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THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATKINSON CANDIDACY

By Theodore Edwards

Comrades Alvin and Saunders contend that the SWP should have given critical support to Atkinson. Alvin holds forth two main criteria for extending the critical support tactic: (1) genuine independence from the capitalist parties and (2) support of a substantial section of labor or an oppressed minority. There is no dispute on point (2), all sides being agreed that Atkinson's campaign is quite popular in the Negro community. The disagreement arises on point (1): whether or not the Atkinson campaign is genuinely independent of capitalist parties.

In my view, both Alvin and Saunders have consistently shut their eyes to the fact that the Atkinson candidacy consists of quite a lot more than merely a Negro candidate running for City Council and embodies a bit more than the fervent desire of the Negro people for representation on the City Council. Alvin measures the closeness of Atkinson to the Democratic Party on the basis of comparing it with past cases where the SWP has extended critical support. He comes to the conclusion that Atkinson is not as close as some of the candidates previously supported and thus qualifies under point (1). In my opinion, this is not even half the story. It is embarrassing to have to remind party comrades that there is also a party machine operating in the Atkinson campaign. We, as Leninists, certainly should not have to be reminded not to underestimate the power and efficacy of a party apparatus!

Alvin holds that the real candidates of the capitalist parties are Navarro and Allen, while Atkinson, in spite of the support of the CP-influenced Democratic Clubs, does not have the support of the dominant section of the Democratic Party. Leaving aside for the moment what has happened since April 7 when the field narrowed to Navarro and Atkinson, it is quite true that the Democratic Minority Conference and the other Democratic Clubs do not constitute the dominant section of the Democratic Party. But the DMC certainly constituted the dominant section of the campaign apparatus of Atkinson, at least prior to April 7.

The DMC, this child of the CP-entry into the Democratic Party, has for its announced purposes and objectives to lead the Negro people into the Democratic Party and to make them think that they can convert the party of Eastland and Faubus into an instrument that can help achieve their aspirations for equality. Given the character of the DMC and its dominant position in the Atkinson campaign machinery as well as the pronouncements of Atkinson proclaiming himself as a leader in the DMC, there could be only one conclusion to this kind of campaign, if at all successful -- as it was. The end of the road is the Democratic Party.

Alvin and Saunders minimize Atkinson's ties with the DMC, while the nature of the campaign apparatus is denied or considered unimportant and subsidiary. Yet, after the April 7 Primary, the Atkinson campaign became as closely identified with the official Democratic Party as it is possible in a supposedly non-partisan campaign.

I agree with Comrade Alvin that we should decide our policy from objective facts and not from what the Peoples World, the CP-dominated DMC or anyone else has to say about what is going on. I therefore cite the following objective facts (as reported in the Peoples World, the Eagle, the Examiner, and various other newspapers): The County Democratic Central Committee unanimously endorsed Atkinson. 30,000 letters addressed to Democratic voters went out over the signature of Democratic State Senator Richard Richards, urging Democrats to vote for Atkinson and telling them that "Atkinson will be working for the same kind of program that Governor Pat Brown is so ably leading. . . ." Michael D. Fanning, former L.A. postmaster and former County Democratic chairman, was announced as campaign director for Atkinson. The Peoples World of May 23 only states an objective fact, in my opinion, when it characterizes this quite modestly as the participation of the "semi-official apparatus of the Democratic Party, although it is a non-partisan campaign."

If one is to apply the entirely correct requirement of genuine independence from capitalist parties to Atkinson and his campaign machinery -- especially as it has evolved since April 7, and as it was bound to evolve given the forces active in his campaign apparatus -- then only one conclusion is possible, namely, that this is no genuinely independent movement that can be critically supported by the SWP.

Comrade Saunders, it seems, does not agree with Alvin's first requirement for critical support. Rather than genuine independence from capitalist parties, a non-partisan election and a serious community effort is enough for her to advocate critical SWP support. Anything else is preoccupation with maintaining our pristine purity and amounts to political abstentionism.

It is easy to hurl such charges. It is not quite so easy to convince us that just because it is a non-partisan election the SWP should forget its class line and become the potential captive of the CP-influenced wing of the Democratic Party.

To meet events with correct tactics, it is necessary to understand events correctly. If the Stalinists are indeed recouping their fortunes in the Negro community, as Saunders claims, then they do so only as the left shoulder of the Democratic Party and not as Communists or revolutionary socialists. Their machinations have been successful in the sense that they have drawn the official apparatus of the Democratic Party into the campaign, on one hand, and they have dragooned the desires of the Negro people into Democratic channels, on the other. By spreading illusions and lies, the Stalinists have gotten on the band-wagon of the general Democratic swing in the country and think that they are on the way to reforming the Democratic Party. If this is the way to recoup one's fortune in the Negro community, then leave us out of it!

