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FOR MEMBERS ONLY

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO LABOR PARTY THESIS

Substitute for page 16 and page 17 up to the paragraph beginning with CONSEQUENTLY the following:

The question of the attitude toward an existing labor party has never been a question of principle for revolutionary Marxists. No more should our attitude toward a genuine mass movement for a labor party be so considered. In our tactics we must always take our point of departure from the concrete political situation and the tendencies of its development. In general it can be said that so long as the revolutionary party has the support of only a small minority of the working class and so long as the vast majority of the workers support capitalist parties, a movement for independent political action on the part of the workers is progressive in character and must be supported by revolutionary Marxists. At the present time the movement for a labor party, at least the tendencies towards independent political action have assumed such proportions that for us to take a negative or a neutrally expectant position with reference to such tendencies would be absolutely incorrect and would threaten our party with sectarian isolation.

Consequently, the Socialist Workers Party gives positive and unambiguous support..... (include the whole paragraph). After that paragraph continue as follows:

It must not be understood that we are committing ourselves to the proposition that a Labor party is inevitable or even the most likely development. Events are moving very rapidly and under the pressure of the economic and social crisis it may very well be that the masses will turn from the New Deal or from a third party directly to the revolutionary party without passing through the stage of a Labor party. Should a third party be organized by a combination of left-wing Democrats and Republicans, LaFollette Progressives, Stalinists and organized labor, the inability of such a party to solve any major problem confronting the American people would leave the road open for a speedy and tremendous growth in the influence of our party. Until events themselves decide the exact path which the American workers will take our support of the labor party movement must be conditioned by that most probable development and must be of such a nature as to permit us to make a sudden shift without confusing the advanced workers.

Our agitation for the Labor party must at all times be qualified by two conditions. One that we advance our transitional demands as the program for the Labor party. This will distinguish us from the Social-Democrats, Lovestoneites etc. Not that we make it an absolute condition for our support of a Labor party that it adopt our transitional demands but we must attempt to impress the workers with the idea that a Labor party will be most effective if it will struggle for those demands. Secondly, the workers must clearly understand that in reality there is no solution to their problems outside of the proletarian revolution and that we create no illusions about the

possibility of any Labor party solving any of the fundamental problems confronting the working class.

Preserving its own full organizational (Continue with par.)

Insert the phrase "if at all" after the word "formed" in the first line of the last paragraph beginning with "When and how".

Room 1609
100 Fifth Avenue
New York City

June 27, 1938

Dear Comrade Cruz,

At the last meeting of our Political Committee I proposed an amendment to the draft theses on the "Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International".

To eliminate the following sentences (in section on U.S.S.R., pg. 29 American bulletin): "As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets. In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank and file kolkhozists, peasants and Red Army men."

The P.C. decided that I write you and ask for an elaboration of the thought expressed in the above sentences and your opinion re the amendment.

Briefly stated, the reasons for the amendment are:

1. The proposal "to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets" just "as once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets" disregards the sharp social conflicts going on within the bureaucracy and aristocracy - sections of which will go over to the camp of the proletariat (as stated in another section of the theses); establishes an ill-defined basis for disfranchisement of tens of millions - including the skilled workers. It is in contradiction to the section of the theses which states that the "democratization of the soviets is impossible without legalization of soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties."

2. In any case, there do not appear to be any valid political reasons to establish an a priori disfranchisement of entire social groupings of present day Russian society. Disfranchisement should be based on political acts of violence of groups or individuals against the new Soviet power.

3. So far as I know the proposal in the theses is now presented for the first time in our international movement. There was no discussion of this question at our Plenum - which adopted the general line of the theses. It would be politically unwise to rush into a decision on this question without a thorough discussion in our ranks. This discussion can take place subsequent to the international congress. In no respect would this detract from the program of the Fourth International.

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You will note that points 1 and 2 are directed against the
ea contained in the two quoted sentences of the theses, while
int 3 assumes that differences exist; and motivates postponement
final decision.

I hope that I have made clear the essence of my disagreement
with the formulation in the draft theses. As already stated we
wait your views on the problem.

Fraternally,

Joseph Carter

LR

"IT IS NECESSARY TO DRIVE THE BUREAUCRACY AND THE NEW ARISTOCRACY OUT OF THE SOVIETS."

(Concerning the Draft of the Transition Program of the Fourth International).

On the subject of the slogan which appears at the head of this article I have received some critical remarks which are of a general interest and therefore merit an answer not in a private letter but in an article.

First of all let us cite the objections.

The demand to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the Soviets disregards, in the words of my correspondent, the sharp social conflicts going on within the bureaucracy and aristocracy -- sections of which will go over to the camp of the proletariat as stated in another section of the same thesis (the draft program).

The demand (to drive out the bureaucracy . . .) establishes an incorrect ("ill-defined") basis for disfranchisement of tens of millions -- including the skilled workers.

The demand is in contradiction to that section of the thesis which states that the "democratization of the Soviets is impossible without the legalization of Soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as Soviet parties."

"In any case," continues the author of the letter, "there do not appear to be any valid political reasons to establish an a priori disfranchisement of entire social groupings of present day Russian society. Disfranchisement should be based on political acts of violence of groups or individuals against the new Soviet power."

Finally, the author of the letter points out also that the slogan of "disfranchisement" is advanced for the first time, that there has been no discussion on this question, that it would be better to defer the question for thoroughgoing consideration subsequent to the international conference.

Such are the reasons and arguments of my correspondent. Unfortunately I can by no means agree with them. They express the formal, juridical, purely constitutional attitude on a question which must be approached from the revolutionary-political point of view. It is not at all a question of whom the new Soviets will deprive of power once they are decisively established; we can calmly leave the elaboration of the new Soviet constitution to the future. The question is how to get rid of the Soviet bureaucracy which oppresses and robs the workers and peasants, leads the conquests of October to ruin, and is the chief obstacle on the road to the international revolution. We have long ago come to the conclusion that this can be attained only by the violent overthrow of the bureaucracy, that is, by means of a new political revolution.

Of course, in the ranks of the bureaucracy there are sincere and revolutionary elements of the Koisss type. But they are not numerous

and in any case they do not determine the political physiognomy of the bureaucracy which is a centralized Thermidorian caste crowned by the Bonapartist clique of Stalin. We may be sure that the more decisive the discontent of the toilers becomes the deeper will the differentiation within the bureaucracy penetrate. But in order to achieve this we must theoretically comprehend, politically mobilize and organize the hatred of the masses against the bureaucracy as the ruling caste. Real Soviets of workers and peasants can come forth only in the course of the uprising against the bureaucracy. Such Soviets will be bitterly pitted against the military - police apparatus of the bureaucracy. How then can we admit representatives into the Soviets from that camp against which the uprising itself is proceeding?

My correspondent -- as stated already -- considers that the criteria for the bureaucracy and aristocracy are incorrect, "ill-defined," since they lead to the a priori rejection of tens of millions. Precisely in this lies the central error of the author of the letter. It is not a question of a constitutional "determination" which is applied on the basis of fixed juridical qualifications, but of the real self-determination of the struggling camps. The Soviets can arise only in the course of a decisive struggle. They will be created by those layers of the toilers who are drawn into the movement. The significance of the Soviets consists precisely in the fact that their composition is determined not by formal criteria but by the dynamics of the class struggle. Certain layers of the Soviet "aristocracy" will vacillate between the camp of the revolutionary workers and the camp of the bureaucracy. Whether these layers enter the Soviets and at what period will depend on the general development of the struggle and on the attitude which different groups of the Soviet aristocracy take in this struggle. Those elements of the bureaucracy and aristocracy who in the course of the revolution go over to the side of the rebels will certainly find a place for themselves also in the Soviets. But this time not as bureaucrats and "aristocrats" but as participants in the rebellion against the bureaucracy.

The demand to drive out the bureaucracy can in no case be counterposed to the demand of the legalization of Soviet parties. In reality these slogans complement each other. At present the Soviets are a decorative appendage to the bureaucracy. Only the driving out of the bureaucracy which is unthinkable without a revolutionary uprising can regenerate the struggle of various tendencies and parties within the Soviets. "The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties are Soviet parties" -- the thesis says. But precisely because of this it is first of all necessary to banish the bureaucracy from the Soviets.

