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PRE-CONVENTION DISCUSSION MATERIAL

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FOR A CORRECT ORIENTATION IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By B. Lens and D. Stevens

Less than a month remains before our national convention opens. This convention should bear the stamp of the first stage in the greatest action the party has ever undertaken; it should mark a high point in the preparations for our first national presidential campaign. Yet, at this late date, the party has not been presented with a plan to transform it into a conscious, determined, and efficient campaign machine, embracing every one of its organs from the leading bodies to the branches and fractions throughout the country.

This failure cannot be explained merely by the lack of organizational forces, the need of a larger full-time staff, and the absence of sufficient finances. These factors could only effect the general scope of the plan. Rather does it flow from the conceptions of our tasks in the face of World War III and the role of our election campaign in the struggle against the war.

Comrade Cannon, in the May 10 issue of The Militant of this year, writes:

"The formal outbreak of the war, that is to say, the extension of American economic and political aggression into direct military action, may be deferred for strategic and tactical reasons. Or, the shooting war may break out at any moment. But in either case, those who count on the salvation of the human race by the independent class action of the workers must take the war -- tomorrow or a bit later -- as a fundamental reality.... Given the advanced stage of war preparations and the weakness of the revolutionary movement in this country, it must be acknowledged that the prospect of staying the hands of the war makers is very slim indeed."

However, on May 24, The Militant published Comrade Dobbs' radio speech which concluded with these words:

"The Socialist Workers Party will continue the same uncompromising struggle today on the brink of the Third World War.

Workmen and Workingwomen! In your great numbers, and in your mass organizations, raise the power to stop this fatal plunge into war and chaos. You have the power to change everything.

**Organize this invincible power!
Unite with the Socialist Workers Party!**

Bind your ranks together with a socialist program, and begin the march to a world where we and our children can live in peace as free human beings without poverty and without fear!"

This is not a little like blowing hot and cold at the same time. It may be argued that one is an agitational speech and the other is an

The blurred print on page 1 reads:

Working men and Working women!

In your great numbers,
and in your mass organizations,
rests the power to stop this fatal plunge
into war and dictatorship.

Marty Goodman ^{Feb} 2013

(reading the originals at Holt Labor Library, S.F.)

analytical article. The workers, however, cannot be agitated to fight for what is analyzed as a "slim prospect." Actually, it is impossible for our presidential candidate to speak over the radio without basing himself on the revolutionary perspectives in the struggle against World War III. But it is not the radio speech which sets our line or determines our course in this period. If the Political Committee is now preparing the party for a wartime existence instead of for the bold unfurling of the banner of revolutionary struggle against the war, then the election campaign will be limited in large part to the radio speeches of our candidates and, except for petition work, etc., leave the party as a whole in a lethargic state.

A thorough discussion of both the political and practical aspects of the election campaign is required throughout the ranks of the party. Only in this way can clarity be won. Only in this way can the party, to its last member, follower, and friend be prepared for its tasks in the election campaign.

We are submitting two discussion articles, the first on the political perspective and the second proposing some practical steps for the campaign. We hope that other comrades will take up this discussion, offer further proposals, and make of the election campaign, for the period of its duration, the party's paramount problem and task.

To speak of the general inevitability of war under capitalism is one thing. It is quite another thing to simply predict the next war as inevitable, which is to predict a major defeat of the working class. While we may point out all the weaknesses of the present labor leadership, which if continued will lead to war; while we may and should expose all the plans and the many advances of the war makers; we may under no circumstances concede them success at this time. This has always been the tradition of revolutionary Marxism. While warning of the possible disasters ahead, and seeing them more clearly than did all others, Trotsky never conceded the defeat before the fact -- in Germany, in 1932, or in Spain, in the middle of the Thirties. We have a revolutionary program to stop the war!

Open warfare with the Soviet Union has been, for more than a year, the official policy of imperialism's policy-makers. Why, then, are atomic bombs not now being dropped on Russia? The capitalist official theoreticians openly admit that they cannot atom bomb Russia right now because the Red Army would occupy all of Europe, and the total destruction of Europe is not at present militarily feasible. Nor is it in general economically desirable.

In addition, the American imperialists lack stable bases from which to launch their attack on the Soviet Union. The recent Columbia rebellion in the midst of the Pan-American Conference symbolizes their insoluble difficulties. In China, their plans are continually crumbling. In Italy and France, they are still far from being able to saddle the workers with safe Wall Street puppet dictatorships. More important still is their present difficulty, much greater than at the outbreak of World War II, to tame the Labor Movement in the United States and achieve a solid home-front from which to launch the attack.