If we are really serious about fighting for actual Negro independent political and mass action, then we must realize that we would have to send in sizeable forces into such a campaign as the Atkinson campaign (providing we considered it all right in principle)

to fight tooth-and-nail against the Stalinist policy of class collaboration inside the Democratic Party, to be able to mobilize Negro mass support for real political independence, to orient to either take over the campaign machinery or to walk out in a split if the Democratic Party orientation cannot be stopped. If we cannot send in such forces, because they are not available or because they are busy elsewhere, then I believe it is better to "sit it out." Let the Stalinists recoup their fortunes inside the Democratic Party as left demagogues that mislead the Negro people into the party of Jim Crow. Non-partisan election or not, I believe it is better to abstain from becoming the captive of a capitalist party apparatus or of such a maneuver by the CP that is hell-bent-for self-destruction.

Los Angeles, Calif.
May 23, 1959

MEMORANDUM TO THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE:

SOME THOUGHTS ON INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Our draft section of the International Resolution, entitled "The World Today," starts out from the following important observation: "The dominant feature of the world today is the struggle between the outlived capitalist order and the nascent world socialist order, amid the unresolved crisis of proletarian leadership."

Underlying this dominant world feature is the struggle of conflicting class forces symbolized by two diametrically opposite social and economic systems. While the latter are mutually antagonistic, their development is simultaneously dialectically interconnected as two aspects of one historical process. The decline of the outlived capitalist forms of society and the advance of the nascent socialist forms interact in their movement in every part of the globe.

Outwardly and concretely, however, this struggle manifests itself as a contest for advantage in armaments, in military position, in economic competition and in political and diplomatic maneuvers between two power blocs. To be more exact, it is a manifestation of the cold war between the aims and objectives of the dominant imperialist powers and the ruling Kremlin bureaucracy. Any weakening or setback of one side reverts to strengthen and reinforce the other side, without either so far having gained a decisive advantage. Quite the contrary; every new important event on the world arena tends to draw this struggle closer toward a stalemate.

This is exemplified by a series of tactical retreats from the "brink of war" executed by both sides. In every instance these retreats were compelled by forces arising out of the world crisis and conflicts, and extending beyond the control of either Washington or the Kremlin.

Affected most directly by the advancing stalemate is the policy of imperialist aggression. A further modification, or the introduction of a further postponement into its war time-table is clearly indicated.

The imperialist setbacks and retreats were initially impelled by the powerful surge of colonial revolutionary upheavals. These have covered the long trek from China, Korea and Dien-Bien-Phu to the Middle East. In the latter area the Anglo-French-Israeli forces found it prudent to beat a hasty retreat from their invasion of Egypt. Scarcely two years later this debacle was duplicated by the quiet and unobtrusive withdrawal of military contingents from Lebanon and Jordan shortly after the insolent imperialist show-of-force occupation. In the Far East the Quemoy affair is apparently resulting in Chiang Kai-Shek being again held in leash, while Peking orders a cease-fire and Washington welcomes negotiations. Diplomatic and technical conferences between representatives of the contending power blocs have proliferated, one leading to another, on nuclear arms tests, detection, etc. Projections for a summit meeting, appearing now and then, brings intense maneuvering by both sides for most effective position, or posture of strength. The imperialist powers, however, do not feel free to reject it outright.

On the one hand, the imperialist powers face the immense and rapidly growing industrial and military might of Soviet Russia and China -- dramatized by the launching of the Sputniks. On the other hand, the imperialist ambitions of their own coalition is weakened by anti-war pressures welling up from below, especially in Europe, but finding an echo also in the United States. Moreover, while the

Soviet bloc succeeds in its increasing penetration of the world market, demands from capitalist monopoly concerns, seeking new outlets for their products, constantly eases the imperialist embargo on trade with the former.

In contrast to the growing might of the Soviet bloc there stands out the chronically disintegrating tendencies of NATO, and the actual dismemberment of the Baghdad Pact Alliance. Right alongside, the rising Pan-Arabic world is veering step by step toward closer collaboration with the East and displaying growing hostility to the West. Even the continued possession of American air bases in that area are endangered. Neutralist tendencies are gaining ground in Asia spreading also to Japan. All the while, the imperialist powers are losing ground in their domination of the United Nations.

To be accepted as equals in world councils and in the world market, with guarantees against attacks, this has long been a primary aim of the Kremlin bureaucracy. It lives in dread of the revolutionary implications internally and externally, that are inherent in a world situation of irrepressible struggle between opposite social systems. Hence the quest for co-existence has become an organic part of the Kremlin's foreign policy -- the quest for a status quo with the capitalist environment. Their present bluster and threats, alternating with conciliation, is the only form they know of applying pressure on the imperialist powers to attain such a condition.

For the imperialist powers the series of setbacks suffered, the retreats made and the advancing stalemate of positions have imposed a scaling down of demands for unchallenged world domination. Their side faces the most immediate danger of further disintegration of their alliances. Preservation of the status quo of world relations must, therefore, appear as an alternative that cannot be easily rejected.

The present inability of either power bloc to break the advancing stalemate points to far reaching consequences. Involved most directly is the question of "peaceful coexistence." Elements of such a condition can be expected to arise, to exist in fact and to become more pronounced regardless of lack of formal recognition.