It is, moreover, untrue that the slogan represents something new in the ranks of the Fourth International. Possibly the formulation is new, but not the content. For a long time we held to the point of view of reforming the Soviet regime. We hoped that by organizing the pressure of the advanced elements, the Left Opposition would be able with the help of the progressive elements of the bureaucracy itself to reform the Soviet system. This stage could not be skipped. But the further course of events at any rate disproved the perspective of a peaceful transformation of the party and the Soviets. From the position of reform we passed to the position of revolution, that is of a violent overthrow of the bureaucracy. But how can the bureaucracy be overthrown and simultaneously given a legal place in the organs of the uprising? If we think through to the very end the revolutionary tasks which face the Soviet worker and peasant the slogan

which stands at the head of this article must be recognized as correct, as self-understood and urgent. That is why the international conference, in my opinion, should sanction this slogan.

July 4, 1938

Crux

June 7, 1938

DISCUSSION WITH CRUX ON THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

Crux: The significance of the program is the significance of the party. The party is the vanguard of the class. The party is formed by selection from the most conscious, most advanced, most devoted elements and the party can play an important historical political role not in direct relation to its numerical strength. It can be a small party and play a great part. For example, in the first Russian Revolution of 1905, the Bolsheviki fraction had not more than 10,000 members, the Mensheviks 10,000 to 12,000 that is the maximum. At that time they belonged to the same party, so that the party as a whole had not more than 20,000 to 22,000 workers. The party guided the Soviets throughout the whole country thanks to correct policy and to cohesion. It can be objected that the difference between the Russians and the Americans, or any other old capitalist country, was that the Russian proletariat was a totally fresh, virgin proletariat without any tradition of trade unions, conservative reformism. It was a young fresh virgin working class which needed direction and looked for this direction and in spite of the fact that the party as a whole had not more than 20,000 workers this party guided 23,000,000 workers in the fight.

Now, what is the party? In what does the cohesion consist? This cohesion is a common understanding of the events, of the tasks, and this common understanding -- that is the program of the party. Just as modern workers more than the barbarian cannot work without tools so in the party the program is the instrument. Without the program every worker must improvise his tool, find improvised tools, and one contradicts another. Only when we have the vanguard organized upon the basis of common conceptions then can we act.

One can say that we didn't have a program until this day. Yet we acted. But this program was formulated under different articles, different motions, etc. In this sense the draft program doesn't presage a new invention, it is not the writing of one man. It is the summation of collective work up until today. But such a summation is absolutely necessary in order to give to the comrades an idea of the situation, a common understanding. Petty bourgeois anarchists, and intellectuals are afraid to subscribe to giving a party common ideas, a common attitude. In opposition they wish moral programs. But for us this program is the result of common experience. It is not imposed upon anybody for whoever joins the party does so voluntarily.

I believe it is important in this connection to underline what we mean by freedom in contradiction to necessity. It is very often a petty bourgeois conception that we should have a free individuality. It is only a fiction, an error. We are not free. We have no free will in the sense of metaphysical philosophy. When I wish to drink a glass of beer I act as a free man but I don't invent the need for beer. That comes from my body. I am only the executor. But insofar as I understand the needs of my body and can satisfy them consciously then I have the sensation of freedom, freedom through understanding the necessity. Here the correct understanding of the necessity of my body is the only real freedom given to animals in any question and man is an animal. The same holds true for the class. The program for the class cannot fall from heaven. We can arrive only at an understanding of the necessity.

In one case it was my body in the other it is the necessity of society. The program is the articulation of the necessity, that we learned to understand, and since the necessity is the same for all members of the class, we can reach a common understanding of the tasks and the understanding of this necessity is the program.

We can go further and say that the discipline of our party must be very severe because we are a revolutionary party against a tremendous bloc of enemies conscious of their interests and now we are attacked not only by the bourgeoisie but by the Stalinists, the most venomous of the bourgeois agents. Absolute discipline is necessary but it must come from common understanding. If it is imposed from without it is a yoke. If it comes from understanding it is an expression of personality, but otherwise it is a yoke. Then discipline is an expression of my free individuality. It is not opposition between personal will and the party because I entered of my free will. The program too is on this basis and this program can be upon a sure political and moral basis only if we understand it very well.

The draft program is not a complete program. We can say that in this draft program there are things which are lacking and there are things which by their nature don't belong to the program. Things which don't belong to the program are the comments. This program contains not only slogans but also comments and polemics against the adversaries. But it is not a complete program. A complete program should have a theoretical expression of the modern capitalist society in its imperialist stage. The reasons of the crisis, the growth of unemployed, and so on and in this draft this analysis is briefly summarized only in the first chapter because we have written about those things in articles, books, and so on. We will write more and better. But for practical purposes what is said here is enough because we are all of the same opinion. The beginning of the program is not complete. The first chapter is only a hint and not a complete expression. Also the end of the program is not complete because we don't speak here about the social revolution, about the seizure of power by insurrection, the transformation of the capitalist society into the dictatorship, the dictatorship into the socialist society. This brings the reader only to the doorstep. It is a program for action from today until the beginning of the socialist revolution. And from the practical point of view what is now the most important is how can we guide the different strata of the proletariat in the direction of the social revolution. I have heard that now the New York comrades are beginning to organize circles with the purpose of not only studying and criticizing the draft program but also elaborating the ways and means in order to present the program to the masses and I believe that it is the best method which our party can utilize.

The program is only the first approximation. It is too general in the sense in which it is presented to the international conference in the next period. It expresses the general tendency of development in the whole world. We have here a short chapter devoted to the semi-colonial and colonial countries. We have here a chapter devoted to the fascist countries, a chapter on the Soviet Union and so on. It is clear that the general characteristics of the world situation are common because they are all under the pressure of the imperialist economy, but every country has its peculiar conditions and real live politics must begin with these peculiar conditions in each country and even in each part of the country. That is why a very serious approach to the program is the first duty of every comrade in the United States.

There are two dangers in the elaboration of the program. The first is to remain on general abstract lines and to repeat the general slogan without real connection with the trade unions in the locality. That is the direction of sectarian abstraction. The other danger is the contrary, to adapt too much to the local conditions, to the specific conditions, to lose the general revolutionary line. I believe that in the United States the second danger is the more immediate. I remember it most especially in the matter of militarization, armed pickets, etc. Some comrades were afraid that it is not real for the workers, etc.

In the last few days I read a French book written by an Italian worker about the rise of Fascism in Italy. The writer is opportunistic. He was a Socialist, but it is not his conclusions which are interesting but the facts which he presents. He gives the picture of the Italian proletariat in 1920-1921 especially. It was a powerful organization. They had 160 socialist parliamentary deputies. They had more than one-third of the communities in their hands, the most important sections of Italy were in the hands of the socialists, the center of the power of the workers. No capitalist could hire or fire without union consent and this applied to agricultural workers as well as industrial. It seemed to be 49% of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the reaction of the small bourgeoisie, the demobilized officers was terrible against this situation. Then the author tells how they organized small bands under the guidance of officers and sent them in buses in every direction. In cities of 10,000 in the hands of the Socialists thirty organized men came into the town, burned up the municipality, burned the houses, shot the leaders, imposed on them the conditions of working for capitalists, then they went elsewhere and repeated the same in hundreds and hundreds of towns, one after the other. With terrible terror and these systematic acts they totally destroyed the trade unions and thus became bosses of Italy. They were a tiny minority.

The workers declared a general strike. The Fascists sent their buses and destroyed every local strike and with a small organized minority wiped out the workers' organizations. After this came elections and the workers under the terror elected the same number of deputies. They protested in parliament until it was dissolved. That is the difference between formal and actual power. All the deputies were sure that they would have power, yet this tremendous movement with its spirit of sacrifice was smashed, crushed, abolished by some 10,000 fascists well-organized with a spirit of sacrifice and good military leaders.

In the United States it might be different but the fundamental tasks are the same. I read about the tactics of Maguc. It is a rehearsal of a Fascist overthrow. He represents small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened. He has his gang which is absolutely unconstitutional. This is very very contagious. With the deepening of the crisis it will spread all over the country and Roosevelt who is a very very good democrat will say, "Perhaps it is the only solution."