In spite of these difficulties, the American bourgeoisie is objectively committed to all-out war, war immediately -- before the internal collapse, war at once -- before the further spreading of either Stalinism or genuine communism. The inexorable laws of the class struggle and the internal decay of capitalism leave them no alternative.

Their desperate need for war on the one hand, and the tremendous obstacles in the way of such a war on the other, constitute a contradiction that is not merely a paradox in words. It is a real one, rooted in the dramatically contradictory features of capitalist economy. Its manifestations are apparent in what the liberals please to decry as "our inconsistent" foreign policy. Only Marxists can fully appreciate this contradiction and see all of its implications. The superficial observer, sees only the imposing picture of a huge capitalist nation with unprecedented wealth and power, dominating the world, and relentlessly pursuing a direct line of action, smashing everything that stands in its way, class enemy or class rival.

The most vicious treachery of the Stalinists and of the trade union bureaucracy, and the most dangerous crime of Wallace consists in maintaining this one-sided picture and acting in accordance with it. Their pacifism does not present any real hope to the people of stopping the juggernaut. All they can do is protest -- so long as they acknowledge the power and permanence of bourgeois legality. They obscure the essence of the class struggle. Their "peace" talk is in the manner and spirit of capitalist class rule. Consequently their anti-war activity is a farce. They do nothing to dispel the fog of lies and deceit by which all institutions of education, propaganda, and social action attempt to conceal more fundamental relationships of power.

We, on the other hand, concede nothing to the enemy class. Their power is power only so long as the eyes of the workers are closed, only so long as the workers are led by betrayers. Their war making powers, their atomic and biological weapons, become all hollow shells when the substance of working class support is removed; when the myth of national unity is exploded.

The working class can yet stop the war! In our propaganda and agitation, we should present the more basic picture, the truth of the power of the working class and its unlimited capacities for revolutionary action and leadership. No other party will or can do this. This is our special role. We must fulfill it with all the energy and resources at our command. In this way it will become evident that we are not another group protesting, that we are not another group advocating a change, but that we are the only force preparing for action to assert the invincible power of our class. Thus we are also the only anti-war party.

We still operate under the decisions of our last convention. It is time to openly examine our perspective of building a party of mass action and to say what is. The tempo is slower due to well understood objective conditions. But is it time to abandon our thesis?

Millions of American workers are today seeking a radical answer to their problems. In no other way can the initial successes of Wallace's movement be explained. In particular, industrial and farm workers, small farmers, the high school and college youth and the Negro

people in great numbers responded to that demagogic capitalist's appeals for peace, labor's rights, and racial "justice."

Of greater significance even than the Wallace party is the revolutionary potential now being brought to the fore via "civil disobedience" movement led by Randolph and Reynolds.

A million and more potential SWP members today see only Wallace and reformism as they seek the type of program that only scientific socialism can offer.

The happy fact stares us in the face -- that the conditions for a mass party in the United States exist today. However better they may be tomorrow, they have not been better yesterday.

For these reasons, our campaign must be not only a general propaganda campaign against capitalism, but a running sharp debate with the Wallace movement, the CP, and the trade union bureaucracy. To the extent that we expose bourgeois reformism, pacifism, and popular frontism in the eyes of the leftward moving workers, to that extent will our party grow.

A mass party through the election campaign? This is not excluded -- but it will hinge on factors not within our control, the tempo of economic collapse, war developments, strike struggles, and political and revolutionary struggles throughout the world. The major fruits of our campaign may not be enjoyed until after its conclusion. Meanwhile our opportunity and revolutionary obligation is clear.

The dolorous line in some recent Militant articles, which points only to the inevitability of total war, adds nothing to the value of our propaganda and agitation. It is not sufficient to console ourselves that the objective conditions for revolution will be created by the coming war.

Certainly it is necessary to prepare the party and the workers who follow the party to continue the struggle under war conditions. We do not propose to close our eyes to the fact that war may very well be the framework of our struggle tomorrow. We should warn over and over again against the threatening catastrophe of a third world war. We must warn and we must do all in our power to arouse the workers to its danger.

But we must above all, point to the only road to stop the war -- the road that leads to a workers and farmers government. Our transitional program should be concretely applied to the conditions of our struggle against the war and to our election campaign.