In no sense would this signify an end to the conflict between the two power blocs, much less an end to the irreconcilable struggle between diametrically opposite social systems. What is indicated is rather changing forms of conflict. A modus vivendi compelled by necessity. Not an elimination of mutual recriminations, bluster, bluffing, threats, sharp clashes and intense competition; but sufficient understanding and deals to make preservation of the status quo its essential basis. While conditions of coexistence require a certain degree of adaptation and adjustments, such as are now growing out of the Quemoy affair, any stable or lasting arrangements are, of course, excluded.

Past history has brought examples aplenty of the degree to which the Kremlin is prepared to adjust its foreign policy to the capitalist environment. Recent history reinforces this trend.

Khrushchev was the first foreign statesman to greet De Gaulle with a personal message on his coming to power in France. In direct contravention of the struggle for independence of colonial peoples, Khrushchev declared that Algeria must remain within the French Union; and he indicated through his ambassador in Paris that he considered Bizerte ought to remain under French control.

Thus the head of the strongest workers state uses his position to place restraints on the French workers and on the Algerian rebels, attempting to subordinate the needs and interests of both to the schemes and designs of the Bonapartist regime. With elements of coexistence as a condition in fact and becoming more pronounced, outright betrayals will follow present restraints.

In such a situation there can be no other role for the Stalinized party leaders outside the Soviet orbit but to support directly their native capitalist regimes -- the partners in coexistence, the partners in maintenance of the status quo -- whether headed by a De Gaulle, a Tory or a so-called liberal neutralist. They will be drawn closer toward a tie-up with the trade union bureaucracies, the Fabian Laborites and the Social Democrats, all of whom are camp-followers of the bourgeoisie and in essence committed to the preservation of the status quo of capitalist relations.

But the implications of such a condition will extend far beyond the control, either separately or jointly, by the Kremlin or Washington. The logic of the class struggle will prove more powerful than any coexistence arrangement. The needs and interests of the workers in capitalist nations cannot be confined within the requirements of the C.P. bureaucrats (or the Social Democratic prototypes) in support of the existing capitalist regimes any more than the needs and interests of the Soviet workers now spurred by the great industrial advance, can be confined within the requirements of the Kremlin's bureaucratic strait jacket. The needs and interests of the workers are polar opposites to these bureaucratic requirements, and the clash between them is inevitable.

It is not difficult to foresee the profound effects of such a development upon the existing Communist parties. The logical consequences of the class struggle will set into motion new leftward currents within them, leading either to overthrow of the leaders, to splits or to face destruction. This is especially true of the French C.P. for which the outcome can be expected to be accelerated by further actions of the De Gaulle regime. Needless to add, the Social Democratic parties will not be exempted from the effects of such developments. All in all this will present new opportunities and new responsibilities for the revolutionary forces.

This is one aspect of international perspectives that demands our utmost attention. It exposes further the falsity of the thesis predicated on a war-revolution sequence once introduced into the international movement. Rather than such views, it is possible to conclude that precious time has been gained for the assembling and development of the international revolutionary cadre. It is possible to approach seriously the unresolved problem of proletarian leadership.

In approaching this task we must recognize that the struggle against world imperialism and against the Stalinized bureaucracy is mutually related despite the differences in tactical requirements. Both the imperialist powers and the Kremlin bureaucracy are antagonistic to the revolutionary solution which alone can advance human society to a higher historical stage.

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Recent world developments have impelled me to set down these thoughts in outline form, without any pretense of presenting a fully elaborated document. I am submitting these thoughts merely for consideration and further study.

Dec. 10, 1958

Arne Swaback

Memorandum to the National Committee

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

"Men make their history themselves," said Engels in a letter to H. Starckenburg, "only in given surroundings which condition it and on the basis of actual relations already existing, among which the economic relations, however much they may be influenced by the other political and ideological ones, are still ultimately the decisive ones, forming the red thread which runs through them and alone leads to understanding."

This analysis holds true today with equal force for both the existing world systems -- the Soviet and the capitalist -- and a careful examination of the red thread should help to clarify our views of present international perspectives.

Economic relations within the two systems unfold in opposite directions. While Soviet economy continues its giant forward strides, expanding production and raising the productivity of labor, the capitalist economy faces increasing decline and disintegration. Consequences of the most profound nature will flow from both developments during the coming period.

The dynamism of Soviet economic advance since the 1917 revolution might be said, paraphrasing Engels, to have gained in force in proportion to the square of the distance (in time) from the point of departure. The tremendous source of human energy and ingenuity unleashed by the revolution is taking on the form of a veritable crusade, most pronounced in the development of science, mass education, labor skills and technology. In fact, the further the Soviet Union advances from its point of origin the greater its impact.

The incomparable superiority of Soviet economic forms and relations, despite the degenerate features of bureaucratic rule, constantly reasserts itself all the more powerfully. Not hampered by private profit motives, Soviet industry is able to skip stages in mass production developments and leap directly, on a broad scale, into the new technology of nuclear energy, electronics and automation. In combination with the vast expanse of its territory containing immense natural resources laid down in this heartland of the earth during past geological epochs, this enables economic planning in the boldest terms.