It was the same in Italy. They had a minister who invited the Socialists. The Socialists refused. He admitted the Fascists. He thought he could balance them against the Socialists, but they smashed the minister too. Now I think the example of New Jersey is very important. We should utilize everything, but this especially. I will propose a special series of articles on how the Fascists became victorious. We can become victorious the same way but we must have a small armed body with the support of the big body of workers. We must have the best discipline,

organized workers, defense committees, otherwise we will be crushed and I believe that our comrades in the United States don't realize the importance of this question. A Fascist wave can spread in two or three years and the best workers' leaders will be lynched in the worst possible way like the Negroes in the South. I believe that the terror in the United States will be the most terrible of all. That is why we must begin very modestly that is with defense groups but it should be launched immediately.

Question: How do we go about launching the defense groups practically?

Crux: It is very simple. Do you have a picket line in a strike? When the strike is over we say we must defend our union by making this picket line permanent.

Question: Does the party itself create the defense group with its own members?

Crux: The slogans of the party must be placed in quarters where we have sympathizers and workers who will defend us. But a party cannot create an independent defense organization. The task is to create such a body in the trade unions. We must have these groups of comrades with very good discipline, with good cautious leaders not easily provoked because such groups can be provoked easily. The main task for the next year would be to avoid conflicts and bloody clashes. We must reduce them to a minimum with a minority organization during strikes, during peaceful times. In order to prevent fascist meetings it is a question of the relationship of forces. We alone are not strong, but we propose a united front.

Hitler explains his success in his book. The Social-Democracy was extremely powerful. To a meeting of the Social-Democracy he sent a band with Rudolf Hess. He says that at the end of the meeting his thirty boys evicted all the workers and they were incapable of opposing them. Then he knew he would be victorious. The workers were only organized to pay dues. No preparation at all for other tasks. Now we must do what Hitler did except in reverse. Send forty to 50 men to dissolve the meeting. This has tremendous importance. The workers become steeled, fighting elements. They become trumpets. The petty-bourgeoisie think these are serious people. Such a success! This has tremendous importance as so much of the populace is blind, backward, oppressed, they can be aroused only by success. We can only arouse the vanguard but this vanguard must then arouse the others. That is why I repeat it is a very important question. In Minneapolis where we have very skilled powerful comrades we can begin and show the entire country. I believe that even those enigmatic murders of Corcoran and Brown can be used for this.

Crux: I believe that it would be useful to discuss a little this part of the draft which is not sufficiently developed in our text. It is the general theoretical part. In the last discussion I remarked that the theoretical part of the program as a general analysis of society is not given completely in this draft but is replaced by some short hints. On the other side it does not contain the parts dealing with the revolution, the dictatorship, and the construction of society after the revolution. Only the transitory period is covered. We have repeated many times that the scientific character of our activity consists in the fact that we adapt our program not to political conjunctures or the thought or mood of the masses as this mood is today, but we adapt our program to the objective situation

as it is represented by the economic class structure of society. The mentality can be backward; then the political task of the party is to bring the mentality into harmony with the objective facts, to make the workers understand the objective task. But we cannot adapt the program to the backward mentality of the workers, the mentality, the mood is a secondary factor -- the prime factor is the objective situation. That is why we have heard these criticisms or these appreciations that some parts of the program do not conform to the situation.

Everywhere I ask what should we do? Make our program fit the objective situation or the mentality of the workers? And I believe that this question must be put before every comrade who says that this program is not fit for the American situation. This program is a scientific program. It is based on an objective analysis of the objective situation. It cannot be understood by the workers as a whole. It would be very good if the vanguard would understand it in the next period and that they would then turn and say to the workers, "You must save yourselves from fascism."

What do we understand by objective situation? Here we must analyze the objective conditions for a social revolution. These conditions are given in the works of Marx-Engels and remain in their essence unchanged today. First, Marx one time said that no society leaves its place until it totally exhausts its possibilities. What does this signify? That we cannot eliminate a society by subjective will that we cannot organize an insurrection like the Blanquists. What do "possibilities" signify? That a "society cannot leave?" So long as society is capable of developing the productive forces and make the nation richer it remains strong, stable. That was the condition with slave society, with feudal, and with capitalist society. Here we come to a very interesting point which I analyzed previously in my introduction to the Communist Manifesto. Marx and Engels waited for a revolution during their lifetime. Especially in the years 1848-1850 did they expect a social revolution. Why? They said that the capitalist system based on private profit had become a brake upon the development of the productive forces. Was this correct? Yes and no. It was correct in the sense that if the workers had been capable of meeting the needs of the 19th century and seizing power the development of the productive forces would have been more rapid and the nation richer. But given that the workers were not capable, the capitalist system remained with its crisis, etc. Yet the general line ascended. The last war (1914-1918) was a result of the fact that the world market became too narrow for the development of the productive forces and each nation tried to repulse all the others and to seize the world market for its own purposes. They could not succeed and now we see that capitalist society enters into a new stage. Many say it was a result of the war, but the war was a result of the fact that the society exhausted its possibilities. The war was only an expression of its inability to further expand. We have after the war the historic crisis becoming deeper and deeper. Capitalist development everywhere was prosperity and crisis but the summation of the crises and prosperity was an ascendancy. Beginning with the war we see the cycles of crisis and prosperity forming a declining line. It signifies now that this society exhausted totally its inner possibilities and must be replaced by a new society or the old society will go into barbarism just as the civilization of Greece and Rome because they had exhausted their possibilities and no class could replace them.

That is the question now and especially in the United States. The first requisite now for a new society is that the productive forces

must be sufficiently developed in order to give birth to a higher. Are the productive forces sufficiently developed for this? Yes, they were developed sufficiently in the 19th century -- not as well as now but sufficiently. Now especially in the United States it would be very easy for some good statistician to prove that if the American productive forces were unleashed that even now today they could be doubled or tripled. I believe that our comrades should make such statistical survey.

The second condition -- there must be a new progressive class which is sufficiently numerous and economically influential in order to impose its will upon society. This class is the proletariat. It must be the majority of the nation or must have the possibility to lead the majority. In England the working class is the absolute majority. In Russia it was a minority but it had the possibility to lead the poor peasants. In United States it is at least half of the population but it has the possibility to lead the farmers.

The third condition is the subjective factor. This class must understand its position in society and have its own organizations. That is the condition which is now lacking from the historic point of view. Socially it is not only possible but an absolute necessity in the sense that it is either socialism or barbarism. That is the historical alternative.

We mentioned in the discussion that Mr. Hague is not some stupid old man who imagines some medieval system exists in his town. He is an advance scout of the American capitalist class.

Jack London wrote a book, The Iron Heel. I recommend it now. It was written in 1907. At that time it seemed a terrible dream but now it is absolute reality. He gives the development of the class struggle in the United States with the capitalist class retaining power through terrible repressions. It is the picture of the fascism. The ideology he gives even corresponds with Hitler. It is very interesting.

In Newark the Mayor begins to imitate Hague and they are all inspired by Hague and by the big bosses. It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means. He is not a fascist as the Stalinists claimed in 1932. But his initiative will be paralyzed. What can he do? The workers are dissatisfied. The big bosses are dissatisfied. He can only maneuver until the end of his term and then say goodbye. A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded.

The imitation of the Newark mayor has tremendous importance. In two or three years you can have a powerful fascist movement of American character. What is Hague? He has nothing to do with Mussolini or Hitler, but he is an American fascist. Why is he aroused? Because the society can no longer be run on democratic means.

It would be of course impermissible to fall into a hysteria. The danger of the working class being out-run by events is indisputable, but we can combat this danger only by energetic systematic development of our own activity under adequate revolutionary slogans and not by fantastic efforts to spring over our own heads.

Democracy is only the rule of big bosses. We must well understand what Lundberg showed in his book, that 60 families govern the United

States. But how? By democratic means up until today. They are a small minority surrounded by middle classes, petty bourgeoisie, workers. They must have the possibility of interesting the middle classes in this Society. They must not be desperate. The same holds true for the workers. At the least for the higher strata. If they are opposed they can break the revolutionary possibilities of the lower strata and this is the only way of working democracy.

