

# CPA Discussion Page

Open to All CPA Members—Send Your Contributions to Communist Political Association, 35 E. 12 St., N. Y. C.

## Postwar in Light of Resolution

By IRVING HERMAN, Chicago.

After much thought and study of the Duclos article, and the resolutions of the National Board, and as a result of considerable discussion with many CPA members, I am firmly convinced that our organization developed a policy based on an opportunistic distortion of Marxism. Had we continued along our past thinking it could have had disastrous affects in paralyzing the masses, particularly the working class, making them a prey before the reactionary onslaught of big business. As a member of the Illinois-Indiana District Committee, I must and do assume responsibility for having accepted, defended and carried through such an erroneous policy as that adopted by our National Committee with the exception of Foster.

We developed theories that, as a result of Teheran, imperialism had or could change its nature, that instead of being moribund and reactionary it had become transformed and would play a progressive role. We, in affect, rejected Lenin's analysis of imperialism. We foresaw an imperialism in which the main contradictions of capitalism were in the process of being eliminated. In this picture, sharpened class relations do not exist, capitalist crisis is done away with, conflicts among the imperialists and between them and the Socialist world are disappearing, and the colonial peoples are to be offered freedom through collaboration and voluntary agreement among the imperialist powers.

In developing such theories we revised the science of Marxism-Leninism and fell under the hypnotic theories expounded by Kautsky ("ultra-imperialism") and by Bukharin ("organized capitalism"). According to these, imperialism would play a progressive role, could solve the contradictions of capitalism, could replace the inherent anarchy of production by planning, would end economic crisis and wars among the imperialists. From this they foresaw the possibility of the peaceful evolution of capitalism to socialism and without sharp class struggles.

Can imperialism, monopoly capitalism, solve all these contradictions? In a speech delivered to the 14th conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union some 20 years ago, Stalin, the world's greatest living Marxist, had this to say on the subject:

"Were it not for the irregular and spasmodic development of capitalism thanks to which the various

capitalist countries come into conflict with and wage war upon one another in their endeavor to acquire colonial possessions; if capitalism could develop without having to export capital to lands of backward economic life, lands whence raw materials are obtainable, lands of cheap labor power; if, instead of being sent abroad, the surplus capital accumulated in the great cities were devoted to a serious development of agriculture and to effecting an improvement in the material conditions of the peasantry; if, finally, this surplus were used to raise the general standard of life of the working class—then there would be no question of an intensification of the exploitations of the peasantry under the capitalist system, or of a fiercer oppression of the peoples in colonies and dependencies, or of conflicts and wars between capitalist lands.

"But were these things so, capitalism would no longer be capitalism! As a matter of fact, capitalism cannot develop without intensifying its own inherent contradictions, and thereby heaping up the factors which will help to destroy it."

A few words on the postwar economic situation.

While it is true that industry's requirements for industrial reconversion, the unfulfilled consumer demands and the stored up buying power reflected in bank savings and War Bonds, the demands for goods of all kinds from devastated Europe and other lands, etc., may help to cushion in part the economic shock which otherwise would be very sharp, yet it would be wrong to think that American capitalism can avoid for long serious economic dislocations and crisis. If anything, the war has sharpened the basic contradictions of capitalism, for example, that between production and consumption. Especially is this so when we consider that in the course of the war our productive capacity has been doubled.

The increased wartime agricultural production in time will present an acute problem. We should not forget that agriculture in the past lagged behind other branches of the economy, that following the last war agriculture was in a chronic state of crisis.

Comrade Browder visualized that the problem of postwar markets could be solved by expanding foreign exports by some 10 times their prewar level and by roughly doubling the income of the working class at home. Even the most optimistic bourgeois statesmen and econo-

mists could see no more than one-quarter to one-third of the foreign trade visualized by Browder.

Furthermore, few of them see any possibility of even maintaining the wartime national income. For example, the U. S. News, a magazine of business, while trying generally to depict a rosy postwar economic future, predicts that the national income will reach its height in 1945, that from then on it will decline, that by 1947 (by which time it says the war with Japan will have been over) it will have fallen by \$16,000,000,000 and after that by another \$5,000,000,000.

While undoubtedly foreign trade will be greater for some time than it was before the war, the rosy possibilities of such foreign trade visualized by Browder through vast industrialization in all parts of the world are utopian. For example, Browder spoke of the vast industrialization possibilities in the economically backward countries. But these countries are largely colonies and dependencies. Imperialist domination of them is the main factor retarding their industrial development, particularly as it relates to building large-scale basic industries.

