

'I TAKE A FRESH LOOK' (4)

Nature of the Party's Dogmatism

By ALEXANDER BITTELMAN

WHAT HAS BEEN the nature of our dogmatism in the U.S. Communist Party? What has been its specific and concrete content?

The answer, I believe, is a failure to take adequate account of the national peculiarities in the economic, political and ideological development of the American people and of the United States. This has been traditional not only with Marxist movements but with most radical currents in the United States. This we have inherited, this we still live by and this is the very source, the beginnings of dogmatic thinking in our midst—ideological, political and organizational—whether on the Right, Left or Center.

To mention only a few instances: American Marxists have still to produce an adequate scientific estimate of the national peculiarities in the origin and development of American capitalism although there has been in existence for a long time a wealth of research and theoretical material. They have still to evaluate fully the special nature and key importance of the contradictions between the monopolies and the general capitalist environment in the United States and to draw from this cardinal fact the proper political and programmatic conclusions. They have not yet approached a scientific, Marxist-

Leninist estimate of the special national characteristics of the struggle for democracy in the United States; how the fight for democracy has become a fight against monopoly domination since the rise of monopoly capital and imperialism; how in the fight for ever more effective democracy for the masses of the people, a historic stage will inevitably be reached from which the American people will be able to begin a peaceful and constitutional transition to Socialist democracy.

Failure to face up to these questions and to tackle them from the positions and with the method of Marxism-Leninism lies at the bottom of a good deal of our present isolation and crisis.

IT HAS NOW become imperative to recognize that in our important ideological and political struggles against American exceptionalism we went overboard. Together with the non-Marxist propositions of American exceptionalism we virtually threw out the very crucial Marxist-Leninist idea that the national characteristics and peculiarities in the economy, politics and ideologies in the United States are of fundamental importance.

In our fight against Lovestoneism in the late twenties and early thirties, we successfully defended the Marxist concept that the international aspects of American capitalism are primary while its national characteristics are secondary. From this correct theoretical position, our Party waged a good fight for the principles of working class internationalism. But the traditional American Marxist dogmatic blindness to national peculiarities played a trick on us. We went further than was theoretically and politically correct.

When we said that international features were primary, this was true in a historic sense and in the long run. The international aspects of the advance to Socialism are basic and primary. But we forgot the national peculiarities as they crucially affect the day-to-day struggles against monopoly domination and for the eventual socialist transformation.

National peculiarities are secondary in a historic sense and in the long run. But at certain

turns and periods in a country's social progress and eventual advance to Socialism, national peculiarities assume decisive political importance. So much so that the very advance to the Socialist ideal, which is international in its nature, becomes dependent upon the ability of the Socialists, the Communists, to discover the special national approaches, paths and roads to the realization of that ideal in their own country.

Because our fight against Lovestoneism and against American exceptionalism was carried on in the traditional American dogmatic manner, our success was in considerable measure nullified by our failure to seek out and find the special national way of building the Marxist-Leninist party of the American working class.

SIMILARLY, with our fight against Browderism in the forties. There too we went overboard in the fight against American exceptionalism—and with less excuse than in the fight against Lovestoneism because on the basis of the earlier experience we should have learned not to wage such a fight or any ideological and political struggle in a dogmatic manner. And the mistakes in this instance have been more costly.

It is important to understand the reasons for this. The fight against Browderism came at the end of a significant period in the life of the American people. This was the period of the New Deal and of the great democratic and anti-fascist efforts of the American people in World War II. Those were epic years. Our Party was beginning to find the peculiar and specific approaches to the masses of American labor and its allies and to become part of their great progressive movements—

an important and valuable part.

Browderism was an attempt to generalize the Party's experiences of that period and to draw certain theoretical and political conclusions; but the product turned out to be basically revisionist. It seriously departed from the international principles of the advance to Socialism and virtually abandoned the very concept of the vanguard role of a Marxist-Leninist Party. This we opposed and successfully defeated. But this is not the whole story.

Where we failed was that we made no consistent efforts of our own to generalize in a Marxist-Leninist way the tremendous experiences and lessons of those epic years. We definitely failed to press forward in the continuous exploration of the peculiar American ways and approaches to building the Marxist-Leninist party. We completely threw overboard the experiences and successes gained in the New Deal and World War II periods instead of utilizing, modifying and adjusting them to the period of the "cold war" which soon began. While correctly condemning Browderism for discarding the key Marxist-Leninist concept of the vanguard role of the Party, we did little or nothing to concretize that concept to the period and situations prevailing after the end of the war.

Our dogmatic failures in the fight against Browderism, shared by Right, Left and Center, played a major role in hastening the present Party crisis.

The foregoing leads to the conclusion that our Party is passing through an ideological, political and organizational crisis of great depth and severity.

(Monday: The Way Out of the Party Crisis.)

No more free lunches for school kids; Brownell proposes crackers and milk

By FRAN THOMPSON

DETROIT. — The people of Detroit were aghast this last week at the latest top level shenanigans of Detroit School Superintendent Dr. Samuel M. Brownell who proposed to discontinue free lunches for 8,300 indigent school children. Instead of a free hot lunch wot kids many of whom are living on Aid to Dependent Children and kids from large families Brownell proposed school principals should be "permitted" to give milk and graham crackers to children unable to buy or bring lunch and who live too far to walk home at noon.

Labor leaders and even Welfare Superintendent Dan Ryan said: It is a vital necessity to extend the free lunch program instead of curtailing it. Out of 313 elementary schools only 88 have lunch rooms and at 15 other schools box lunches are give free. There are 210 schools with no free lunch program at all so in the name of unfairness Brownell proposes to eliminate all free lunches.

Brownell is worried about the city's \$500,000 spent to feed this proud Detroit's 8,300 hungry children, which is only a part of the children who need it. After this display of "let them starve" Brownell should resign his post to make room for some person who knows and can understand the needs of our children.

Brownell has consistently come up with some choice ideas since he has been in office. Take the one about merit raises for teachers. In other words if teachers will apple polish their superiors they may well get that raise. Someone would do well to tell Brownell that this is a labor town and scabby ideas like this just don't go in this town. This is a technique the auto workers threw out 20 years ago.

Brownell also came up with an

idea that because of the overcrowding of classes seven or eight pupils in each class should act as monitors. Explanation, these kids would act as stoolpigeons and report to the teacher on their classmates. It reminds this reporter of the movies I used to see on how the Nazis raised their youth. It could well be termed "The Pint Sized Stoolpigeon Program."

This paper would like to ask Brownell how many Negro teachers have received promotions since he began running the Detroit School System. How many Negro school principals are there in Detroit? As far as we know there are none.

One of Mr. Brownell's pet ideas is teaching by TV. Small children need attention and teaching large masses of children by television is not the answer to overcrowding in the classroom. Even his proposal of teachers coming to school early and leaving late will not solve the basic need in our schools. More and better schools are desperately needed. Better pay for teachers so they do not need to work two jobs to make a living. This better pay and improved conditions for teachers will attract many young people to become dedicated teachers.

Much more federal and state aid to schools is the only answer to the tremendous problems that face the educational system today.

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