The democratic regime is the most aristocratic way of ruling. It is possible only to a rich nation. Every British democrat has 9 or 10 slaves working in the colonies. The antique Greek society was a slave democracy. The same in a certain sense can be said today of British democracy, Holland, France, Belgium. The United States have no direct colonies but they have Latin America and the whole world is a sort of colony for the United States, not to speak about appropriating the richest continent and developing without a feudal tradition. It is a historically privileged nation but the privileged capitalist nations differ from the most "pariah" capitalist nations only from the point of view of delay. Italy the poorest of the great capitalist nations became the first fascist. Germany became the second because Germany has no colonies or rich subsidiary countries and on this poor base exhausted all the possibilities and the workers could not replace the bourgeoisie. Now it is the turn of the United States even before Great Britain or France. The duty of our party is to seize every American worker and shake him ten times so he will understand what the situation is in the United States. That it is not a conjunctural crisis but a social crisis. Our party can play a very great role. What is difficult for a young party in a very thick atmosphere of previous traditions, hypocrisy, is to launch a revolutionary slogan. "It is fantastic," "not adequate in America," but it is possible that this will change by the time you launch the revolutionary slogans of our program. Somebody will laugh. But revolutionary courage is not only to be shot but to support the laughter of stupid people who are in the majority. But when one of them is beaten by Hogue's gang he will think it is good to have a defense committee and his ironic attitude will change.

Question: Isn't the ideology of the workers a part of the objective factors?

Crux: For us as a small minority this whole thing is objective, including the mood of the workers. But we must analyze and classify those elements of the objective situation which can be changed by our paper and those which cannot be changed. That is why we say that the program is adapted to the fundamental stable elements of the objective situation and the task is to adapt the mentality of the masses to those objective factors. To adapt the mentality is a pedagogical task. We must be patient, etc. The crisis of society is given as the base of our activity. The mentality is the political arena of our activity. We must change it. We must give a scientific explanation of society, and clearly explain it to the masses. That is the difference between Marxism and reformism.

The reformists have a good smell for what the audience wants -- as Norman Thomas -- he gives them that. But that is not serious revolutionary activity. We must have the courage to be unpopular, to say "you are fools," "you are stupid," "they betray you," and every once in a while with a sea ndal launch our ideas with passion. It is necessary to shake the worker from time to time, to explain, and then shake him again -- that all belongs to the art of propaganda. But it must be scientific, not bent to the moods of the masses. We are the most realistic people because we reckon with facts which cannot be changed by the eloquence of Norman

Thomas. If we win immediate success we swim with the current of the masses and that current is the revolution.

Question: Sometimes I think that our own leaders don't feel these problems.

Crux: Possibly it is two things. One is to understand, the other feel it with muscles, fibers. It is necessary now to be penetrated by this understanding that we must change our politics. It is a question not only for the masses but for the party. It is a question not only for the party but also for the leaders. We had some discussions, some differences. It is impossible to come to the position at the same time. There are always frictions. They are inevitable and even necessary. It was the reason for this program, to provoke this discussion.

Question: How much time should we allow for this discussion among the leaders?

Crux: It is very difficult to say. It will depend on many factors. We cannot allow too great deal of time. We must now accomplish this new orientation. It is a new and an old. It is based on all past activity but now it opens a new chapter. In spite of errors, frictions, and fights, now a new chapter opens and we must mobilize all our forces upon it in more energetic attitude. What is important, when the program is definitely established, is to know the slogans very well and to maneuver them skillfully so that in every part of the country everyone uses the same slogans at the same time. 3,000 can make the impression of 15,000 or 50,000.

Question: Comrades may agree abstractly to this program but do we have experienced comrades to carry out slogans in the masses? They agree abstractly but what can I do with the backward workers in my union?

Crux: Our party is a party of the American working class. You must remember that a powerful proletarian movement not to speak of a powerful proletarian revolution has not occurred in the United States. In 1917 we didn't have the possibility to win without 1905. My generation was very young. During 12 years we had a very good chance to understand our defeats and correct them and to win. But even then we lost again to the new bureaucrats. That is why we cannot see whether our party will directly lead the American working class to victory. It is possible that the American workers, who are patriotic, whose standard of living is too high will have rebellions, strikes. On one side Hague, the other Lewis. That can last for a long period, years and years, and during this time our people will steel themselves, become more sure of themselves, and the workers will say, "They are the only people capable of seeing the path." Only war produces war heroes. For the beginning we have excellent elements, very good men, seriously educated, a good staff, and not a small staff. In this more general sense I am totally optimistic. Then I believe that the change in the mentality of the American workers will come at very speedy rhythm. What to do? Everybody is disquieted, looking for something new. It is very favorable for revolutionary propaganda.

We must remember not only the aristocratic elements but the poorest elements. The cultivated American workers have a plus and a minus such as English sports. It is very good but also a device to demoralize the workers. All the revolutionary energy was expended in sports. It was cultivated by the British, the most intelligent of the capitalist nations. Sports should be in the hands of the trade unions as part of the revolutionary education. But you have a good part of the youth and women who are not rich enough for these things. We must have tentacles to penetrate

everywhere into the deepest strata.

Question: I think the party has made great advance since the last convention.

Crux: A very important turn has been accomplished. Now it is necessary to give this weapon a concentrated action. General dispersed agitation doesn't penetrate into the minds of the uneducated. But if you repeat the same slogans, adapting them to the situation, then repetition which is the mother of teaching will act likewise in politics. Very often it happens not only with the intellectual but with a worker that he believes that everybody understands what he has learned. It is necessary to repeat with insistence, to repeat every day and everywhere. That is the task of the draft program -- to issue a homogenous impression.

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"FOR AN EFFECTIVE S.W.P."

In his article "For a Revolutionary Socialist Party" Glen Trimble attempts to prove on 12 pages of the Discussion Bulletin No. 2 that James Burnham has changed his position on the Labor party. The claim is that in 1936 Comrade Burnham was opposed to the entry of the Socialist Party into a Labor party, but that in 1938 he advocates such an entry for the Socialist Workers Party, and not only an entry into a specified Labor party, but "into any and all Labor or quasi-Labor parties which have a mass following". Yet this claim is totally false because Comrade Burnham clearly states in his 1938 article in the "New Internationalist" that "The liquidation of the revolutionary organization into this reformist movement is clearly excluded". This position is identical with the 1936 article in the "Socialist Appeal". It is evident that Comrade Trimble missed a very significant point, namely that the 1936 article did not take a principal but a tactical position on the question of the Labor party and that the article in the "Socialist Appeal" was written at the time of the ensuing "prosperity", when any attempt to build a Labor party would undoubtedly put the controls over such a movement squarely into the hand of reactionary bureaucrats and political adventurists. The Burnham article of 1936 is entirely devoid of any stiff formalistic approach to the problem because it clearly states that "...tactics such as "critical support" or even affiliation are not excluded and sometimes necessary...", and in both 1936 and 1938 articles it is stated that under certain circumstances it is necessary "to go through this experience" with the workers in order to speed up the formation of their class consciousness. Thus so far as both articles are concerned the assertions of Glen Trimble do not hold water. However the change in the tactical approach to the problem of the Labor party took place not within the 1938 article by James Burnham, but in the P.C. majority resolution on the Labor party, and it is against this resolution the heavy artillery of the Trimble article should have been directed. And yet even in this case the accusation that the "Socialist Workers Party" is entering any and all Labor and quasi-Labor parties would still be false. So against what^{is} the article by G. Trimble really directed? Simply against the fact that the majority resolution of the P.C. refuses to approach the question of our relationship to the movement for the formation of an independent working class party in a stiff empirical manner. No one can prove that it ever was with us a principal question how we related ourselves to the movement for the Labor party. The fact is that the aspects of the principal approach to this question are embodied not in the archives of the old issues of the party press, but in the objective revolutionary situation if such becomes a fact, a reality. The majority resolution of the P.C. simply takes into account 1) the gravity of the social crisis, 2) the disparity between this crisis and of the political development of the American working class, 3) the accelerating speed with which the decisive class battles are coming, and in conformity with all this the revolutionary duty of the S.W.P. to prevent the victory of fascism by wresting the movement for an independent working class party from the domination of the opportunists and the bureaucrats. The movement for the Labor party is a process and not a moulded and cooled off entity. If the latter were the case the problem could be met also with ready made, moulded and cooled off formulas. It is not enough to raise the banner of the Fourth International to the height of an observation balloon and to give signals from such height to the struggling workers who are looking for the way out. The majority resolution is flowing out of the 1938 article of Comrade Burnham because this article recognizes the progressive character

of the movement for an independent working class party so far as the workers are concerned in counterdistinction to the reactionary character of the bureaucrats in this movement. And I showed above that there is no gulf between the 1936 and 1938 articles either. It is precisely here that the accusations of the unprincipled maneuverism are entirely unfounded. Comrade Trimble sees only one reason why the Article of 1936 was written, that is the weakness of the Socialist Party. Transplanting this weakness to the S.W.P. Comrade Trimble insists that any departure from the then position is a retreat to the position of Gus Tyler. Perhaps Gus Tyler will say: "I told you so!" Perhaps G. Trimble is afraid exactly of this. And yet Gus Tyler will be totally wrong. He will be totally wrong because it is precisely the bureaucrats in the Labor party who can always tell Gus Tylers: "I told you so", but while Gus Tylers and the bureaucrats have their records we have our records too. The difference is precisely in theirs and ours willingness to show these records to the masses of workers and ask them to examine them.

