

# DISCUSSION BULLETIN

A-28

March 1955

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Published by the  
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY  
116 University Place  
New York 3, N.Y.

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## CLASS STRUGGLE POLICY IN THE UNIONS

(Trade Union Resolution adopted by the 16th National Convention)

During the past twenty years the union movement has made a qualitative leap in both size and scope. In 1933 organized labor amounted to only a weak craft union force of about two million. Today the combined membership of the AFL, CIO and independent unions is in the neighborhood of 17 million. Although weaker numerically than the AFL, the CIO because of its position in basic industry is predominant in concentrated numbers, influence and social weight. From the start the CIO has functioned as a social movement obliged to contend with the strongest monopoly capitalists. The mass production workers of the CIO are least subject to middle class influence and have produced a decisive change in the composition of the union movement. Implicit in this over-all economic power of the workers at the union level is a decisive revolutionary power at the political level.

The series of strike struggles between 1933 and 1946, through which the union power was consolidated, demonstrated several vital political facts: The workers showed their readiness to assault the great corporations and stand up against strikebreaking attacks by the capitalist government. In the sit-down strikes the workers taught the capitalists, if not the union bureaucrats, that they have no respect for capitalist claims to private property rights in industry. The proven ability of the unions to halt production has given the workers great self-confidence. They have become socially transformed to the highest level of union consciousness.

Still another decisive political fact has been demonstrated: The capitalist reaction to nation-wide strikes involving whole sections of basic industry, which arose as a necessary component of the economic struggle of the CIO workers, has made it impossible for the workers to defend their interests through economic action alone.

Every big strike quickly becomes a national political issue with the government intervening against the workers. Every major struggle of the workers becomes elevated into a political struggle. Strikes won on the picket line are soon lost on the political arena because of the false policies of the union leadership. A glaring contradiction has therefore developed between the social power of the workers and their lack of independent political organization.

### Workers Sense Political Needs

The workers sense that strikes have today become political class battles. As a result they hesitate to walk out unless they see a clear chance for some gains or find strike action necessary to beat off a corporation attack. The workers are today searching for forms through which they may express their class political sentiments. In their own fashion they are beginning to act along class lines in national politics. They tend to vote more and more as a bloc, following as a class a false "lesser evil" course of support to the Democratic Party. The mass search for forms of political action also finds distorted expression in the capitalist party primaries.

Despite the absence of their own mass party the workers find themselves compelled to take some interest in the broad political questions of the day. In their consciousness as a class lurks the disturbing knowledge of their direct experience with capitalist crisis in a great depression and two world wars. In their travels abroad as part of the imperialist armed forces they have gotten a first-hand look at the colonial revolution, the socialist aspirations of the European workers, the utter viciousness of fascism as an anti-labor force. Hence there is today a greater potential for organized opposition to capitalist foreign policy. The workers are also becoming more aware that their unions, their democratic rights, their standard of living are the prime target of capitalist domestic policy. In both spheres, foreign and domestic, they are becoming more critical of the ruling powers above them.

The real drift of class sentiment cannot be judged by manifestations at the top of the union movement or by the failure of the workers to attend union meetings made dreary by a bankrupt policy. In the past the workers responded immediately to leadership that had some grasp of their needs and showed some will and ability to fight. That same capacity for battle remains very much present in the working class today. What is needed to gain new response is a class struggle program and leadership. Given that key the workers will leap onto the political arena as an independent class force with the same sweep and power they displayed in building the modern union movement.

At the head of the union movement stands a conservative bureaucracy that acts as a conscious agent of the capitalist government and is utterly devoid of any independent working class program or aims. Having long existed in the old craft union AFL, a bureaucratic formation of this type was introduced into the CIO from the start. The integration of the Social-Democrats into the CIO leadership strengthened the grip of the bureaucracy by giving it new weapons of social demagoguery with which to divert sentiment for independent labor political action back into capitalist political channels.

In collective bargaining the bureaucrats are concerned, not with how much the workers need, but with how little they can be forced to accept. A quest for "fringe benefits" has been substituted for a fighting wage policy. New piece-rate outrages and a stiffer speed-up are accepted in return for stingy health, welfare and pension plans. The auto workers have been saddled with a five-year contract during which period the Korean War has come and gone, automation has cut big slices in manpower requirements, a sagging economy has precipitated heavy lay-offs and yet the workers must wait until 1955 for new contract negotiations.

"Unauthorized" strikes are ruthlessly put down by the bureaucrats in open collaboration with the corporations and the government. In the steel industry the workers have witnessed the obscene spectacle of the CIO union president, David J. McDonald, making a "good will" tour of the plants with one of the labor-hating steel barons, Benjamin Fairless. But the greatest betrayal of all is the political alliance the union bureaucrats have sought to make with the capitalist ruling power.

The line of the CIO officials is to compete with the monopoly capitalists for the friendly support of the government. They have relied on government intervention in collective bargaining and on social legislation to improve wages, hours, and general conditions. In return they have supported the government's imperialist war program and helped to maintain the capitalist two-party political monopoly. Under the pressures of the developing social crisis, the AFL officials have gradually teamed up with the CIO heads in attempting to carry out this policy.

Although the government has given the bureaucrats precious few social concessions, it has become ever more demanding of them. Above all they are required to serve as political police within the labor movement, ferreting out opponents of the imperialist war program and advocates of socialism. These government demands serve to sharpen and intensify the natural inclinations of the bureaucrats to suppress democracy within the unions.