Economic progress made so far marks an important milestone. There need be no doubt that the basic prerequisites to attain the material foundation for a socialist society are now available. These prerequisites are sufficient to overcome, in a relatively brief time, the still existing gaping structural disproportions and to attain a technically homogeneous economic structure in which each enterprise of industry, agriculture, transportation, communication, etc., functions planfully as a component cell of the whole organism. They are sufficient to assure continued increase of labor productivity and therewith a constantly higher standard of living for the people.

However, the achievement in Soviet society of a human "association in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all," remains as when written into the Communist

Manifesto -- a goal for the future. Soviet society is still engaged in the transition from capitalism to socialism. And the bureaucratic political superstructure remains the most crippling barrier on the road to that goal.

But it is important to remember that this bureaucratic political superstructure arose out of the country's economic backwardness, and its isolation in a hostile capitalist world. Out of the generalized want arose the "gendarme" -- the bureaucratic police state. This type of political superstructure, and its caste privileges could be sustained only through a condition of monstrous inequalities and political coercion. The power of the bureaucracy was rooted originally in working class fragmentation and weakness.

The latter aspect has already undergone a qualitative change. The working class is now a mighty social force; it has acquired skills and a high level of education. The millions of raw peasant recruits who once entered industry have become thoroughly proletarianized, and in this decisive sense the former working class fragmentation has become converted into social coherence and unity.

Being determines consciousness. And being -- in this case the unexampled progress of the material forces of production in the USSR -- is decisive in imparting to the working class greater self-confidence and social consciousness. Out of the bitter experiences of Stalinist repression, the Soviet workers are arming themselves with new ideas and new methods of struggle. Their power has been manifest through the actual and genuine concessions that mass pressure compelled the ruling bureaucracy to grant.

The concessions granted were the inevitable outcome of the new interrelations of conflicting social forces. But they were limited in character and designed to modify the contradictory position of the existing powers and privileges of the bureaucracy without destroying its basis of operation. And the modification actually permitted the bureaucracy a temporary and partial reconsolidation of its position in this new relationship.

These new developments including the great economic advances made, and its further possibilities, must form the point of departure for our views on perspectives for the Soviet Union.

As continuing economic advances provide a higher standard of living for the people -- greater income, more adequate consumer goods, more adequate housing, reduced hours of labor, etc., and a general rise in culture -- will this enable the bureaucracy to reconcile its conflict with the needs and interests of the masses? Will it be able to maintain an equilibrium by freezing existing political relations? Objective logic as well as practical experiences indicate the contrary.

With continued economic progress, bureaucratic rule, regimentation and arbitrary control of planning, of production and distribution will tend to be increasingly exposed as an anachronistic carry-over of the past. No less so will be the case of caste privileges. In the same measure the working-class position will be further strengthened and the bureaucratic power of political coercion under-

mined. In other words, it is precisely the continued economic progress which brings the conflicting interests between the masses and the bureaucracy to a head, and presses inexorably for a solution to the conflict -- a solution through the elimination of bureaucratic rule.

Most certainly this will be the logical consequence of existing economic relations which forms a red thread running through all other relations, political and ideological, and which are ultimately decisive.

The economic relations of nationalized property and state planning imparts a different status to workers in Soviet society and impels a different direction to their aims and aspirations than is the case in the capitalist world. Where in the latter case the workers are mere objects of exploitation by private enterprise, their wage standard tends to become the uppermost issue in the class struggle, while increased efficiency of production raises the terrifying spectre of overproduction, unemployment and social disaster. Soviet economic forms and relations, on the other hand, weld the workers most solidly and directly as an integral component into the whole productive system. The satisfaction of their material needs, their standard of living, and their cultural elevation as well, depends entirely and unconditionally upon greater efficiency of production, better quality of products and a higher rate of labor productivity.

The reality of this relationship is deeply imbedded in the consciousness of the Soviet workers. Concretely it finds expression in more direct worker participation in the universal comparisons of fulfillment of plan quotas and in discussion of new plan targets, to which the trade unions are now also drawn in more directly. In increasing measure the workers' voices are heard, on the one hand critical of bureaucratic waste, inefficiency and mismanagement, and on the other by growing and insistent demands for more efficient technique.

But these objectives can be attained only to the extent that the bureaucratic roadblocks are removed. The workers must, therefore, of necessity strive also in increasing measure for control of production, of planning and of distribution to be exercised through their own effective organs. Freedom of creative initiative, more equitable social relations and democracy become no less indispensable aims of their struggle.

"The improvements of the material situation of the workers," said Trotsky, "does not reconcile them with the authorities; on the contrary, by increasing their self-respect and freeing their thoughts for general problems of politics it prepares the way for an open conflict with the bureaucracy."

The rise and the growing might of revolutionary China and the extension of Soviet economic forms to Eastern Europe made a breach in the imperialist encirclement of the Soviet Union. The increasing Soviet penetration of the world market acts in the same direction. The Soviet Union's world position is immensely strengthened, and the allayed fear of imperialist assault removes one of the obstacles to the struggle there against the bureaucratic regime.

But the abolition of capitalist rule on one-third of the planet together with the power and sweep and continued advance of the colonial revolution has upset the capitalist world equilibrium. Capitalism is confined to a seriously constricted world market in which it no longer wields unchallenged control. Everywhere it must now meet increasing competition from the Soviet orbit.