Our "Proletarian Military Policy" has been especially neglected. Only in answer to a letter in the "Workers's Forum" has it even been mentioned recently. This too flows from a false perspective in relation to the struggle against World War III.

The Negro masses are seething on the draft question. Their growing revolt is reflected in the Randolph-Reynolds movement and deflected into the channels of individual resistance to the draft.

We must say to them that only through military training under trade union control and soldier's democracy in the army can Jim Crow in the Armed Forces be wiped out. To the bi-partisan draft program and the Wallace-CP pacifist opposition to the draft in this election campaign, we must counterpose our "Proletarian Military Policy."

We must speak boldly in this period. We must shock people. We must be the Reds. We must make the most widespread propaganda for workers' power. Only a worker's and farmer's government can stop the war. We will explain to the workers that there is no other way out, and that they have the power to stop the war and to change the world.

Workers will listen to us. They don't want to hear cautious words. They don't want to see vacillation. They want to hear words of confidence in their indomitable might -- bold words, that show the road they are seeking.

The worker who listens to us but votes for Wallace will not be a mere Wallace supporter. His support to Wallace will be more watchful, tentative, and will turn into fierce opposition to Wallace in the next stage when he will join our ranks.

And there will be many workers who will listen to us and vote for us. We want these votes and we must fight for these votes. The old way of using elections to make known the party and its program while apologizing for the smallness of our forces and intimating that we are not really concerned about the vote, can no longer be pursued. We want to convince the workers in their minds and in their hearts that they must have their own government to stop the war, and that they must vote that way.

The campaign itself is an anti-war action. It is the sharpest answer to the Mundt-Nixon type of attack. It is the sole action from the United States of solidarity with the working class of the world against American imperialism.

Our election campaign must be a militant anti-war campaign. Only in this way can we inspire the party and the workers who hear us to meet the needs at the present period, and to continue the struggle if war comes before revolution.

Revolutionary situations can develop in periods of deep crisis when the situation looks black. Revolution, Trotsky warned, comes always as a surprise, even to the revolutionists who work for it. How can we rule out the revolution in the immediate period ahead? It may start in Europe, or the colonies, and may develop with startling rapidity in the United States. We must base ourselves on these possibilities even while preparing to continue the struggle under conditions of war.

For a merciless exposure of people's frontism, reformism, and pacifist illusion!

For a revolutionary election campaign against the imperialist war!

Continue the building of the party of mass action; the party of the American Revolution!

June 9, 1948.

FURTHER REMARKS ON THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

By D. Stevens and B. Lens

In a previous discussion article, "For a Correct Orientation in the Election Campaign," we criticized the political perspective of the Party as expressed primarily in articles in The Militant, on the question of the struggle against war and the role of our election campaign. We also mentioned that we had prepared a second article proposing practical steps in this campaign.

Since that time, two things have occurred.

Firstly, the Political Committee's resolution, "Militarization of the U.S.A. and the Tasks of the SWP" appeared in the Internal Bulletin. While still maintaining the correctness of the propositions of our discussion article, we are heartily in agreement with the main line of the PC's thesis and believe that it contains the correct orientation for the election campaign. In particular do we welcome the indications of a recognition of the importance of our "Proletarian Military Policy" for this period. The PC thesis says nothing, however, about the almost complete absence of an application of this policy in our press for many months.

Secondly, the Secretariat issued a communication to the branches, entitled "Presidential Campaign Plans." This is the type of plan that we advocated. We welcome it despite its late appearance. Many of the proposals outlined in our second article duplicated those contained in that communication.

Because of these two steps taken by the National leadership, we have revised this second article, limiting it to a few additional suggestions.

Dobbs and Carlson Clubs

In addition to the designation of branch campaign directors, we propose that each branch should constitute itself as the core of a Dobbs and Carlson Club. Such clubs can involve many friends and sympathizers, who are not prepared to join the party, in the work of the election campaign. Their membership and work in these clubs can be an important step to membership in the party.

Contacts of all sorts can be involved in election campaign work, as in no other form of party work! Any worker who will vote for Dobbs and Carlson, regardless of on what level or for what reasons, should be given campaign literature, pledge cards, etc., and asked to canvass their house and neighborhood, their union local, their church, their fraternity, their social club, their friends and relatives.