The existing bureaucracy was able to fasten its parasitic grip on the industrial unions primarily because of the Stalinist corruption in the labor movement. The Stalinists miseducated and demoralized many of the best worker-militants and destroyed the great opportunity to build a mass revolutionary party that arose during the radicalization of the Thirties.

As the CIO took form the Stalinists were shifting toward a Peoples Front line calculated to influence the foreign policy of the American government toward friendly relations with the Kremlin. Thus the Communist Party followed a political line like that of the new CIO bureaucracy, although for different basic reasons. Like the old-line union bureaucrats and the Social-Democratic lackeys of capitalism, the Stalinists therefore found it natural to join in the suppression of rank and file democracy insofar as they could do so without cutting their own throats.

Apart from the brief interlude of the Stalin-Hitler pact, the CP lived within the CIO bureaucracy on the basis of a pro-Roosevelt line from the rise of the CIO movement through world war II. When the cold war began the imperialist-minded CIO bureaucrats turned on the Stalinists, driving them into an isolation from which they are today trying to recover through a new Peoples Front turn.

#### The Labor-Democratic Coalition

The attempt of the union officialdom to forge an alliance with the capitalist government has taken the political form of a coalition with the Democratic Party. For twenty years the Democrats retained control of the national administration, thanks primarily to the support of organized labor. The coalition was dealt a setback, however, when the election of Eisenhower in 1952 thrust the Democrats from power and cleared the way for the open rule of monopoly capitalism.

Mass dissatisfaction under Republican rule soon produced a trend back toward the Democrats who registered major gains in the November

1954 elections. As a consequence the union officials now hope to restore Democratic control of the administration in 1956, promising the workers a return to the New Deal era.

Adlai Stevenson in a recent speech boasted that the Democrats had "narrowed the gap between the rich and the poor," calling attention to the anti-trust laws and social security measures. These, he predicted, represent only a preview of the bounties to come under the Democrats. Then Stevenson gave the lie to his whole speech when he said, "Instead of isolation our policy is total involvement." In that remark he assured the capitalists that the needs of their war program would be placed above all other interests.

The imperialist war program excludes any basic improvement in the workers' conditions. Any curtailment of war production, on the other hand, will increase unemployment because neither the pump-priming of the Thirties nor the war spending since has overcome a single basic cause of crashes like 1929. Unemployment already exists in the midst of large-scale arms production, demonstrating that under capitalism the alternative to catastrophic war is catastrophic depression. Therefore the monopoly capitalists feel compelled to cripple the fighting power of the unions. In fact the basic aim of the all-out campaign to elect Eisenhower was to turn the clock back to the pre-CIO days.

Election of a Democratic administration would not alter the fundamental anti-labor course of the government. As the executive of the monopoly capitalist class a Stevenson would have to carry out the same basic policies as an Eisenhower. Yet the politically bankrupt labor bureaucracy, being incapable of fashioning new methods of struggle, continues to pin all of labor's hopes on the restoration of the Democratic Party to power. In this aim they are now criminally aided and abetted by the Communist Party.

The issue, according to the Stalinists, is not socialism or capitalism but democracy or fascism. They call for a coalition under the two-party system. The Stalinists are vigorously pushing this disruptive line in the unions, seeking at the same time to curry favor with the right wing bureaucracy as specialists in fighting left-wing advocates of independent labor political action. Thus the trend is set in motion toward a united front of the right wing and the Stalinists on a political line that violates every fundamental need of the workers.

This trend can be expected to make headway for a while because of the Popular Front mood among the workers. The coalition line will also find support among middle class elements. This mass mood is reflected in the recent Democratic election victories. Support to the Democrats flows from opposition to the Eisenhower regime, illusions that the Democrats can make good on their "welfare state" promises and lack of another vehicle for mass political expression.

Manifestations like the CIO-sponsored slate of independent candidates in the recent Newark elections are still rare. The tendency

among the union officials to demand a greater voice in the selection of Democratic candidates. This course has led to union challenges of machine candidates in Democratic primary elections and the CIO action in Newark may have been largely intended as pressure on the Democratic machine in the same general sense.

The notion of labor reforming the Democratic Party in this manner is bound to meet with response among the workers. It will take a certain amount of experience for them to learn that labor can't reform a capitalist party, that the workers will remain on a political dead-end street until they form their own independent class party.

While combatting the mistaken idea that labor can make any progress by working as an organized faction inside the Democratic Party, the revolutionary socialists must at the same time give critical support to independent labor candidacies, using the independent candidacies to hammer home the labor party idea as was correctly done in the Newark elections.

### Contradictory Pressures

Labor's consciousness of the shifts in political reality has lagged seriously behind the march of events. This lag has been most pronounced among the union bureaucrats whose false political policy, arising from their social function as a class-collaborationist agency within the labor movement, has served to drug the political class consciousness of the rank and file. Those who see conservatism among the workers as the cause of their political backwardness are therefore wrongfully blaming the workers for the criminal policies of their leaders.

Disoriented by the union officialdom, the workers still hope to protect and improve their standard of living through continuation of the labor-Democratic coalition. Yet it would be a great mistake to think that the workers' present standard of living has so thoroughly conservatized them that the capitalists and union bureaucrats can lead them around by the nose. All semblance of complacency in the union ranks will give way to militancy the moment their conditions of life become seriously impaired.