These are the fundamental factors that must of necessity enter into all considerations of present day world perspectives. They affect decisively the relation of forces in the world struggle between conflicting systems. Moreover, they affect adversely not only the existing imperialist alliances and the whole gamut of capitalist politics, but they strike deeply into its economic foundation.

Involved are problems of foreign capital investments, world trade and the tapping of its natural resources as well as the growing pressure for economic advance of underdeveloped countries. In all these fields the result of the new world relations will have the most profound consequences especially for the United States -- the keystone of the capitalist system.

From the emergence out of the Great Depression capitalism has about completed its cycle of artificial prosperity made possible by the production for war and for the armaments market. The industrial boom that it generated has leveled off.

Some American bourgeois economists have ventured to describe the present as a period of economic transition. They are entirely correct. The present period marks the end of one phase of the post-war era -- the period of catching up with demand and of very rapid growth that always follows on the heels of war and its devastation. The shortages that developed during World War II and the Korean "police action" are now overcome. The European boom, stimulated by American subsidy of reconstruction and restabilization, has reached its zenith.

The real nature of this transition is far more fundamental, however, than any of these economists or the Big Business spokesmen are prepared to concede. Even the vast market created by production for war and for the armaments race has proved too narrow for the expanded productive forces that it called into being. It absorbed huge quantities of industrial output, but this could not sustain permanently a prosperity level. While capitalism became fabulously enriched, the war and armaments market dissipated real wealth and left the system fantastically debt ridden and wracked by inflation. Besides, within one decade, from 1948 to 1959, the United States economy, the very foundation of the world capitalist system, was plunged into three sharp recessions. The last one is by far the most serious.

Affected most directly is the dynamic sector of the capitalist economic structure -- the capitalist goods industries that turn out the means of production. This sector is the fundamental factor in economic development; its condition is the surest indicator of economic advance or decline.

The fabulous profits of armaments production promoted an accelerated accumulation of capital. New opportunities for profitable investment drew capital resources into further industrial expansion and

the development of more efficient plants and equipment. The result is that the dead weight of excess capacity of production shows up everywhere imposing serious limitations upon capital investments and the process of accumulation.

Out of the enlarged scale of production arose the exact opposite: curtailment and contraction. Capitalism was incapable of developing commensurately the conditions of consumption. Because of this contradiction, inherent in its system of production, the dynamic sector of the economy generated the limitations of its own development.

The central imperialist problem of finding new avenues in a constricted world market for export of capital, manufactured goods and agricultural surpluses remains unsolved. The possibilities of organic expansion that existed during the days of yore are disappearing. Lacking this stimulus to industrial growth, the capitalist economy will inevitably sink to lower levels. Cyclical movements can continue of course, though most likely with lesser upturns -- such as we are now actually witnessing in the United States -- but deeper downslides. In ever increasing degree the economic crisis becomes the only means to "adjust" the growing disproportion between production and consumption in capitalist society.

Most ominous in this picture looms the perspective of large-scale unemployment frozen into the system -- chronic unemployment as a permanent feature. A substantial part of the joblessness will have its origin in technological displacement of labor -- the hapless victims of cybernetics. While this feature will tend to become most pronounced in the United States, no nation in the capitalist world will escape its profound consequences.

Fully confirmed here is the Marxist analysis of the capitalist mode of production. From the general tendency of capitalist development, Marx drew the conclusion: "The greater the social wealth. . . the greater is the industrial reserve army. . . the greater the mass of the consolidated surplus population. . . the greater is official pauperism. This is the absolute law of capitalist accumulation."

Will increased armaments expenditures provide the stimulus to industrial growth so essential to the life and prosperity of capitalism? Will it serve to put the army of unemployed back into production? In the first place, such measures would multiply debts and open further the floodgates of inflation. In the second place, while the colossal armaments expenditures serve as an artificial prop under a sagging American economic structure, the West European regimes find it increasingly difficult to meet the heavy outlays to sustain imperialist military needs.

Far more significant, however, is the fact that modern military technique and with it the production of its implements, no less than the economy has reached a point of transition. The nature of this transition tends similarly to aggravate the unemployment problem. Missiles and nuclear developments reduce drastically the need for the conventional type of massed heavy implements such as tanks and battleships; and even manned aircraft is becoming obsolete. These were the implements of war requiring large labor forces for production.

Now the trend to reduce the latter and increase missile production is emphasized by the present U.S. budget providing a whopping \$7 billion for this purpose (sure to be increased, however).

The grim reality in terms of employment has been indicated by B.F.Coggan, vice president of Convair division of General Dynamics Corporation. Production of Convair's F-102 airplane required ten production workers for every engineer employed. But production of its Atlas intercontinental ballistic missiles requires only one worker per engineer. In other words, far fewer workers are needed to make a billion dollars worth of missiles than for the same amount of manned airplanes. More will be reduced to the ranks of the industrial reserve army.

Closely related to the basic contradictions of capitalist production, one problem stands out not only with serious portents to its economic structure, but with no less serious political implications. It arises primarily out of the immense productivity generated by modern industrial society and its constantly disproportionate growth of what Marx calls the unproductive expenses of production. An ever-increasing segment of the available labor force is engaged not in producing surplus value, but in the attempt to realize the surplus value created at the point of production.

