

# The Proposed C. P. Changes

By Robert Minor

We continue today where we left off yesterday in answering two questions together:

*"How can the labor movement function if not as class against class?"*

*"Does the line of the Party signify giving up the class struggle?"*

Yesterday we said that the labor movement in the present crisis of war and in the period of post-war reconstruction does not and will not pursue the policy that is indicated by the slogan of "class against class." In regard to the other question, however, we said the idea that the class struggle will vanish from life during this period of war and post-war reconstruction is quite a different proposition requiring an

## Answers to Questions

entirely different answer. We explained that the difference is that "class struggle" is a scientific name for a basic law of motion of capitalism itself, which nobody can "abolish" without abolishing capitalism—no matter whether he wishes to or not. Now to resume.

Look at the question of class struggle in the concrete terms of the existing organizations of the working class through which the workers conduct their struggle. Of course, the outstanding example is the trade unions; these are the real class organizations of the millions of workers.

Analyze it from the point of view of what is to be done in respect to these organizations. Right away you will see how utterly inconsistent with the real life of the vast organizations are the conclusions about "giving up the class struggle" which can be written so neatly on a piece of paper, derived from the fact that we are now in a great alliance of all classes for national unity in this war for freedom.

The existence of the organs of struggle of the working class is not a matter of "policy," to be adopted today and laid aside tomorrow.

When anyone proposes a weakening of America's great trade union movement, or any obstruction of its freedom to function fully and to grow in strength in its place in American national life, every trade unionist, every person of a reasonable degree of enlightenment is stirred up to fight, knowing that it is a proposal for weakening the very foundation of democratic American life. Everyone would know, if only by instinct, that there cannot be a survival of a democratic life or government in a modern industrial country if there is not within that country a powerful, widely organized and freely operating trade union movement.

Trade unions arise in every capitalist society without exception and regardless of what policy may be adopted to permit or in the attempt to suppress them. No matter if it is a Bismarck in Germany or a Pinkerton hired by the early trusts in America that tries to prevent it, trade unions grow and must grow in all modern industrial countries. It is a natural law of social development, which cannot be displaced. For 20 years the underworld criminal Mussolini, and for 11 years the foul Hitler tried with bloody persecutions and with corruption to destroy the workers' trade union movement and to force it into the mold of a slave organization; but Mussolini went down in Italy where Italian trade unions stood, as though by a miracle, stronger than ever; and the Nazi toad will be trodden underfoot not only by American, Russian and other liberating armies, but also by the German labor movement which was not destroyed because in modern society labor movements cannot be destroyed.

That is what Engels meant when he said: "The trade unions . . . even amid the worst reaction [as in Paris in 1878] can simply no longer be smashed."

That is what Lenin meant when he said that "trade unions are not only historically necessary, but historically inevitable organizations" of the industrial working class.

The trade unions are "permanent." That they continue to exist through every form of modern society is proven by the experience of Russia, where, as Lenin said, under Socialism the trade unions "embrace nearly the whole of the working class," that they are "organizations of the ruling, dominant, governing class," and a "reservoir of state power" (although they are not state organizations as some mistakenly say). Trade unions are inevitable in the modern world, and if there is any question of their existence in another epoch it is a "remote" one and, as Lenin said, "Our grandchildren will talk about it."

If we spoke of the vanishing of the class struggle in a capitalist society, a practical conclusion would be that the trade unions and the labor movement generally would have no further function. This would be obviously a monstrous and ruinous piece of idocy. The trade unions are only now entering into their most important and indispensable part of the national and international life. Their very growth in size, maturity and prestige is partly stimulated by the recognition on the part of millions of workers who never before took part in them, that a great national war of liberation, and a period of peaceful international post-war reconstruction, are proven to be impossible without them. They are the indispensable vehicle for the participation of the most important sections of the masses in national unity. As long as labor power is bought and sold for the profit of "free enterprise," that fact alone is the essential fact of class struggle; and the elimination of trade unions, if such an insane thought could be entertained, would mean the pulling down of the whole structure of civilization and the plunging of the whole capitalist world into a chaos of Nazi-Japanese conquest.