During World War II and again in the Korean War the workers reacted sensitively to encroachments on their living standards. The recent years of relative prosperity have not generated mass confidence in the future. People were made crisis-conscious and fearful of the future by the 1929 crash and its aftermath. Although the masses are not yet fully aware of the fact, they are losing faith in capitalism and are sensitive to the need for action in defense of their interests.

Beneath the preliminary class-struggle manifestations now rising to the surface lie a whole series of fundamental contradictions. The workers represent the greatest social force in the nation, yet the capitalists rule to the detriment of the workers' interest. Although possessors of vast potential power the unions are rendered impotent because of a wrong political program that entangles them in the capitalist net. The union bureaucracy resorts to suppression of internal democracy in order to put down opposition to its false policies in

the ranks.

The irreconcilable contradiction of interests between the workers and capitalists is leading toward political differentiation of the two classes for a showdown fight. Naked political preparation for an all-out capitalist attack against labor has taken the form of an incipient fascist crystallization around McCarthy. Political polarization of the working class has developed in the form of a tendency to choose between capitalist candidates as a class and a tendency to intervene as a labor faction inside the Democratic Party.

There will be ups and downs in this political development. But under the impact of capitalist crisis political collaboration between labor and capital will become less and less tenable. Independent labor political action has become an imperative class necessity. Delay in the realization of this political necessity has produced a whole new complex of pressures. The fundamental antagonism between capital and labor will thus have an increasingly explosive effect on class relations and the political backwardness of the workers will be overcome under the pressure of necessity,

When the mass radicalization comes the workers will use their unions as the foundation on which to build their own party, combining their organized economic power with organized political power. The fight for leadership of the radicalized workers will therefore begin as a fight for leadership of the unions. For that reason the trade union question is the key question of revolutionary politics in the United States. The militancy of the workers must be fused with a revolutionary leadership bringing class consciousness and a spirit of determined struggle into the union movement.

In the coming radicalization the struggle of tendencies will have the double aspect of a fight for leadership of the vanguard and of the broad mass movement. The contest will occur between three forces: the union bureaucracy, the Stalinists and the Socialist Workers Party. Of these tendencies only the SWP will constitute a vital historic force. Neither the union bureaucrats nor the Stalinists have any progressive historical mission, both are transitory obstacles to be overcome on the road to socialism.

The union bureaucracy has drawn its main strength from the relative stability of capitalism that in turn served to stabilize a labor aristocracy on which the bureaucracy rests. As the capitalist crisis sharpens the labor aristocracy will begin to lose its privileges. Differentiations will take place within the aristocracy and find their reflex in the bureaucracy itself. Demands for class struggle policies will mount at the same time among the least privileged and most dynamic union elements.

The sharpening class antagonisms will reverse the effect of the union officialdom's tie-up with the capitalist state. From its former role as a source of bureaucratic strength this tie-up will become converted into a source of weakness. Therefore our union work must be firmly based on an understanding of the transient nature of the stability presently manifested by the union bureaucracy and

the labor aristocracy on which it rests.

Stalinism plays a retrogressive and disorienting role in the union movement, contaminating the class consciousness of the workers with a class-collaborationist line dressed up in radical language and seeking to restrain them from independent class action.

In the pending struggle of tendencies the SWP will have a chance to win leadership of the vanguard and the radicalized mass movement. Our surest guarantee will be the party cadres forged in the unions, class-conscious fighters armed with a powerful revolutionary-socialist program meeting the historic needs of the workers.

### Transitional Program

Our perspectives must flow from the maximum possibilities inherent in the war-depression nature of capitalism. Leftward-moving elements in the mass movement must be imbued with the correctness and inevitability of our socialist program. We must note all signs of a shift in mood among the workers, respond sensitively to mass initiative and support every demand that will tend to draw the workers into politics as an independent force.

The party must demonstrate in action -- in tune with the motion of the masses-- the correctness of its policies. Sideline commentators and critics can never become mass leaders. The workers will listen only to those who are themselves in the thick of the fight, those who demonstrate by deeds their ability to lead.

Our strategic task is to overcome the contradiction between the fully-matured conditions for independent labor political action and the political immaturity of the working class. A transitional programmatic construction is required to bridge the gap between the present demands of the workers and the fully revolutionary-socialist program. In accord with the fundamental line of the Transitional Program of 1938, we must establish contact with the workers at their present level of consciousness and help them generalize their grievances and demands on a higher political plane.

Our key transitional demands should center around the questions of war and unemployment as they directly affect the daily lives of the workers. Special attention should be paid to demands aimed to evoke union action on the special problems of the youth, the women workers and the Negro people, stressing labor's duty to those natural allies.

The first expression of independent class political action can be expected to take form through a labor party with an essentially reformist program. In the formative period we will not necessarily make program a criterion in deciding whether to give critical support to labor candidates. The first task is to bring about a break from capitalist politics. In giving critical support we insist on independence from the capitalist political apparatus. Under no circumstances will the SWP cross class lines to support a candidate on a capitalist ticket.



As the term "critical" indicates, even in the formative stage of the labor party we reserve the right to point out errors and inadequacies in program. Once the labor party becomes a reality questions of program will become paramount. We will work to crystallize a left wing, on the revolutionary-socialist program. Whether our party will make an entry into the labor party or not is a purely tactical question that will be decided only by future developments.