Systematic visiting of registered voters in the selected area should be carried out by the clubs, with the object of getting VOTES and building financial and moral support for the campaign. Militant and F.I. subscriptions, and recruitment will all come as by-products; but in this campaign, we are campaigning for the broadest possible support of the workers for our Party Campaign Platform and for their

votes for our candidates. All other activities will be enriched and not suffer, by keeping the campaign in this order.

The Party should utilize the clubs for the organization of campaign activities, such as fund raising, social affairs, picnics, sports, dinners, movies, forums and street rallies, should be run under the auspices of the Dobbs and Carlson Clubs.

Later, these clubs will have the function of bringing out every Dobbs and Carlson supporter on registration day and on election day.

Each activity of the club should be carefully organized and planned through a number of committees such as publicity, Campaign Fund and literature distributions committees. Every comrade and sympathizer of the party should serve on one or another of these committees.

The branch headquarters is transformed into a colorful campaign headquarters. Huge streamers and posters with large pictures of the candidates decorate the inside and outside of the building. All headquarters are kept open every evening as a center for committee meetings and for the dispatching of campaign workers. The headquarters and its address is publicized in all literature and street meetings. Printing arrangements should be made so that each branch can have the address of its own campaign headquarters on national campaign literature.

The Dobbs and Carlson Clubs should be considered as broader organs of the party than the branches. The name, Socialist Workers Party should at all times be linked with the names of its candidates.

Fractions

Much more difficult than the adaptation of our branches to the election campaign is the problem of involving our trade union fractions. The difficulties are obvious, especially in this period of the red-baiting campaign.

Each fraction must make a detailed examination of what possibilities of campaign work exist in their situation. In some cases, only selected comrades can openly advocate support of Dobbs and Carlson. In other cases, all can do this. In such cases where the fraction is not in a position to carry on this work directly through any of its own members, the rest of the party branch must assist by visiting key militants and progressives in the union with campaign literature.

This campaign in particular has brought the question of national political candidates onto the agenda of every trade union and shop meeting. Every fraction must attempt to organize political forums and debates between candidates before their union membership. Local and national candidates should request time in all union meetings to present our platform.

Party Staff

The greatest political action in the history of the Party requires the most extensive Party staff we have ever had. It requires the highest level of organizational planning and direction. This is not a luxury, but a necessity that flows from the decision to conduct a

national election campaign. We should increase the paid staff both nationally and locally. We need at least the staff we had before the general Party retrenchment. One of the major purposes of the Campaign Fund, which might well exceed the \$25,000 goal tentatively set by the Secretariat, should be to make feasible this expansion.

We also should enlist volunteers for full-time and part-time Party workers from the following sources: 1) Seasonal workers; 2) Comrades on vacation from jobs; 3) Seamen; 4) Students; 5) Housewives. (Each branch should make detailed arrangements for taking care of the children.)

Finally, every party member should consider himself in this period as near a full-time worker as possible, totally at the call of the Party.

Education

All party education in this period should center around the election campaign. Internal and public lectures and classes on topics like the following can be rich in political lessons, as well as serve to prepare comrades and friends for electioneering activities.

1. The Marxist view on revolutionists' participation in parliamentary and electoral activities.
2. The election platform of the Party. (The specific application of our transitional program to the current issues of the campaign.)
3. Our candidates, Dobbs and Carlson. (Who they are, their lives, highlights of their activities in the class struggle, their imprisonment, their long record in the mass movement and in the party, they are class-war heroes. We should make no concessions to the false accusations of our enemies that we are building a leader cult.)
4. False Programs in the Campaign. (Sharpest political delineation from all other parties, in particular, the Wallace Party, CP, SP.)
5. Class politics versus people's frontism. (The question of electoral blocks; the question of the united front.)

Tradition

We must make full use of the best American labor traditions. The tradition of Debs in particular should be utilized to the utmost. His record in the First World War, his political position, his war-time speeches, his imprisonment, etc., should be compared with the records of Dobbs and Carlson. We should highlight the sharp contrast between the thoroughly revolutionary Debs, symbol for his class, of the workers struggle for Socialism, and the spineless opportunism of Norman Thomas and the cynical betrayals of the Communist Party.

We are the only rightful heirs of Debs today. This rich heritage should be explicitly embodied in our election campaign.

The traditional struggle of revolutionists for proletarian solidarity and against all forms of race hatred and discrimination should

be brought to the fore. To white workers we must again and again raise the issue of Jim Crow, and put forth our explanation and program. On this vital point, it must be noted that our first two radio broadcasts were entirely deficient.