Comrade Trimble tries to escape from the reality of the movement for the independent working class party by making a caricature of it when he refers to the incident in Torrance, Calif. Com. Trimble who so amply quoted Com. Trotsky on the question of maneuvers, though this was a song from another opera, would do well if he would remember that Lenin in his "Leftism, infantile disorder of Communism" says that we got to take workers as they are, as what the capitalist system makes them to be. Naturally, if the workers in Torrance, Calif. would have the same education as Com. Trimble has, perhaps they would not be so empirical in this particular case. But to screen the social significance of the happenings in Torrance by ridiculing it, is not serious, to say the least.

The minority resolution has the same approach to the question of the Labor party as Glen Trimble's. The difference is that they direct their arguments in the proper direction and do not give any way out, as the resolution in a way recognizes itself, that it states that in the trade unions "we face great or even overwhelming labor party sentiment." These are the advantages which it has over the Glen Trimble article which gives its "alternatives": revolutionary parliamentarism. This sort of a panacea is the worst what we could expect from those comrades whom we in our time had won over from the opportunist position of Gus Tyler. I feel sure that this kind of approach is not a representative one. The problem is much more serious, requires a more serious approach than is in general shown in Glen Trimble's article and in the tone of it. It is not a personal question. It is enough to remember the opposition the tactics of the united front met with within the ranks of the parties of the Third International. The experience proved the correctness of this tactic. Great struggles are ahead of us, and in the sense still greater responsibility than it was the case in 1921. Let us put things in their proper proportions and thereby be better able to perform the tasks which are ahead of us.

L. Kogan

FOR A LABOR PARTY, BUT.....

There can be no greater disservice done a good cause than to present a poor argument for it. To the extent that it has done so, the National Committee Resolution on the Labor Party is responsible for the bewilderment and confusion which have fallen upon the Party, for the size of the opposition to its proposal, and generally for a campaign the major characteristic of which is a practically complete absence of any educational value for the membership.

Thus, and in a distorted sense, the opposition, though arriving at a false conclusion, has nonetheless a progressive character, for it reflects opposition not so much to the idea of a Labor Party, as to the arguments adduced for it. It is necessary to state quite openly that those arguments are born of fear and shot through with opportunism.

What, for instance, is the meaning of the phrase: "At the time of our national convention we took insufficient account of the new developments in the labor movement, especially in their political aspects?" It means by clear implication that we derive a political line not by the needs of the masses resulting from a given stage in the development of capitalist society, but rather do we draw that line from the "developments in the labor movement!" There can be no more miserably tail-endist position for the Party which has always proclaimed itself to be the VANGUARD of the working class. The masses are proverbially slow to reflect organizationally the need of the hour. When the vanguard has to wait for new organizational developments of the masses before it can give its own membership a position, it thereby ceases to be a vanguard.

Fundamentally, no sudden and grave changes have occurred in world economy since the convention. Even if we wish to come down to the argument of the National Committee, no great new movement for the Labor Party has come forth. Indeed, some who were its most ardent supporters only yesterday have grown very cool to the idea.

If then on the basis of an analysis of the same conditions we arrive first at one conclusion (against the Labor Party) and then to its very opposite, it is evident that we were wrong at least one of those times. It is the elementary duty of the leadership to unearth the very roots of the error, explaining it patiently to the membership, so that the Party might learn from its mistakes.

American capitalism has the peculiarity of being the last of the major sections of world capitalism to arrive on the scene, and is further distinguished by the fact that it found previously undreamed-of capacities of production latent in its resources and in the very fact of being developed late.

This fact, coupled with America's vast expanse and the frontier

on one side, and with the feverish intensity of industrial expansion on the other, tended to dull and to obliterate the class relationships and antagonisms inherent in itself. The traditional American philosophy of rugged individualism is based exactly on the fact that for long years, indeed, well into the present century, America was the classic "land of opportunity," where a worker need not remain such, and therefore need not have a worker's ideology. Every immigrant, and even more, every native American was taught that he could climb from the workers' into the capitalist class, and every schoolboy was sure that with the proper amount of diligence and industry he stood a good chance of becoming President.

Indeed the worker had only to look around and he would see any number of "self-made" persons, who had come, or whose parents had come to America as poor immigrants. This was particularly true in the field of industrial capital. If it is true that Morgan inherited a good part of his financial holdings, it is likewise true that Ford was once a bicycle mechanic and Knudsen (G. M.) was an immigrant boy.

As a result of these conditions and of this ideology the American working class organized itself - to the extent that it organized itself at all - into respectable craft unions of the AFL type, which seldom came into head-on collision with the employers and which could exist on a class-collaborationist basis because American capitalism found enough in its resources to be able to afford a series of concessions to the workers, and especially to their upper strata.

It was as the result of a major crisis in world economy and also as a result of its repercussions in America that a new movement developed (the IWW), and that movement died, as inevitably it must, among other reasons because of the very temporary character of that crisis which culminated in the world war, and because American capitalism, having won the war even before it intervened, was able to expand some more and thus to recuperate.

This background, the almost appalling enormity of material and technical resources of which American capital disposes, was necessarily reflected even in the conscious class political movement of the proletariat. In it are to be found the roots of Lovestone's theory of exceptionalism. In it the reason for the statement that our own movement sometimes made and sometimes implied that it is not excluded that American capitalism may yet find enough resources to postpone for a rather prolonged time a directly revolutionary crisis.

We looked for such crises to occur primarily in Europe and in Asia.

The perspective of an even temporary stabilization of capitalism on American soil after the ravages of the first Depression was false. The tactic that followed and flowed from that perspective, to build the revolutionary party by slow and systematic work in the trade unions, on the economic field, is therefore not sufficient.

For, right on the heels of the first ravaging depression, American

capital - even ahead of the rest of the world - is hit by a new one, more devastating than the first one in scope and intensity. New technical developments are throwing added thousands of workers out of work; the machine-load of the worker is increased with the same disastrous results. Governmental "pump-priming" fails as the "pump" falls apart. Already some municipalities are bankrupt or on the verge of bankruptcy and cannot care for their unemployed, with resultant bread riots (Cleveland).

And under these conditions Hugelism, being heretofore only a case of reactionary local boss-politics, is transformed into a laboratory experiment and forerunner of American Fascism.

Under these conditions the trade unions are powerless as instruments of economic pressure in the hands of the workers. The phenomenal early growth of the CIO; its almost unchecked series of original successes is at an end. Lewis himself stated publicly that the CIO was trying to organize as many unions as possible "before the next depression hits the labor movement."

The conditions which obtained in the age of the rise of American capitalism prevented the development and the growth of a large social-democratic movement. That same capitalism, telescoping into each other the various stages of its own decline and decay, forces the workers to seek a political solution to their economic problems. Even this was foreseen by the leading elements of the CIO, who built LNPL as that instrumentality which at the opportune time would proclaim itself the political organization of labor, and which, under the bureaucratic domination of the CIO leaders would crystallize into a prop of capitalism.

Seeing the whole problem under this light, and in view of the fact that the American working class as a class will be forced by the rapid decay of capitalism to go through a Labor Party period, it is absolutely imperative that the revolutionists be on the ground floor of the new political organization of labor. The coming of the workers on the political arena in a period of rapid capitalist decline has an inherently revolutionary character. The revolutionary Marxists must be there and in as prominent a position as possible to prevent as long as possible the bureaucratic crystallization and ossification of the Labor Party, to give expression to the revolutionary aspirations of the masses, and to become the polarizing force for a new, wider revolutionary vanguard.

It is precisely in this task that the transitional program will serve the Marxists in good stead. For, the transitional program, representing the immediate needs and demands of the masses, and being therefore easily acceptable to large layers of them will force since the very beginning a political differentiation within the ranks of the Labor Party, a differentiation which will lead the more advanced workers to its full revolutionary implications.