In any case our party will under all circumstances preserve its political independence. The party cadres in the mass movement are not working to build a substitute for the SWP. All our work, in all spheres and at all times, is carried on for the purpose of building our revolutionary-socialist party.

### Tactical Problems in the Unions

The fight to restore union democracy is inseparably tied to the campaign for independent labor political action. Suppression of union democracy reflects the officialdom's subordination to the capitalist state and their consequent retreat before the police-state attack. Observance of union democracy, on the other hand, is a reflex of class-struggle action in defense of the workers interest.

Advocates of a class-struggle political policy in the unions are the prime targets of the government witch hunters and their bureaucratic collaborators. That is why the political militant of the Fifties must conduct himself in the unions much like the union militant of the Thirties had to conduct himself in the open-shop plants. Good judgment by the political militants in this regard will be interpreted by the workers as a mark of leadership capacity.

The problem is to push realistically toward class-struggle objectives and yet avoid needless victimization through carelessness or excessive boldness. Our union work thus requires considerable skill, patience and endurance. The militants need to arm themselves with the long view, reinforce their confidence with a sound grasp of the party program and draw inspiration from the union rank and file.

It would be disorienting to count on vanguard action by the old militants who stormed the open-shop bastions to found the modern union movement. They are wearing out along with the limited union program of their militant days. The party must look to the new young layers of potential militants and to the women workers, the Negroes and other minority groups. They are the ones who will spearhead labor's political radicalization. Although the workers in basic industry will constitute the main force of the mass political vanguard, workers in the secondary reaches of industry and trade will also comprise an important section of the politicalized labor force. Careful attention must therefore be paid to party work in secondary as well as basic industry.

Union tactics must be kept carefully in tune with mass sentiment, guarding against actions that would go beyond the given limits of mass support. Mass militancy without a high degree of class consciousness has a strictly limited potential. Hostile pressures cannot be withstood indefinitely by the union ranks. Our tactics

must therefore be attuned to the limitations as well as the possibilities of the given situation.

A class struggle program cannot be injected into the unions simply by following a "lesser evil" course in union power politics. We take a practical attitude on internal union struggles as one aspect of a whole complex of tactics. It is sometimes profitable for us to intervene in support of a given candidate or slate when our work can thereby be advanced, but our main energy must be directed toward politicalization of the union ranks.

Tactical thinking is sometimes confused by the mistaken notion that sheer personal ability will enable a person to make himself so useful in the union that he can penetrate the official apparatus without becoming involved in unprincipled official union policies. But nobody can cheat the laws of the class struggle through talent, maneuvers or any other gimmick. Union careers of that type commonly lead either to victimization or compromise, and the longer it takes for the showdown the greater the latter danger becomes.

It is a one-sided and wrong view that our main struggle is for strategic positions in the unions. In fact this is a poor time to be pushing for union posts. Our main aim is to develop class consciousness in the ranks. We subordinate the fight for strategic positions to this aim and connect that subordinate activity with this aim.

#### Party Coordination with the Fractions

The party fractions tend to reflect the one-sidedness of the union movement. Large political issues become obscured by narrow union problems and the fractions are under constant pressure to make practical adaptations. That is why individuals cannot remain revolutionists without the party which rises above narrow questions of detail and generalizes from the large political issues.

Party branches must not be permitted to become mere appendages of union fractions nor must the fractions be permitted to drift without close branch attention. The fractions must have a firm political foundation in the branch in order to maintain a proper political balance in union work. A solid branch base is equally vital to aid fraction recruitment and speed the integration of new worker members into the party.

Immersion in local work also tends to narrow the branch point of view. Close coordination is therefore necessary between the party center and the branches. Lacking such coordination the branches would tend to become influenced by expediency and practicality arising from local problems and the large national and international issues would be pushed into the background. The center in turn would tend to deal with political issues in an abstract fashion that would fail to meet the needs of the party workers in the field.

Party militants must have a clear grasp of the relation between union work and the party's general political work. Campaigns con-

ducted by the party do not represent an attempt to by-pass the unions. General party activity on the mass arena supplements our union work. It is directed primarily, although not entirely, toward the workers in the unions, for they alone are capable of sustained action because they alone are organized on a mass scale.

Progress in the union fractions depends in large measure on adoption of the campaign principle in general party work. Drives to expand press circulation help broaden the fraction contact lists. Party tours help speed the recruitment of contacts.

Efforts like the Trumbull Park action raise the political level of union activity. Election campaigns enable party candidates to reach the union membership with the full party program, thus giving a boost to the union militants who can't fully speak their minds without danger of victimization.

Effective campaign activity requires the concentration of all available forces to achieve concrete and definite objectives. The fractions, branches and press, guided and coordinated by the party center, must function as a single unit revolving around the specific axis of the campaign.

In all our activity, from the daily work of the fractions to the most highly political party campaigns, the basic aim must be to forge a left wing in the mass movement under the leadership of the S.W.P. We must polarize around our fractions an expanding force of union militants who are awakening to political class consciousness. These combined forces will in turn be capable of drawing larger masses into motion during periods of upsurge.

Without our party fractions as the backbone there can be no revolutionary left wing in the mass movement. That is why union work that does not build the party forces is not revolutionary union work. That is why the key objective in all our union activity must be to recruit worker-militants into the party.