In the United States this disproportionate growth is the most pronounced. Thus, according to Edwin Clague, the Commissioner of Labor Statistics, while from the turn of the century to 1950 the available labor force more than doubled, the increase in production workers employed in manufacturing industry merely kept the pace, remaining at about 25% of the growing labor force. But a huge expansion occurred in trade and service occupations. Employment in this bloc of activities rose from 24.4% to 40.2% of the total working population. Most of these occupations constitute a necessary function, but a goodly part is purely parasitic. On the whole, these magnify the mounting overhead expense of capitalist economy.

During the last decade this process has been accelerated. Labor engaged in trade and service occupations continued its disproportionate growth at a more rapid ratio. But now the number of production workers employed in manufacture has declined in absolute terms. The output by U.S. factories, during the last decade, rose by 35% with 6% fewer workers employed.

Only the marvelous productivity of American labor could provide the basis for such an extension of the unproductive expenses of production. But it is equally true that the latter could come into being and be maintained only through a relatively high worker income level. And here is the crux of the problem.

A high worker income level in the face of vanishing capitalist prosperity, excess capacity of production and decreased industrial expansion, becomes incompatible with the process of accumulation of capital. It impairs profit returns. The fundamental antagonism between profits and wages is intensified. Hence the monopoly owners of capitalist industry are now, spurred by the mounting contradictions of their system, preparing to attack the working-class standard of living. Witness their increasing resistance to union demands for

wage increases to keep up with the rising cost of living. And, as a corollary we have seen growing manifestations of employer unity in meeting strikes with total lockouts.

Government actions through carefully staged corruption exposures of labor bureaucrats and legislative curbs on unions have become an increasingly significant part of these attacks in the making. What greater role these will play in coming developments in the U.S. is foreshadowed by events in Britain and France. The Tory government's spearheading the assault on the working-class standard of living is outdone only by the more sinister onslaught by the De Gaulle regime.

But capitalism cannot escape the dialectic laws of its own system. Conditions like the present bring these into particularly sharp focus. Alongside of the elements of economic and social decline, the forces are set into motion which will in time lead to a new social synthesis.

The nature and extent of conscious working-class reaction to the full consequences of the present economic transition will require further study, of course. But a fact worthy of note is that the American workers, for the first time in decades, have now shown examples of combining their industrial struggles with political action to defeat a most brazen legislative assault -- defeating the "Right to Work" laws. And at this point it is possible to say that the growing elements of crisis unfolding on lower economic levels and large-scale chronic unemployment, the terrible economic insecurity involved together with sharper attacks upon their living standards, will of necessity compel the American workers to go beyond the confines of the mere struggle for wages and working conditions. They will be propelled from now on, and at accelerated speed into the wider arena of independent action as a political force -- the preliminary steps toward a struggle for mastery of society. Most certainly this will also enhance the prospects of growth for the genuine socialist movement.

In Western Europe the working class has attained a higher level of political consciousness. Though its leadership is no less dull-witted and treacherous than the American counterpart, the necessity of the workers struggle for power is now posed more sharply.

It is true that the present currency measures and the introduction of the so-called Common Market on the continent is a reflection of gains made in restoration of West European capitalist economy. But these are even more so a reflection of the limitations imposed by their reduced rations in world economy and the elements of crisis ensuing out of this situation. From its former position of holding overlordship of vast colonial empires capitalism in Western Europe has been reduced to the pathetic level of these paltry measures in its struggle for survival. While genuine unity on a capitalist basis remains illusory, there need be no doubt that these measures are designed to facilitate the bourgeois onslaught on the workers. At the same time they signal the beginning of far more intense cut-throat imperialist competition in a constricted world market with all the consequences, disturbances and further deleterious effects that flow therefrom.

Such competition -- and its results -- lends emphasis to the world reality of interdependence of nations and of the national economies. From this interdependence the Soviet economy is not exempted even though it is far less directly involved. For the capitalist world, however, the effects of the present situation strike home directly. The reciprocal interaction of the present elements of decline and disintegration are reflected in the national economic structures. The accentuation of these elements in the United States will have its further impact on the West European nations, drag them downward and, in turn, this reacts adversely upon economic developments in the United States.

Viewing these general tendencies in connection with, and as a part of the approaching stalemate in the struggle between the two world power blocs, the probably short-term outcome of the latter seems more clearly indicated. All the foregoing points in the direction of elements of co-existence becoming increasingly a condition existing in fact, regardless of lack of formal recognition.

Receptions given by American tycoons of industry and finance to the Mikoyan visit underlines their eagerness to find avenues of outlet for their manufactured goods in the Soviet orbit. Their European counterparts have displayed no less eagerness. The extent to which their aims may be realized could perhaps serve to ease the impact of the incipient capitalist world economic crisis. However, any degree of co-existence and attempts to preserve the status quo of present world relations raises more problems and introduces more contradictions than it solves.

In any event, coming developments in both world economic, social and political structures will tend to bring fundamental issues to a head -- issues that pertain to the necessity of struggle against the capitalist mode of production as well as the struggle against the Soviet bureaucracy.