The Labor Party, although not yet built, already has in store an internal crisis which springs naturally from the contradiction between the bureaucratic class-collaborationist leadership on the one hand, and the revolutionary needs of the masses on the other.

It is to the extent that they will be present and that they will have helped build the Party that the Marxists will benefit by the crisis. It is to the extent that the transitional program will have found an echo in the masses through our work that the program will prove to be an explosive force in the ranks of the Labor Party.

Time presses. If our forecast of an impending pre-revolutionary situation in the U. S. is correct, it is our task to speed the inevitable formation of a Labor Party, the sooner to provoke its demise.

F. M. Giordano
July 10, 1938.

OUR PERSPECTIVES AND THE NEW LINE

I. TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS AND LABOR PARTY.

The most eager opponents of the new line have unfortunately chosen to ignore the transitional demands thesis. Yet it is only the latter that can explain and in part justify the labor party thesis.

The transitional demands thesis implies that America is in a pre-revolutionary situation: One raises transitional demands only at such a time. To be sure, the thesis gives no serious analysis of American society or the prospects of American capitalism; it even shies away from a clear statement that America is in a pre-revolutionary situation. But this merely brands it as both inadequate and dishonest: it commits the party to a line which it neither avows nor justifies.

If a labor party arises in a period of revolutionary crisis, it will be unable to play traditional reformist politics. It will of necessity be the arena within which the various political tendencies of the labor movement will compete and struggle. The revolutionists, by pressing forward their transitional demands - demands which correspond to the requirements of the situation - will win over broader and broader strata of workers, until they are ready for the seizure of power. Granting only the premise, the pre-revolutionary situation, the rest follows. After the seizure of power, few persons will interest themselves in the Labor Party thesis. The historian of the movement will be more apt to describe errors contained therein as breaches of revolutionary etiquette than as violations of principle. The ferment of revolution is the great solvent of formalism.

It is clear that an opposition in principle to the Labor Party line must be based upon opposition to the transitional demands thesis: opposition not to its details (workers' militia and shop councils are wholly correct slogans) but to its implications. That thesis is the root of the new line. Its acceptance paves the way for innumerable ruinous policies, of which the Labor Party slogan is but one.

II. PROSPECTS OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

The thesis on transitional demands stresses certain economic facts as being of great significance. Certain it is that American (and world) capitalism is declining. But one cannot deduce from this fact alone the impossibility of stabilization for considerable periods of time. Since the World War revolutionists have been proving the inevitability of British decay. The depression of 1929 appeared to signify an imminent British collapse. Yet Britain suffered a milder depression than any other industrial nation, and her recovery was so extensive that in 1937 the rate of profit reached 10% and production was at an all-time high. Such a phenomenon suggests caution in issuing death warrants. At all events, the light hearted predictions of American decline should wait upon a more thorough-going analysis of American capitalism than has yet been made by any member of the national committee.

Much has been made of the rapid rate of decline - an event of a purely accidental character, due to sudden curtailment of federal expenditure. The rapidity of the decline is certainly no more significant than its slowing up. The indices have for some time fluctuated within a relatively narrow zone. The Time-business index records a drop of thirty

points during the last four months of 1937. But the first six months of 1938 have netted a further drop of less than three points. Unfortunately there was no room for this fact in the thesis.

The most important factor in determining the immediate economic and political development of the United States is federal spending. A healthy capitalism overcomes the disparity between commodity production and consuming power by new capital investment. During 1935 to 1937 federal spending attempted, with partial success, to substitute for capital investment. Government spending cannot solve the problems of capitalism, but, as the New Deal and World War have shown, it can temporarily maintain profits and cushion unemployment.

Judging on the basis of the English experience, and the long continued low interest rate on treasury bonds (ten year money is quoted at two percent, twenty year money at two and a half) the American government retains a borrowing power of fifty to seventy-five billions. During the past year about a billion and a half of that was consumed by the New Deal. The depression has forced next year's estimated deficit to four billion. But even at a much higher level of spending, American capitalism has a number of years of life ahead of it, provided war does not intervene.

In the past various economic groups have competed for a share of the federal deficit spending. In the future these contenders will tend more and more to narrow down to two groups: the war machine (and its allied capitalists) and the working class. Here we strike the root of American reformism.

For years we contended that declining capitalism could grant the workers no concessions. We have been proven wrong. Concessions can be granted so long as the bourgeoisie retains either profits or borrowing power. The unemployed worker, who six years ago relied upon a handout at the Salvation Army soup kitchen, and who today receives \$6 weekly on home relief - this worker is well aware of that fact. It is precisely because he is getting six dollars that he sees the possibility of twelve. It is not the depression that is driving the workers toward a labor party; it is federal largesse. We are witnessing the development of reformism in the United States not because the situation is revolutionary or the masses backward. We are witnessing such a development because the material basis of reformism has not yet been destroyed. Old age pensions, slum clearance, public power projects - these things are still realizable under a declining capitalism. It is through the labor party that the worker places his order for them.

III. THREE VIEWS AND A THESIS

Granted the premises, the labor party line is not wrong in principle. But that does not mean that it flows inexorably from the premises. Draper and other comrades will doubtless marshal the innumerable tactical arguments against it. I will merely mention certain significant divergences among the proponents of the thesis.

The labor party thesis, interestingly enough, is almost devoid of motivation. One can excuse the absence of a blue-print, but not of an indicated goal. We are to agitate for a labor party. With what consequences? Do we hope thereby to aid in the creation of a labor party? Do we wish to separate ranks from leaders? Do we merely wish to prevent the formation

of a third capitalist coalition party? We cannot always take responsibility for events, but we must take responsibility for our purposes.

Comrade Mc Kinney has declared (before the Wash. D.C. branch) that he has no intention of aiding the construction of a labor party. Our agitation for it is designed to head off such a development. He expressed the fervent hope that there would never be a labor party in America.

Comrade Cannon has declared that we need the labor party for a field of operation. We raise the slogan because the masses can be led to independent political action only through a labor party.

Comrade Crux is relatively indifferent to the sentiments of the masses for such a party. The objective situation calls for it.

These three individuals support the same thesis. Doubtless other leaders will have their own interpretations. It will be recalled that some months ago the leadership confessed to divergences in the National Committee. It thus seems likely that the absence of motivation in the thesis is the result not of accident but of design. We are confronted with an agreement to agree.

An important tactical question: granting the transitional demands thesis, of what value is a labor party? If the situation is ripe for them, the transitional demands can be raised in the trade unions and shop committees. Why is it necessary to demand that the unions affiliate to Labor's Non-Partisan League before we can call for a workers' militia? In any case we will find ourselves confronting the same workers and the same bureaucracy. Since we are to recruit workers on the basis of our transitional demands and not on the basis of our labor party line, the latter would appear to involve a wholly unnecessary maneuver.

IV. PERSPECTIVES OF OUR MOVEMENT

The transitional demands thesis appears to have achieved an uncritical acceptance by the party membership. This is quite understandable: it looks Bolshevik and smells of barricades. But somehow the optimistic picture which it paints has found no reflection in the mood of the party. For the mood of the party reflects our real situation, not our escapist fantasies. Neither on a national nor an international plane is there any cause for optimism concerning the immediate future of our movement. In France alone is there any chance of averting world war by revolution. And the French situation grows daily less favorable. A realistic reorientation of our party must take as its starting point the virtual certainty of war within a few years.

Anti-war agitation must be the keynote of our activity. And the labor party movement, together with the unions, will provide the best field for our operations. This need not commit us in any way to advocacy of a labor party, which would inevitably be reformist - ranks as well as leaders - for years to come. Happily, history is sparing us a debate on whether or not to work within the labor party groups: increasing numbers of our members are finding themselves inside by reason of union affiliation.

Unfortunately the United States has an excellent chance of winning

the next war. But win or lose, the country will take a giant stride on the road to revolution. The plunder of even a highly successful war must inevitably be trivial when contrasted with the dissipation of national resources involved. The material basis of reformism will be greatly narrowed, if not destroyed. And the Stalinist will no longer be our rivals for the support of militant workers: they will be genuine rivals only of the fascists.

Our American party, despite its numerous defects, has the toughness necessary to survive an imperialist war. And that is the most promising sign for the future.

Victor Fox
July 15, 1938

MINORITY RESOLUTION ON THE LABOR PARTY

Hal Draper

(Following is the elaborated draft of the minority resolution which is presented for the vote in the party referendum.)