TRADE UNION REPORT TO 16th NATIONAL CONVENTION

Comrades, this report will presuppose application to our union work of the fundamental analysis presented in the political resolution and report. It will presuppose also the broad application of our transitional program along the lines of the political resolution. This report will deal with those subjects only obliquely, in their relation to the objective situation as it directly affects the unions, the current trends reflecting the course of union development, and the two sided character of party union policy in our efforts to forge new left wing cadres in the mass movement.

In forging a line for our trade union work at the present political juncture two basic thoughts should be kept in mind. First, that during recent years class relations have been relatively stable in the country with the result that conservative tendencies have been able to maintain domination over the unions. Second, that it is only in the recent period that signs have appeared of a shift in the workers mood through outbreaks of spontaneous defensive struggles at the union level and through sentiments recorded in the national elections. Two major factors are operating to produce this shift in the mood of the workers of which we begin to see some preliminary signs. One factor is uneasiness arising from the basic contradictions in capitalist society, particularly the fears engendered by the depression threat. The second factor is the repressive actions against the labor movement initiated by the capitalist class. There has been a sustained capitalist offensive against labor on the political front ever since the passage of the Taft Hartley Act in 1947. The attack was redoubled when Big Business took direct control of the government in 1952 through the election of Eisenhower. The witch hunt was deepened in industry through the inquisition by the McCarthy, Velde and Clardy committees. Recently the I.U.E. printed an exposure of an anti-union plan formulated by the General Electric Corporation. This plan reflects a basic pattern under which organized plants in big industrial centers would be decentralized in smaller towns where labor is cheaper and unorganized, where unionization can better be prevented. On this basis the corporations expect to reduce wages, intensify the speed up and generally drive down employment conditions.

The capitalist politicians are helping to pave the way for union busting through a series of governmental devices. One of the key aspects has been the general drive in Congress to provide "states rights" escape clauses in the Taft Hartley Act to curb federal jurisdiction over labor legislation and give greater autonomy to the states. In this manner the areas where the decentralized plants are located would be brought more firmly under reactionary control. The second part of this broad pattern has been enactment of a series of "Right to Work" laws in the states, all going in the direction of restricting union rights, impeding union growth and obstructing union action. At the outset these laws focus their attack on the union shop. Once a wedge is thus driven, further repressive maneuvers would be undertaken. At the federal legislative level this attack is symbolized by the Humphrey-Futler Bill which for the first time in America, outlaws a political party. This law also ties in the whole union busting scheme embodied in the witch-hunting concept of "communist-infiltrated" organizations. This latter provision is designed for purposes of an attack on the unions in their present strongholds.

Its aim was manifested in pretty clear form in the Square D strike.

Any thinking person, who has the fundamental interests of the working class in mind, perceives that this situation clearly demands a class struggle defense of the workers. Yet the unions today stand paralyzed by a bureaucracy that drugs the political consciousness of the union membership, preventing in devious and often dirty ways the application of class struggle methods at any level of union action. A bureaucracy that suppresses criticism in the ranks by strangling union democracy and serves in general as a political police agency of the capitalist government to ferret out radical workers in the union ranks. Thanks to the aid of the whole coterie of Social Democratic renegades who have been integrated into the union officialdom in the last 15 or 20 years, the union bureaucracy has been further enabled to divert class struggle sentiments in the ranks by a slick line of social demogogy of the type that emanates from Reuther. But despite all their servility to the capitalist government, despite all their brutal suppression of union democracy, despite all their slick schemes and social demogogy, the iron facts are that Meany, Reuther and Co. can't go on cheating history forever.

There are great contradictions building toward a social explosion in this country. The working class is the strongest social force in the nation and yet the capitalists rule to the detriment of the working class. The workers are powerfully organized in their unions, approximately 17 million strong. They have acquired a great degree of cohesiveness and class solidarity. Yet the union power is rendered impotent by a false political policy. In present day America only the formation of a socialist society can solve the workers fundamental problems. Yet the workers remain tied ideologically in their mass to the bankrupt capitalist system while an incipient fascist crystallization makes its appearance in the country. These contradictions, all fundamental in character, will in time produce a deep social crisis in this country that will lead to a class showdown between fascist reaction on the one side and the workers revolution on the other.

But this fundamental social process will yet pass through a substantial pattern of change. There will be many conjunctural shifts in the political situation and a whole series of ups and downs in the class struggle as this process unfolds. Central to this pattern will be a growing realization among the workers that the policy of political collaboration with the capitalist government places the union movement in an untenable position. That fact will be brought home to the great rank and file of the labor movement under the impact of the class struggle as it unfolds in the future.

The workers have shown, especially in recent times, that they sense the need for independent action, the need to act as a class on the political field as well as in union struggle. They have demonstrated this in their tendency to choose between capitalist candidates as a class, generally supporting the Democratic Party. Of course, some workers vote for the Republicans but the great majority, acting in concert with their unions, tend to support the Democratic Party. The workers also manifest a desire to register independent class political expression through their response to union intervention in the Democratic Party primaries as a labor faction. They hope in this way to reform or capture the Democratic Party and make it serve their interests.

Now we recognize, and we base our work on the positive side of this instinctive drive of the workers toward independent class political action. But we don't go along with the negative side of this development, which diverts this instinctive drive back into the channels of capitalist politics. However, in shaping our policy, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that popular front illusions remain widely extant among the workers and will become uprooted only as the workers go through further experience in their political coalition with the Democratic Party.

