see and point the way ahead. It shows the various stages in the struggle and the relationship of one to the other. To understand this Program and to learn how to fight for it ever more effectively should become the objective of every Communist.

A Russian edition of William Z. Foster's *Outline Political History of the Americas* was published in the Soviet Union in 1953, and was reviewed at length in the March, 1954 issue of *Kommunist* (Moscow) by V. Yermolaev and G. Sevostyanov. The Soviet scholars begin their review by remarking:

Foster's book represents a great contribution to the study of the history of the peoples and countries of the Western Hemisphere. It gives an outline of the history of the peoples of the Americas, practically for the first time in historical literature, on the basis of Marxist-Leninist methodology, an outline which is quite extensive both as to the scope of the problems raised and the depth of their treatment.

This paragraph is followed by a 12-page exposition and analysis of the contents of the volume, and the concluding paragraph of the review reads:

Foster's book is of serious political and scientific importance. It serves not only as a rich source for the study of the past and present of the peoples of the Americas, but at the same time discloses the means of struggle of these peoples for peace, democracy and Socialism. This book will help historians in their further studies of the problems of the history of the peoples and countries of the Americas. At the same time it will serve to assist Soviet students and teachers. It will be received with great interest by broad circles of the Soviet public.

We are happy to be able to inform our readers that this volume, first issued by International Publishers in 1951, and out-of-print for some time, will be available again this summer.—Ed.