The Hearsts and the Roy Howards call for the destruction of the trade unions, but we know what they are.

No one will understand labor's role of struggle in this present war unless he sees that a powerful and mature labor movement is capable of acting "together as a class" (as Marx expressed it)—capable of deliberately choosing a policy suited to the interests of human progress, and then carrying it out.

A weak labor movement today could not lay aside the policy of strikes and stoppages of production. The inevitable clash of immediate economic class interests leads to strike struggles which can be prevented only by the workers themselves through the strength and prestige of their own organizations.

To many persons it is inconceivable that abstentions from strikes can be a result of strength of the labor movement. Many cannot see that the making and carrying out of a nation-wide agreement of the entire labor movement with the capitalists and the capitalist class, in support of a necessary and just national war, is an evidence of maturity and strength of the working class and the labor movement.

Yet, under these conditions, this is a fact.

Disoriented persons on the fringe of the labor movement conclude that the present policy is the old "Gompers" opportunism of 30 years ago. It is not. Opportunism is a policy of compromise against the interests of the workers; the present policy in support of this people's war is in the interests of the working class and of all progressive humanity. A concrete indication is

the fact that every one of the rottenest representatives of opportunism—from John L. Lewis to the Trotskyite saboteurs and Norman Thomas, plus the New Leader "social-democrats," is trying openly or otherwise to wreck labor's present pro-war policy.

But this does not mean an absence of class struggle. On the contrary, the very existence of all of these opportunist corruptions is a by-product of an existing class struggle.

Nor is it solely a matter of the economic opposition that rises necessarily out of the buying and selling of labor power; for, as Engels said, the struggle of the working class has "three sides, the theoretical, political and the practical economical," which "form one harmonious and well-planned entity." The whole of the "three sides" of the struggle of the working class enters into the public life of the nation as an indispensable part of its democratic strength.

Anyone who examines the weak and wavering inconsistency, the dangerous lapses in the will to make war resolutely, that are found, for instance, in the bourgeois press, and in the weak tolerance of open treason of big pro-Nazi publishers, and in the leadership of the bourgeois political parties, should understand that to subtract the moral, the theoretical and the political contributions of the labor movement from the public life of the nation would mean to weaken the nation to the point of disaster.

Our moralities of present day nations come, some from feudal survivals, as in our country from the old rotting remnants of slave-times, an example of which we see in a Rankin in Congress; or they come from a business class which at its very best tends to subordinate social to individual standards of business motivated by profit.

To these origins, however, is added a third in modern times. It comes from the working class and is generated in the enormous growing labor movement. This new source of morality, essentially social in character, all over the world, as Engels said, is the "morality of the future."—"that morality which contains the maximum of durable elements." Let cynics laugh, but 50 million men and women of the working class will know that this is true.

This, as well as the protection of the economic needs of the workers (necessary to their effective aid to victory), and a great active role in fighting for the war in our political life—this is what we have in mind when we say that the class struggle is ever-present in a capitalist society. And anyone would become a utopian, and a dangerous fool, if he tried to believe it wasn't present.

So, concretely, the trade unions must be built strong and kept politically clear in service of the nation at war—we must know that the class struggle is in operation as "the immediate driving force of history." For the trade unions are "the real class organizations" of the workers which are necessary for its contribution to the winking of the war for the survival of democracy.

We have had to concede that labor will not demand the abolition of "free enterprise" at the present time, and "free enterprise" is in essence class struggle. But our powerful labor movement as a matter of policy rejects all proposals of strikes and their interference with the war that are understood under the slogan "class against class."

Struggle is the most fundamental principle of life. Nothing will materialize, of all the nation's dreams of peace and well-being, except as the reward of colossal struggle in this year 1944.

The next question, to be answered in tomorrow's Daily Worker, is one asked by Sam T.