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A good deal of what is stated above in mere outline form, as thoughts on the questions raised, is not new. It has been said before and perhaps in a more effective manner. What I have attempted to do here is to emphasize some important aspects of world economic developments and to indicate my opinion of their logical consequences in order to help clarify our views of international perspectives. These thoughts, the same as those contained in my memorandum of December 10, 1958, are submitted for consideration and further study.

Arne Swabeck

January 24, 1959

NATIONAL COMMITTEE INFORMATION REPORT

Los Angeles, Calif.
March 7, 1959

Dear Farrell:

I want to send you some ideas on recent developments that will affect our trade-union work in the next period.

Manufacturing industry in America has increased its output by about one-third in the last ten years with approximately the same number of workers employed. This is due in part to improved techniques (automation) and in part to speed-up. In the auto industry, I am told, the increase is 50% with virtually no increase in the number of workers.

We already have some millions of workers who appear to be permanently disemployed, with little hope of finding work. When we consider the annual increase in the labor force, which comes to at least a million, the problem of jobs for all begins to appear as absolutely insoluble in capitalist America, whereas at the time when industry was expanding it presented itself as a relatively easier one.

The action of the AFL-CIO Executive Council at its recent meeting in coming out for the 35-hour week and calling for an Unemployed Conference to be held in Washington are signs that even the thick-headed union leadership is beginning to see that it must cope with the problems raised. Of course, it took some heat under Reuther to get things going, and for this, the Detroit comrades deserve credit.

The action of the Executive Council and the introduction of a 35-hour week bill in the Senate by MacNamara now open the entire question on a national scale.

Our union fractions should raise these questions in their locals and organize support for these measures. The movement for the shorter work week must be broadened and deepened or the union leaders will only use the issues to make believe they are trying to do something for the unemployed. The shorter work week can only be won, if the movement for it assumes really mass proportions and adopts militant methods of struggle for it.

We should point out some of the new features of the present struggle for a shorter work week. The raising of the question to the political level preceded the adoption of the 35-hour week by the AFL-CIO. The fact that this bill is before the Senate gives us the opportunity to raise our agitation for it to a political level.

Also, the issue of a shorter work week appears at this time because of the millions of permanently disemployed and not, as in the case of the struggle for the eight-hour day, as a relief from long, back-breaking hours of labor. In addition, this new struggle comes not in a period of expanding capitalism but in a period of its mortal crisis, the disemployment situation being a chronic feature of it.

We must note, also, that once again the mass movement of labor is compelled by all the conditions of the present time to adopt a

part of our program. In defending itself against inflation, part of the union movement adopted our program for the sliding scale of wages, through escalator clauses in union contracts, cost-of-living bonuses, etc. Of course, most of these were gained only in a distorted form. Now, the sliding scale of hours comes to the fore in addition to the continuing problem of inflation. Our newer members who may not be aware of the fact that our movement worked out these problems and the solutions for them more than 20 years ago should be encouraged to look over our transitional demands adopted in 1938.

The above ideas were presented to a joint Auto and Steel fraction meeting held here today and subjected to a preliminary discussion. All the comrades present were agreed that we should begin pushing in our area to support the AFL-CIO demand for the 35-hour week and the bill now before the Senate. While the unemployment situation is not nearly as severe in this area as it is in Detroit and elsewhere in the East, we want to build up sentiment in the unions in support of these measures, adding our own amendment "at forty hours pay."

The comrades are going to draft model resolutions to present in their locals. We will keep you informed as we obtain some action on them.

The Militant should keep up a steady flow of articles and report results from all over as they come in. This can serve as well in bringing the message to union readers. In the plant where our steel fraction functions, for example, there are now 35 regular Militant readers, 25 of them subscribers.

We would like to have your opinions on the matters raised here.

Comradely,

Milton Alvin

NATIONAL COMMITTEE INFORMATION REPORT

Los Angeles, Calif.
March 19, 1959

Dear Farrell,

I have your letter of March 11th. I want to send you some further thoughts on the question of unemployment.

It was good to see The Militant special issue on the question. However, I think the paper should have included, and in my opinion, even played up the fact that the AFL-CIO Executive Council has gone on record for a 35-hour week. This action on their part, aside from how it came about, marks a historic step for the organized labor movement as a whole in America. Of course, if a broad and militant movement for the shorter work week does not develop, it may very well turn out that no one will remember the action.

We should take the positive approach to the question, that is, use the fact that the AFL-CIO is now on record for the 35-hour week as our point of departure for future activity. The step they have taken opens the door to us and we should take every advantage of the new opportunity. I am opposed to the idea of our getting into a dispute with the labor bureaucracy over the issue of a 30-hour week as against a 35-hour week. Their adoption of the 35-hour week position is a step in the right direction and we should describe it that way and support it by trying to organize a militant movement behind it. In this respect, I like a formulation that I recall came from Detroit recently (in The Militant or a letter, I don't remember which) that supported the 35-hour week now with the demand that the 30-hour week be adopted a year from now.