As to the domestic situation, it is evident that monopoly capital will not voluntarily agree to doubling the incomes of the masses. What is more, the working class will not only have to fight for higher wages, but will have to struggle to even retain the weekly take-home wages won during the war. Barron's weekly publication on national business and finance, in its May 28 issue, polemizes against the conception of higher wages and says that it will "discourage new investment."

The big capitalist circles are not averse to having millions of unemployed as a reserve army to depress wages and to be used as a club against the unions. Recently the *Chicago Daily News* editorially ridiculed the whole idea of full employment. There is much evidence that many capitalist circles favor dismantling those government-built war plants which they have no direct use for, and destroying those goods which cannot be readily sold.

It is evident that the working class must assert its independent role, rallying around it the farmers and middle classes and those sections of capital who are ready to support a program in the interests of the people. They must fight to achieve such a people's program in the face of bitter resistance by the big monopolists. Such a people's program, I feel, is embodied in the resolution of the National Board.

## Free Discussion Held Guarantee of Marxist Line

Editor:

May I add my impressions concerning the recent serious discussions?

It seems to me that the leading people in our organization up to this point have stopped thinking for themselves and have accepted Browder's thesis as gospel. Only in this way can one explain why an entire party adopted an anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist position which held its grip for 18 months without one word of overt protest.

Browder hoped to allay the fears of the monopolists, who are opposed to social and economic improvement in society, by calling upon the workers to remain docile "for generations to come." He argued that if, in the postwar period labor should strike for better conditions, the capitalists would be displeased and would retaliate. Retaliation would lead to struggles. Struggles would lead to strengthening reactionary capitalism which would organize the fascist brigands. The result would be chaos and the peace of the world would be kaput.

I remember the Social Democrats in Germany advancing the same

theories although not as bluntly as Browder. Browder's grand illusion of abolishing or "minimizing" the class struggle within our present society so as to appease the evil forces which lead to fascism would have turned us in the same direction which the theories of the Social Democrats brought Germany.

It is my opinion that Browder's domination of thought in our movement has been very unhealthy. The fact is that the opinion of the outstanding Communist leaders had been suppressed. Browder's leadership created a stifling atmosphere in the Communist movement.

I have been wondering how it is possible that within a quarter of a century the Communists have twice adopted a revisionist program.

• Lovestone's program, by the way, was far to the left of the two although it led in the same direction as Browder's. Browder was one of those who fought Lovestone and his policies but a decade and a half later, he brings forward an "improved" Lovestonism, and hands it

down from above as pure Marxism. It seems to me that in both cases, the cause may be traced to "one-man leadership" which rested upon personal rather than Marxist followers.

• Credit should be given to William Z. Foster who refused to take the "pills—fit for a horse to swallow," as Mike Gold has picturesquely described Browder's thesis.

I would like to add that I don't agree with Duclos on the question of the dissolution of the CPUSA. Browder, too, makes this a crucial question which it is not. The crucial question is that of program.

The two dangers at present, in my opinion lie: 1) in the fact that Browder refuses to correct his ways, 2) that the Communist movement might swing into a sectarian approach to the problem of the U.S.A. The latter danger can be avoided, as I see it, if the Communists down below and the workers, are listened to more closely and that they are encouraged to think and speak without fear.

Sincerely,  
F. DODGE.

## Many Organizational Weaknesses Must Be Removed

To a member of a local club executive, the Resolution of the National Board comes as a welcome breath of fresh air, an answer to questions that have long stirred in the minds of members and sympathizers. The program for our nation and the world is complete and set forth so clearly that all must be spurred to action with renewed vigor and self-sacrificing zeal. The analysis of past errors evokes pardonable pride in an organization that is absolutely unique in its ability to criticize itself, learn from its experience and maintain firm unity.

I cannot find a single sentence in the resolution with which I could possibly disagree. My purpose in offering this discussion is to propose to fill a gap, a most serious omission, which, if not remedied, will have an adverse effect on our future activities and will facilitate the continuation of the conditions that made possible the errors into which our movement drifted.

I am sure that our club is typical of a large number in our Association, which carry on no independent activity worth mentioning, and are engaged in the endless task of maintaining contact with the membership. A study of the ills of such a club will point up in high relief the organizational shortcomings that hamper our work and set a limit to our achievements.