As has already been pointed out in the political report, the recent elections marked a reversal of the trend toward open Big Business control of government. This outcome of the 1954 elections will further stimulate sentiment for a labor-Democratic coalition policy, and the process will create some new problems for the union busters. At the same time this development can be expected to delay any mass trend toward independent political action for a while. The popular front illusions among the workers must first be dissipated on a substantial scale before such a mass trend can develop. The workers have yet to learn that they can't reform the Democratic Party through faction politics and they will probably need further experience with another Democratic administration before this lesson will be driven home to them.

Now, we're opposed to the labor-Democratic coalition policy, but we must nevertheless recognize the hard fact that we can't prevent it. From this fact it follows that we are in no position today to agitate for the speedy formation of a labor party. Our task remains one of explaining to the workers the need for an independent class party; of revealing the fatal flaws in the labor-Democratic coalition; of exposing the fraudulent policies of the union bureaucrats and also of the Stalinists; of winning support in the union ranks to our class struggle analysis and program.

In the same vein, it will be necessary for us to modify application of our slogan for the Congress of Labor, giving a propagandistic explanation of the role and function of the Congress of Labor and its relation to the whole labor party question. A Congress of Labor might be proposed in connection with concrete, class-struggle issues, such as a city-wide mobilization in support of a strike like Square D, but we cannot realistically propose at this juncture a national Congress of Labor whose function would be to launch a labor party.

In our explanations, and here the paper is going to have to do the main job for the comrades all up and down the line, we have to hammer, and hammer hard against the popular front illusions that grow in large measure out of the "welfare state" fraud. We have to patiently expose this fraud in its basic aspects, in its concrete forms, and at every juncture where there's a new manifestation of double-crossing and cheating of the workers, that throws fresh light on this malevolent device.

It is necessary for us to show why the war program and the whole pattern of contradictions in capitalist society excludes any basic improvements for the workers; to explain that the Democrats were able to create the impression they had solved the depression problem in the Thirties only because the country was thrust into war in 1941

and again in 1950. Another important point for us is to combat any idea that the workers must rely on war production to maintain their jobs, explaining the socialist alternative to the war-depression crises of capitalism. And one of the foremost points must be full exposure and analysis of the jingoism of the union bureaucracy, of their servile role as State Department lackeys.

We must pound away also at the criminal line of the Stalinists. Show that it was principally and primarily due to the miseducation and demoralization sown by the Stalinists in the vanguard cadres of the Thirties that the chance to build a mass revolutionary party in America was destroyed in that period of great social crisis. And that it was principally and primarily due to treachery by the Stalinists that a reactionary bureaucracy was able to fasten its stranglehold on the great industrial union movement of this country. We have to strip all the radical demagogy from the current class collaborationist line of the Stalinists, tear apart their Popular Front line of support to the Democratic Party, and reveal them as a corrupt tendency within the labor movement who are making common cause with the whole reactionary union bureaucracy in an attempt to head off independent class political action.

It will be necessary also for us to explain the fatal political flaw in the program of opposition movements like the opposition to Reuther that came to the support of the Square D strike. The positive side of their role was their initiative in coming to the aid of this strike, thereby making it impossible for the Reuther bureaucracy to stand aside and let the bosses cut down this UE union. On the negative side was their fumbling on the question of "embarrassing Governor Williams," which was the central device the Reutherites used to dampen militancy. This political fumbling by the anti-Reutherites weakened the Square D struggle and contributed to an unnecessarily bad settlement. The thing that stands out in this experience is that without a clear line on independent class political action there can be no left wing in the mass movement worthy of its name.

By way of a light moment in the report, we see that the Schactmanites are finally taking the leap they have long contemplated. We understand they have decided to support union candidates in capitalist party primaries. They're now well bent down the road to political death! But I don't think it takes us by surprise. We were already aware back in 1940 of where they were heading. The Cochranites are also reported to be nibbling at the bait of faction politics in the Democratic Party -- as a beginning through support of Negroes on the Democratic ticket -- like a mouse who's trying to nibble the cheese without springing the trap. But the trap is there and it works on a hair trigger.

To get back to correct principles, the union question is the key question of revolutionary politics in the United States today. The key question in the union movement itself is the forging of new left wing cadres, based on a strictly class struggle program, with no crossing of class lines to play the game of capitalist politics in any way, shape, or form. Our job then, since we can't expect the workers to move at present toward independent political action, is to continue our efforts to win workers to an understanding



of the iron necessities for a class struggle program, and in this effort we will find much in our favor that arises from the past experience of the workers.

Already, lurking in the workers' consciousness, like a political land mine, are the bitter experiences of two World Wars and a great depression. This consciousness is one of the main factors that impels the workers to manifest a desire to act boldly where their interests are at stake. In the great sit-down strikes, through which the CIO was established, the workers demonstrated that, insofar as their own interests are involved, they have no respect whatever for capitalist claims to private property rights in basic industry. During World War II, and again in the Korean war, the workers reacted sensitively to the encroachments on their living standards that occurred under wartime conditions. As a matter of fact, the railroad switchmen reacted so strongly, right in the midst of the Korean war, that Truman denounced them as a "bunch of Russians." It's the modern American version of the contradiction manifested in the Irish revolutionist, who would go to mass in the morning and pay homage to the Bishop as the head of the Church, then go out in the afternoon and bushwhack him as a landlord.