Another demand that might well be included in our program is the formal organization of the unemployed by the unions. A start has already been forced upon the UAW in Detroit. We should now try to extend and deepen the organization efforts and tie the unemployed securely to the unions. Unlike the early 1930's, when the unemployed organizations were organized by the radical parties, we have taken the position that in the present period, when the unions have grown to 16 or 17 million strong, they should assume the task of organizing the unemployed and fighting in their behalf. In the 1930's, if I remember correctly, the AFL, at that time the CIO had not yet seen the light of day, gave no help to and even opposed the unemployed organizations. In the three recessions we have had since the end of the II World War, some comrades put forward the idea that the party should get out and organize the unemployed. In each case we explained that we wanted the unions to do the job, that it was their responsibility. Now, it looks like a start has been made in that direction, and it will lead to good results in the long run.

In our propaganda on this question we should broaden the appeal so that the presently employed workers will take up the struggle for the shorter work week. It may very well be that the union leaders have adopted the 35-hour week because they are concerned with the decline in dues income and in the UAW the officers have taken a 5% salary cut (this is serious business to them!). But the employed workers are faced with the problem of being laid off because of improvements in technique (automation) and speed-up, both of which will be utilized to a greater extent in the future. There is nothing that whets the appetite of a boss more to squeeze a bit more out of the workers on the job than the sight of a long line in front of the

unemployment compensation office or the relief department. At the same time, Marx noted more than 100 years ago that capitalists expand their facilities horizontally in times of good business (build more of the same kinds of plants) and vertically when competition get tough (convert existing plants to more efficient means).

The employed workers have a direct and two-fold interest in the shorter work week: to protect their right to a job and to help their fellow workers thrown on the scrap heap. Everything should be tied together in our propaganda so that the militants in the unions will understand the double threat to them, even in their present conditions: (1) from automation; (2) from a huge army of unemployed, becoming desperate.

I think this is a good time to begin a discussion on these problems in the party and at the convention. Signs point to the probability that these questions will grow in seriousness and affect larger numbers of workers. We should work out our policy more definitively so that we can guide the work of our fractions in the unions where these problems can now be raised and actions organized. We should also urge the student youth to consider these questions from the standpoint of the rapidly disappearing opportunities to get good jobs upon graduation from school.

Comradely,

Milt Alvin

Los Angeles, Calif.
April 11, 1959

Political Committee

Dear Comrades:

The April 6 issue of the Militant which featured the unemployment problem and was presumably aimed at the AFL-CIO Conference in Washington suffers from two serious shortcomings. First, the emphasis is placed on a secondary aspect of the question; second, the line on the 30- or 35-hour week demand is wrong.

On the first point, it seems that a conference called at the nation's capital at a time when there is a bill before Congress to shorten the work week to 35 hours, when a substantial number of unemployed were expected to attend, when the AFL-CIO had already endorsed the demand for a 35-hour week, the Militant headline should have demanded action to pass the bill. The lead article should have urged the conference to exert pressure on Congress for action. The demand to organize the unemployed, perfectly in order and very important, of course, would seem on this occasion to take a secondary place.

It appears to me that the wrong emphasis here flows from the continued line of the Militant to counter-pose the 30-hour to the 35-hour week. If our position was clear on this point, the Militant lead would undoubtedly have demanded action on the bill now before Congress.

I cannot understand why the Militant does not energetically support the 35-hour week, without any reservations except the establishment of the general principle that as unemployment increases progressive shortening of the work week must be demanded by the labor movement. The paper describes the 35-hour week and the Mac-Namara Bill as inadequate. This is doubtful. It would take a great struggle on labor's part to win even this demand and, if won, would certainly establish the principle of the progressive shortening of the work week. Who can say whether or not the widespread introduction of the 35-hour week is inadequate? In my opinion, if American industry went on a 35-hour week tomorrow, every unemployed worker would go back on the job, pretty near.

The article in the Militant on page 3, entitled "How to Keep Machines from Killing our Jobs," asserts that many workers already have the 37½-hour, 35-hour and 30-hour week. It gives the impression that there are so many workers covered by less-than-40 hour provisions, that a struggle for a 35-hour week would be ineffective. The article is all wrong on this point.

The number of workers covered by less-than-40-hour work weeks is very small, as everyone knows. Probably less than 5% of the total working force has less than 40 hours to work each week. In some cases, these shorter work weeks don't mean anything much. For example, in garment, the workers are on piece-work; in rubber they work six 6-hour days at straight time, etc. In construction you will probably find that the shorter work week is in effect in very few areas of the country.

The biggest problem that confronts the labor movement today is to get the unemployed back to work and to protect those still on the job from the lay-offs that come from the introduction of improved techniques in production. (I leave aside strictly political problems, I am referring to economic questions.) Any movement in this direction should be actively supported by us without giving the impression that we don't think current proposals go far enough. What we should be emphasizing is the organization of the struggle that will be required to win even those demands that have already been officially adopted by the labor movement. In this connection, we should be the foremost champions of the 35-hour week demand. If this proves to be inadequate some time in the future, there will be no problem in raising new demands for a 30-hour or shorter work week.

I think the PC should discuss this question fully and adopt a clear line in support of the 35-hour week at 40 hours pay.

Comradely,

Milton Alvin