Without, for the moment, trying to analyze, let us simply list the weaknesses, as they appear on the surface.

(1) Average attendance at meetings—10 percent. (2) Year-around absentees—60 percent. (3) Consistent activity—only one—Worker Route—participation—5 percent. (4) Membership in mass organizations—40 percent; almost all active. (5) Leaders 100 percent engrossed in routine business and visiting members. (6) Literature sales—almost nil.

The list is incomplete, but will suffice to indicate what most of us have experienced at first hand. This is nothing new, and Comrade Williamson for one has been writing excellent articles in an attempt to teach us how to improve the situation.

My contention is that the difficulty is basic. Furthermore, the errors cited in the Resolution cannot be saddled with an appreciable part of the blame, as these conditions have existed for a long time, and are the fertile soil in which such distortions of Marxim-Leninism can thrive.

We pride ourselves on our inner-democracy, and justly so. There are few organizations that can match our record in this respect. Yet right here is where we must look for the weak link in the chain. The fault does not lie in our set-up, for we certainly possess all the necessary machinery, and we know how to use it. The difficulty is inherent in our habits and tradition, handed down from an earlier period, when we were much more compact, more mobile, more disciplined, and ever so much more sectarian.

It should hardly be necessary to point out to an organization of Marxists that a decision will be made effective by the membership to the extent that the members have participated in the discussion leading up to the decision. Yet in our day-to-day activities, how many of our club, county and district leaders make use of this axiom? Certainly, the difficulties are tremendous, especially in war-time, but the penalty for disregarding this basic principle is that programs remain on paper, or are put into effect by a small percentage of the members. I have actually heard functionaries, who should know better, lay the blame for the failure of a plan on the business or non-cooperativeness of the rank and file members.

I can almost hear a thousand voices shouting, "But how is it possible to obtain participation in decisions when always the same few

faithful work horses appear at meetings?" The answer is ludicrously simple—my "voices" are putting the cart before the horse. The reason why most absentees prefer other meetings, the movies, or their homes on CPA meeting nights is that they see no particular point in attending. They are just plain NOT INTERESTED in the things that usually take place at our meetings. Either they are never asked to help make decisions or their opinions are invited in such a way that only one conclusion is welcomed, or again perhaps there are no terribly important or interesting decisions to be made at the periodic meetings of the club.

I would like to expand somewhat on the lack of interest in our meetings on the part of many members. Again an example from my own club. Brother A wants to engage in some form of activity and has a little time to spare. We have a Worker route that is precariously manned and can always use more people. But Brother A cannot be convinced that he should be the one to reinforce this activity. He has his reasons, period and sometimes exclamation mark. It happens that Brother A also considers working in the YMCA, the ailing local Democratic Party, or the high-society-controlled war organizations as not down his alley, especially because he would have to work as the lone CPA member (the club leaders, you must remember, are too busy carrying out urgent County directives on routine work to spend any time breaking ground in these directions). So Brother A is drawn into some of the tasks of holding the club together, such as sending out notices or tickets, or visiting delinquent members, etc. Brother A and most people like him soon retreat back into their shells and in turn are "visited."

Have I drawn too dismal a picture? I don't believe so. Certainly there are bright spots. Much good work has been done, and some brilliant work. Our members working as individuals in various organizations are doing a generally excellent job. There is, however, no point in a discussion of this nature to cite examples of objectives attained due to correct action. We all know that this happens occasionally, though in general my description holds true.

It appears that I have set forth an indictment of the leadership, particularly in the intermediate and lower ranks, and unfortunately cannot escape the conclusion that our functionaries have not consistently applied the Marxist-Leninist training that the organization has given them. As members, we must all share the responsibility for allowing such conditions to exist. It is easy to see that the logical result of such a state must be periodic theoretical errors and serious weakening of the influence of the CPA.

I submit the following proposals, in an attempt to supply a remedy, and invite members to criticize and amplify them.

1—Insist upon the last ounce of democratic procedure as laid down in our Constitution and By-laws.

2—Initiate a period of serious and organized study of our Marxist classics.

3—Pay much greater attention to the quality of our elected leaders. Give preference to those who are most in touch with actual field activity.

4—Back each responsible head with a strong and active executive committee. Insist that policy be set by the whole committee.

5—Draw active people into leading committees (an old stunt, but seldom effectively accomplished).

6—Consistently give priority to community activity over routine organizational tasks. The effect will be the opposite of what you might expect.

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