The workers have seen their major strike struggles turned into national political issues. From this experience they're learning they can't defend their interests through simple union action alone. What they don't understand so well, and have yet to learn, is that they can't solve their problems through reliance on a "welfare state" government or any other kind of a capitalist government. They must go through further experience, supplemented by our patient explanations, our careful, persistent efforts to help them learn the political facts of the class struggle, before they will be ready for massive, independent political action, before they will learn the futilities, and the dangers of political class collaboration. We can't anticipate mass action in the field of independent labor politics until they have gone farther in that process. We can expect, however, that there will be manifestations of mass action at the union level. The workers find themselves caught between a capitalist offensive against the unions on one side, and an inept, cowardly, class collaborationist bureaucracy on the other. This situation implies the probability of further spontaneous outbursts of defensive struggle in the next period. Recently, we've had a preview of situations of this type. One example is the Square D struggle, an old fashioned strike-breaking attack on the part of the capitalist class in which new fangled witch hunt devices were superimposed. Another example is the American Safety Razor strike in Brooklyn, an attempt by unionized workers to prevent the company from running away to the open-shop South. A third instance is the Studebaker give-away plan -- pay cuts, worsening of conditions, weakening of seniority, general tearing down of union control on the job. It did not result in a strike because the union bureaucracy beat down the sentiments of the workers to fight back against this attack, but those sentiments were clearly present, and it does not follow that in every instance the union bureaucracy will be able to beat the workers down. Another type of fight is manifested by the struggle of the IIA in New York where the AFL tried to take over with the general collaboration of the capitalist government



and the workers reacted strongly against it. The longshoremen knew they must have a union, they knew there are a lot of weaknesses in the IIA, but they looked the situation over, decided the IIA was a better deal for them, and despite the capitalist propagandist barrage, Taft-Hartley injunctions, arrests, jailings, and financial scandals, the workers supported the IIA in the elections and on the picket line. As a result the IIA whipped the AFL. We can expect other spontaneous defensive struggles of these and similar types in the days to come.

Our work in support of the Square D strike was a good example of correct policy in actions of this kind. The party gave unconditional support to the workers' struggle without regard for the auspices under which the struggle was taking place. The comrades participated in the action to the maximum extent practical; got the paper into the hands of the strikers; talked to them about our program; exposed the false political considerations of the Reuther bureaucracy in opposing a full mobilization in support of the strike; and showed that the anti-Reutherites who mobilized in support of the strike went along with the unnecessarily bad settlement for the same false political considerations as the Reutherites.

The New York comrades acted along similar lines in the ASR strike. Unlike the Square D case, the ASR workers did not receive any mass support from the general union movement. This made a substantial difference in the scope of the struggle and thereby placed limitations on what our comrades could accomplish in that situation as compared with the Square D fight. Despite these limitations the comrades were in there pitching to aid the struggle, distribute the paper, discuss program and develop contacts.

In the period ahead we will find other opportunities to intervene in situations similar to Square D and ASR. It should be our policy to jump into such battles with our press, and participate directly in the actions insofar as practical circumstances permit, whether or not we have a single member in the situation.

In our day to day work within the unions, on the other hand, we must recognize that this is the wrong time to be playing practical union politics. The union bureaucrats are in effect in a conspiracy with the bosses and the capitalist government to stamp out radicals inside the unions before an upsurge comes. In their favor, and against us, is the present social equilibrium and the whole weight of the witch hunt.

Our comrades in one national fraction are today in a bit of hot water from this general cause. Under an earlier top regime the comrades were able to advance a certain distance in the formation of opposition groups and were able to take over some local union posts. In more recent times, they have been subjected to a heavy right wing offensive under a new top regime. A sympathizer has been expelled from one union in one circumstance, a comrade has been fired out of the plant in another, a general pattern of FBI pressure is developing. In considering what should be done in this situation I call to mind the famous mixed metaphor that Comrade Stein coined at the 1942 convention. "When you're in hot water," Comrade Stein said, "you must either unfurl your banner, or pull in your horns." Let us apply

this maxim to the problem of the fraction under discussion. There's no question about their being in hot water. Everything I've said up to this point has been calculated to indicate that this is not the time to unfurl their banners. So it follows that they have to pull in their horns. And the same thing applies to all union fractions.

This is no time to be pushing for posts in the unions. This is no time to be starting fights that you can't win or to be initiating projects in the unions that you can't carry through. This is a time for caution in our work inside the unions. As was pointed out in the trade union resolution, the political militant working within the unions in the 1950's must conduct himself much like the union militant had to act working within the open shop plants in the 1930's. Concentrate on winning contacts in the membership. Move in tune with the workers' sentiments on union issues. Don't push forward beyond the limits of effective support. If you make a mistake in tempo in your work inside the unions in this period, let it be on the side of caution. Work patiently with the long range view uppermost in your mind.

It will be interesting to take a quick look at the question of building groups and taking union posts through a comparison of our past and present policies. Our past alliances in the unions were made under altogether different conditions than those which obtain today. The basic task of the time, from which our policy flowed, was one of organizing and consolidating the unions, and our policy of alliances and critical support to non-party elements in the unions was sound under those conditions, because it served the general interests of the workers and facilitated the building of our own cadres. But the union bureaucracy no longer plays the same Progressive role that at least a section of it played during the period when the problem was to organize and consolidate the unions. Instead, the bureaucracy acts today as a conscious agent of the capitalist government and imposes its national policy on the unions in a dictatorial fashion. Today it is a rare union official, almost as rare as a one armed cornetist with the itch, who is not wholly the prisoner of national policy. There is no realistic basis for an alliance with such elements in the unions.