1. The problem of the labor party is a problem of our strategy and tactics in the period of capitalist decline, and more specifically, in the present period of the death agony of international capitalism and the chronic social crisis of American capitalism. We must solve the series of questions that arise with regard to (1) the objective significance of labor parties in this period; (2) the implementing of our Transitional Program so as to make it a real force in the upsurge of the American workers and in order to steer their development into revolutionary channels; and (3) the working out of positive tactics in reaching and influencing in our direction the sections of the working class which are breaking away from their old-party ties and groping for independent class action.

The Perspective of the Labor Party Movement

2. The leadership of the LNPL movement is at present intent upon continuing its present course of tailing the old capitalist parties -- i.e. the old policy of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies" in new, organized, form. It is not excluded that they will continue to remain within the bounds of this policy. The more probable outcome, and the one upon which the LNPL leaders themselves are banking, is that a realignment within the old party set-up will lead to a coalition between the LNPL forces and a split-off "left wing" of the Democratic Party (plus even Republican elements) -- to form a characteristic third-party movement, a bourgeois Democratic Front. The mass basis of such a party would still be the trade unions affiliated to the LNPL, bestraddled by the generals-without-an-army of the left Democrats, side by side with the LNPL leaders as the left face of the third-party leadership. The objective driving force of such a split would be precisely the sharpening of the social crisis, leading to differences in the ranks of the bourgeoisie on how to deal with it, the "left wing" seeking the shelter of the politically conservative labor forces.

3. But if such a Democratic split fails to mature rapidly enough, and if the movement for independent action among the workers threatens to go over the heads of the LNPL leaders, on the way to revolutionary action, then the stimulus will be present for the formation by the LNPL of their own independent party on a national scale, reluctantly pushed ahead by pressure from below to the formation of the famous "independent labor party". It is out of such conditions that an "independent labor party" would arise.

4. This is why it is superficial and false to believe that the significance of an independent labor party would appear as a spur to the development of political class-consciousness on the part of the workers. The relationship is the other way round: an independent LNPL party would be the distorted reflection of the workers' advancing consciousness, not its cause or stimulus. Nor is it true that it would in its turn stimulate further advance in political consciousness. On the contrary, its raison d'etre would be to utilize the new form in order to stem the flood and siphon it back into safe channels. It is the old trick of misleadership: running around in front of the masses in order to head them off.

5. It is important to distinguish the progressive and reactionary elements in such developments. On the one hand, there is the fact that a swing in sentiment by sections of the working class away from the old capitalist parties and toward independent political action manifests a progressive subjective development on their part. This we hail -- this represents a stage in the development of the subjective pre-conditions of the revolution. But it is a fact that the same progressive subjective development is present when a worker breaks with the Democratic Party and joins the C.P. because he looks upon it as a working-class party; similar examples can be given. The fact that there is a progressive sentiment afoot does not insure that it will not be corralled into a reactionary channel (any more than a sincere hatred of fascism insures that it will not take the form of support of war against Germany). We must distinguish sharply between (1) the progressive character of the political action sentiment among the workers, and (2) the reactionary character of the labor-party form into which it is crystallized. The former has an extremely important effect upon our tactical steps, as we shall show; the latter determines our basic strategical approach.

Our Basic Strategical Approach

6. The basic question which must guide our policies is: Can a labor party play a progressive role? This question cannot be answered by the mechanical application of principles which apply any time, anywhere. It is determined by our analysis of the present era of capitalist development. --When capitalism was expanding economically, the labor party could rally large masses of workers about the struggle for immediate demands, which the bourgeoisie was able to yield. In this post-war period of declining capitalism, however, this possibility no longer exists; the bourgeoisie must rather withdraw than grant further concessions. Even the successful struggle for immediate demands requires revolutionary orientation. With the intensification of the social crisis, whatever immediate gains or victories are registered are cancelled out by the development of the crisis itself. Where once a reformist political party acting within the frame work of capitalism had an independent role to play in organizing the working class for immediate concessions, today the only working class program which is actually independent of the capitalist class is the revolutionary program. Today a labor party, like every other political formation, is confronted with the harsh alternatives -- defense of capitalism or the fight for socialism; the possibility of finding footing in a middle ground is no longer there.

7. The old type of program which, in a different period, provided this middle ground has now been taken over by the most enlightened section of the bourgeoisie itself -- the "left", New Deal Democrats. It is precisely because the reformist labor leaders have no essential political independence from this program that there is no objective basis for their political independence from capitalist politics in general. Under such circumstances, "separating the workers from all capitalist politics" is more and more equivalent to -- leading them in a revolutionary direction. A labor party born under these auspices is marked from birth: to tie the workers to capitalist politics through new forms, dividing this labor with the left varieties of bourgeois politics (Rooseveltian demagoguery, etc.)

8. To say however that a labor party can do nothing to solve even the most immediately pressing problems of the workers and that it

cannot separate them from capitalist politics does not mean its role is merely one of futility. The vacuum from which the progressive significance of a labor party has fled is filled with a reactionary content. The establishment of such a political machine means a positive obstacle on the road of the development of the workers, a positive enemy of the revolutionary movement. Its positively reactionary character manifests itself on all the fields vital to the interests of the working class. With the threat of a new war overhanging, it cannot even allow itself the verbal denunciation of capitalist war which the Second International before the war could afford, but must appear openly as a social-patriotic recruiting machine and propagandist among the workers, partly even deliberately founded for the preparation of the national union. To teach the workers now to look upon such an organization as the center and rallying point for the political movement of the working class (i.e. to advocate the formation of a labor party where none exists) means to make it all the harder, in time of war, to break the workers away from their allegiance to it.

9. At a time when the old two-party system is breaking up, it is possible for a labor party to achieve an organizational, formal independence from the two old machines. But politically, it can only gravitate within the orbit of third-party politics. The P.C. Majority agrees that if the LNPL forces formed a party in coalition with the left Democrats, it would mean a third party. But if the LNPL is forced to form their party without these allies, what basic difference would there be between the two variants? In program? support of capitalism? methods? mass basis? Why would one be progressive and not the other? It is true that significant differences would exist -- for example, a party formed by the LNPL alone would be more sensitive to working-class pressure (just as the C.P. is more sensitive to this pressure than Roosevelt); etc. -- but these do not determine the question of its progressive or reactionary character; and in action they would dictate a different tactical approach, not a different estimate of its objective significance.

The Transitional Program and the Labor Party

10. What conclusion must we draw with regard to the labor party from our estimate of the present social crisis and our advocacy of a transitional program? On the negative side, the present crisis sharpens the outlines of the preceding analysis. Where before the "abstract" analysis of the period of capitalist decline pointed to the reactionary character of a labor-party formation, the present concrete circumstances reinforce the conclusion. Or -- is a labor party reactionary when it is merely a question of capitalist decline, but becomes "progressive" when this decline takes ever more intensified forms?

11. But it is the positive conclusions from the transitional program which point our road. The deepening social crisis in the United States dictates to the revolutionary party the need for a program for the masses that goes beyond the immediate demands elaborated heretofore, that goes outside the framework of capitalism. Convulsive upheavals in the coming period hold forth the possibility for the revolutionary party to advance in bold strides forward with great gains in influence and membership -- PROVIDED that we know how to (1) make this program a living force in the direct mass action of the workers, and (2) on the political field, on the basis of the experiences of the struggle, guide the political lessons which the workers draw toward the necessity of revolutionary organization, of revolutionary politics.

12. How will our program take hold in the workers' mass movement?
--The transitional program prepares the way for putting the question of power on the agenda. The main line which the party must follow in implementing the transitional program is to teach the workers the necessity of depending on their own extra-parliamentary strength and organization -- certainly not to teach them to depend upon, or hold to any present illusions in, the ability of a labor party to carry out this transitional program. What organizational forms must we strive for to carry out the transitional program? Under Section A of the National Action thesis (Economic Demands): "The organizations best fitted to cope with the problems of workers control at the point of production are the shop-committees. Every effort must be exerted to organize the shop-committees, which may become organs of dual power in the factory and the nucleus of soviets, as the crisis takes on a revolutionary character in the future." -- Under Section B (The Struggle Against Fascism): the organization of the Workers Defense Guard, the Workers Militia. -- In Section C (Struggle Against War): the need for extra-parliamentary organization, here most immediately counterposed to the perspective of a labor party, is most obvious. -- Section D (the slogan of a Workers Government) means for us, as the form for which we strive, a workers' government based upon the councils of workers and farmers. Although the workers may have to pass through the experience of a labor party government, we must realize the danger of ourselves giving this content to the slogan, in our own agitation. -- Carefully the party must lead the workers through the experiences of the shop-committees, the Workers Defense Guard, etc.; to the creation of councils of workers and farmers, and toward the national consolidation of these extra-parliamentary organs of struggle as the crisis matures. That is the course which we must set in motion among the masses to counteract the people's-frontism and democratic front of the Stalinists and liberals. If this is the main line we put before the masses, our main line in political agitation is also to keep before their eyes the necessity for revolutionary organization. We cannot point both toward soviets and a reformist labor party as the means of carrying out our revolutionary transitional program.