We can recruit new cadres out of the union ranks only in intransigent struggle against these elements. That struggle in the initial stages will be essentially propagandistic, with the press serving as our chief instrument. Later on, when elements who serve class struggle aims begin to appear we will take up the question of new alliances, under the new conditions. Meantime, there is no cause for alarm over our present relative isolation, because new conditions are bound to produce new allies for us, and we have an active, effective policy of probing to find and to win these allies to our party.

For the Cochranites, on the other hand, our relative isolation in the mass movement loomed as a sectarian monstrosity. They see little hope in the union ranks. They have set out today to ingratiate themselves with the union officials. I understand that Cochran has been running around the country like Diogenes with a lantern looking for an honest man in the union bureaucracy. They want at all costs to win strategic positions in the unions and to them practical union politics is the beginning and end of union policy. But

this game is as old as opportunism itself, there's no future in it, at least there's no revolutionary future in it.

Our main aim is diametrically opposite. Our aim is to develop class consciousness in the union ranks. This excludes any cooperation with the bureaucratic gang, or with those who are caught in the prison of the national policy, or who have any responsibility for that policy. We need a free hand for thorough criticism of this whole gang, and it must not be curbed for the sake of any practical alliances.

New cadres, the cadres that are going to build the left wing of the future in the mass movement, will not be created among the routinized unionists who were once the backbone of the CIO, but who are today wearing out along with the limited program of their militant days. This was evident in the UAW flying squadrons that showed up on the Square D picket line. Many of them aren't what they used to be. They have grown older, softer, less eager for battle, ready and anxious to make way for the younger workers when a clash with the cops looms. It is a false argument that the experience of the generation of former militants is decisive. That same argument was raised back in the 1930's, only then the contention was that the experience of the craft unionists was decisive. The truth is, that the bulk of the union fighters of the 30's were new people, and they learned militant union methods quickly in struggle. Similarly, today, the bulk of the radicalized cadres in the next upsurge will not be the routinized unionists who have shot their bolt. They're going to be new people, many of whom play little or no role in the unions today. Especially they're going to be young people, and those who bear the heaviest burdens of discrimination, the Negroes, and other minority peoples, the women workers,

It would be too narrow a concept to think that we can reach these elements only, or even mainly, through our fraction work inside the unions. That's only one side of our union policy. Another big side of our union policy is the party public activity -- circulation of our press and publications; conducting party election campaigns, particularly to get the use of radio and TV; holding of public meetings, debates; our other general activities. All these are excellent vehicles for broad propaganda. In this activity there is no need for the caution that is required inside a union at the present juncture. As Trotsky once observed, "the party press says what the union comrade can't say." That's exactly why you can't build revolutionary fractions in the unions without a party. That's exactly why we bitterly fought the criminal attempt of the Cochranites to reduce our press to the level of union diplomacy.

The capitalist agencies don't hesitate to take a firm propaganda line in order to do trade union work from outside the unions. They hammer away day after day at the union rank and file through the capitalist press and the other propaganda mediums. The Catholic Church, reactionary veterans' organizations, race-hate groups, fascist propagandists -- all these elements hammer away at the union rank and file from outside wherever they can; working at the same time from the inside, pushing their line in an effort to win influence over the workers. It is in this manner, that the cadres of

conservatism are formed in the unions. The prejudices they foster are a real obstacle inside the unions, obstacles that can't be overcome by any clever move or trick. I'll go farther. The national policy of the union bureaucracy itself is in the last analysis shaped and controlled through the pressures that are brought to bear upon the bureaucracy from outside capitalist agencies.

We intend to take all possible steps to help the union militants combat the capitalist propaganda, using our press as the main weapon, with the object of developing class consciousness in the union rank and file. We will center our fire on the false line of the labor-Democratic coalition, concentrating mainly on the union bureaucracy, with plenty of hard swipes at the Stalinists. We will present a clear class struggle line without any regard for petty union politics. Our policy will be to admit cooperation only with those who serve class struggle aims, only with those who can help us build a class struggle left wing in the unions, a left wing erected on the firm foundation of growing SWP fractions.

In conclusion, I'll recapitulate briefly the essential line of our union work as we have sought to put it forward in the report and resolution:

The political militants are today under a heavy witch-hunt attack in the unions. The degree of pressure, the tempo of the attack upon the militants may vary from time to time, but the danger will be present for some time to come. A cautious policy is therefore required in order to avoid needless victimization. The party, through the press and other means, will say for the comrades in the unions what they cannot say for themselves.

The main aim, in the two-sided approach to our union work, will be to develop class consciousness in the union ranks, to help the workers overcome their popular-front illusions. We must patiently explain to the workers the need for independent political action and project a clear class line in the press, without regard for petty union politics. We will cooperate only with those who serve class struggle aims.

Wherever spontaneous outbursts of class struggle occur, we will jump in with our press and participate directly with such forces as we can mobilize on a practical basis. This will be our policy whether or not we have a single comrade in the situation.

Through these combined means we will work toward building a class struggle left-wing in the unions, led by our party fractions. We will endeavor to strengthen our forces and improve our capacity to carry out this program through constant attention to recruitment.

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