13. The party ranks must understand this precisely as our main line. The great gap between the objective requirements of the situation and the subjective stage of development of the workers requires that we take the path of the transitional program in an effort to hurdle the course of reformist political development which the American working class had to go through. But the backwardness of the American workers imperatively demands that we supplement this strategy with a positive program of tactical steps within the labor party movement. Just as on the extra-parliamentary field, we launch slogans which, starting from the elementary needs of the workers, are designed to bring them in struggle outside the framework of capitalism; so inside the labor party movement, we must conduct a struggle around demands which, starting from the desire for independent political class action, are designed to teach them through experience that the labor party cannot bring them a step forward, that our position is correct, that the way out lies in our direction.

Tactics in the Labor Party Movement

14. Our labor party policy up to now is inadequate for our present needs for two reasons: first, because it was not linked with a program for bringing the masses into motion on a line alternative to that of the labor party movement, the transitional program which we have now developed; secondly, because it necessarily emphasized the negative aspect of blocking the formation of a labor party without taking sufficiently into account

and paying serious attention to the necessity for tactical utilization of the progressive sentiment which has its distorted reflection in the labor party movement, through work inside, although our Declaration of Principles and previous resolutions already sketched the outlines of such a possible future course. This is the turn which the party must make on the labor party question.

15. It must be understood that such concrete tactics cannot be improvised; our considerations with regard to the period of capitalist decline do not automatically dictate our tactics for specific situations. These can be developed realistically only by a concrete knowledge of the situation, the relationship of forces, local differences, etc., and after full discussion. Our first step in making a turn toward concretizing our tactics must be a survey of the national and local scenes, and it is the task of the party leadership to carefully lay out a positive tactical approach to each. The P.C. Majority solves the problem in short order by prescribing "complete and unambiguous support" in each and every instance. The sectarian is equally expeditious with the view that we should have nothing to do with this morass of reformism. The line of the party must be neither of these rule-of-thumb answers.

16. The important aspect of the labor party movement for us is the fact that there is movement. Where will this movement lead to? Ahead of it lies either labor-party action or revolutionary political action. We have stated that our basic approach demands that we seek to block the road toward the crystallization of this sentiment in the form of a labor party. Does this then mean turning it back in the direction from which it is coming, toward the capitalist parties? Obviously not; at the same time that we seek to block the road toward the labor party, we must push the politically-awakening workers forward -- which means, along the alternative road of revolutionary action. In proportion as our efforts have their effect, it is this combined action which will enable the advance guard of the workers to come most quickly to the revolutionary party. Blocking the reformist road -- that is the sense of our strategical approach to the labor party question; pushing the workers from behind, forward -- that is the place of our tactics.

17. We can do neither effectively unless we are in the labor party movement. The nature of the movement itself provides the channels. The first is through the trade unions. In the last analysis our program can play a role in making the history of the American working class only if our roots are deep in the trade unions, if we are the best union militants, and under those conditions we cannot be isolated from the labor party movement. The second is through serious fraction work in the labor party organizations, branches, etc. If the labor party movement develops to much more far-reaching dimensions than it has so far, it may yet be necessary for us to throw a large portion of our forces into such activity. In cases where there is an established labor party and our party is not on the ballot, possible tactics may include such steps as registering in the labor party primaries. The question of whether such tactics concretely permissible and to what extent they should be driven are not matters that can be settled outside of a specific examination of cases.

18. How do we work inside the labor party movement in order to push the workers forward, against their leadership, and over the heads of their leadership to us? We (i.e. our fractions in the trade unions and in the LP) raise slogans and demands adapted to the particular stage of development of the workers with whom we are dealing. Where the organization is

endorsing capitalist party candidates, as in New York, Pennsylvania, etc., we can say: "Your leaders have ostensibly organized for independent political action and in order to solve your pressing problems; it is our opinion that they and the labor party can and will do neither. You don't agree with us? Then see for yourselves, try to get these things; we'll fight along with you, *Demand that your leaders put up independent candidates!" In specific situations the fight for independent candidates can be an important lever in disillusioning the workers with what they can expect from the LP. But only if in our own propaganda, we utilize such experiences in order to foster such disillusionment, to draw from them our general conclusions and lessons with regard to the labor party movement! It is this which is precisely the main emphasis in the press, for example. Furthermore, it is a matter of the simple truth to state that even if independent labor candidates are run, the problems of the workers will not be a step nearer solution. The demands which we put forward inside the LP as positive gains for the workers are the transitional demands. Where independent candidates are run, our attack shifts to center around the question of program, especially the transitional demands, and those demands again which will bring the workers in collision with the line of the party and its leadership. In the process of exposing the impotence and reactionary nature of the labor party or labor party movement, we must show that there is an alternative path, which only the revolutionary party is following.

19. Where independent labor candidates are run, the tactic of critical support (with the emphasis on the critical) may be employed in order to avoid a head-on collision with the labor-party sentiment of the workers where it would be difficult to explain our opposition in terms of the workers' own experiences, rather than in terms of our own revolutionary theory. But as in the preceding case, the value of such tactics depends completely upon employing them in the context of our general agitation around the LP question, utilizing these tactics in order to expose the LP in action.

20. The question of affiliation to a labor party is also a tactical question. It would become permissible only if it is no longer a question of attempting to block the formation of a labor party, but when we are faced with the fact of an established mass labor party -- provided that complete organizational and programmatic independence of our own party can be maintained.

21. The question of supporting affiliation of trade unions to labor party movements is also a tactical question, depending on the question: is there an established mass LP or is the question still open as to whether the working class will take this road or not? In Minneapolis, for example, where the FLP is precisely such an established mass party, our answer cannot be the same as in New Jersey, where the LNPL itself has not formed a LP because of the lack of mass support and interest among the workers. There we can still help to determine by our own activities whether the workers will be able to hurdle the LP stage or not. In each situation, local or national, we must decide: Are we going to accept as our starting point the fact that an established mass party exists and orient our first line of attack toward the question of program? There is no use blocking the entrance to the LP road when the workers have already passed by. In this case, the question of advocating the formation of a LP becomes obsolete. But this is not the case at present on the national scene nor in almost all localities.

22. We believe it important to bring to the attention of the party membership some dangers in the present situation. The effects of social

* without giving up our political convictions, but going through these experiences with you.

crisis do not remain completely outside our own organization. There is a tremendous pressure upon a party which insists upon maintaining intransigently a revolutionary line. A desperate attempt to escape from "isolation", the desire to find new short-cuts to mass influence, a dissatisfaction with results attained heretofore which can lead to disorientation as well as to a healthy reaction -- these represent the starting-points. We raise this question because we believe that such tendencies have been manifested in now proportions in the reaction of sections of the party membership to the P.C. proposal. Pessimism and defeatism with regard to the future of the party shading into liquidationism, growing confusion in political ideas, openly opportunistic motivations and reasoning in approaching the labor party question -- these are trends which it must be the task of the party leadership, majority and minority, to combat. In this sense also, the problem is the revolutionary party.

23. The road to the building of our party in the immediate period lies along the line of the struggle for the transitional program and the digging of our roots into the mass organizations of the working class. This means:

Making every member a member of a trade union or other mass organization.

Organization of fraction work inside the LMFL and LP movements.

Bringing forward the transitional demands in the trade unions and LP movements, and undertaking a campaign to popularize them in our press, popular pamphlets, etc.

Emphasis on teaching the workers the necessity for reliance on their own extra-parliamentary strength and organization.

Building toward the organization of shop committees and local councils of workers and farmers, with a national perspective.

Organization of opposition movement inside the LP movements around slogans designed to bring the workers into collision with their leadership.

A national orientation toward throwing our forces into building the labor party movement can only divert us from this path. This is the positive line along which the party can be built.