Our traditional internationalism must continue to be a major feature of all propaganda. Cannon's introduction to the first nationwide radio program (May 15) is a splendid example of how this can be done.

Street Meetings

Street electioneering and stumping is popular and traditional during election campaigns. Even in those cities where this method has not been used, the branches should discuss the possibilities of creating the precedent of street meetings.

Election rallies in the streets should be attractive and dramatic. In addition to loud speaking equipment, streamers and placards -- flares can add great color to a meeting.

Recordings can be used with effectiveness. Radio speeches by our candidates, which are recorded by the studios as a matter of routine, should be made available to all branches for use in street rallies, as well as indoor meetings. Records of union and revolutionary songs have been used in the past to draw crowds to the street meetings. We have the musical talent and the Militant Chorus which enable us to create and record a Party Campaign Song to heighten the spirit of our election campaign.

Arrangements have been made by the New York Local Educational Committee for the filming of the candidates making their acceptance speeches over the radio from the National Convention hall. These motion pictures can be used not only at indoor meetings, but also at street election rallies. Copies of these films will be made available to the branches.

Every party member should be trained to become a campaign agitator. In New York City, all branches are involved in a five-week course for street speakers in preparation for the election campaign.

* * * * *

Many of the practical steps planned for the campaign depend, for their proper execution, on the amount of money available. The correct level will be set within the Party in two ways: by a political approach to the campaign which is saturated with revolutionary optimism -- and by specific actions. The fine work already done in obtaining radio time on a scale beyond our boldest expectations, is an example of a type of concrete action which will inspire members and friends to great financial sacrifices.

With this twofold start, it is not at all excessive for the convention to ask a week's pay from every comrade. Sympathizers who see this spirit and action of our party will want to aid financially to get the work done!

A \$50,000 Campaign Fund is entirely realistic!

The convention must make clear that the PC and all campaign committees, local and national should call for the most extreme efforts on the part of all party members. Once the significance of the campaign is fully felt, we will tear ourselves out of all lethargy and organizational conservatism.

Fears expressed about "tiring" or "wearing out" the party must be put aside now. This must not be planned like a routine subscription or fund drive. The tempo is different. The campaign and our enthusiasm will have a snowballing effect and gather momentum right up to November.

All party life must now be adjusted to the opportunity and the need. Look about you for any incipient heroism being saved up for the barricades. It cannot be put to better use at any time than now, in the day to day work of the Party's biggest campaign in its history.

June 12, 1948.

POLICY ON THE RANDOLPH-REYNOLDS PROPOSAL

1. The Randolph-Reynolds defiance of Army Jim Crow is a genuine expression of the sentiments of the Negro people and is therefore of great revolutionary significance. Even those opposed to the movement, admit that it has already won widespread support among the Negro masses. This considerable backing is explained by the rich and varied political experiences of the Negro masses from 1940 to the present day.
2. That this movement has concentrated on federal practice of Jim Crow in the army and not on social and industrial grievances is not in the slightest degree accidental. It derives from the whole national and international position taken by the federal government in its war against "Hitlerism" and "totalitarianism." This puts the administration in an indefensible position in the face of Negro protests.
3. The movement has already vitally affected the Negro petty-bourgeois leaders and has turned the attention of Negroes from the demagogic electoral competition between Truman and Wallace to direct action against the federal government.
4. The SWP welcomes with deep satisfaction this new stage of the struggle for Negro emancipation. It condemns all those who denounce this movement as treasonable and will defend it against all its enemies.
5. This movement not only contains great potentialities for the Negro struggle but also poses great dangers for it, making it necessary for its leaders and sympathizers to study carefully all the factors involved.
6. The leaders of this movement have called on Negroes to express their protest by refusing to join the army and going to jail if necessary. Rightly recognizing the unity of the struggle of all the oppressed, it calls upon whites to take the same action. These proposals, put forward in this form, can lead to dangerous weakness, disorganization and even disaster.
7. The SWP as a Marxist party has always opposed individual protests against war such as refusing to submit to the draft. This has been Marxist policy for over thirty years. The fundamental reason is that the great strength of the working class and the masses of the people lies and will always lie in organized mass action. Individual acts, however heroic, turn the minds of the masses from their organized power. They allow the government to penalize, put into prison, and eliminate from the struggle many of the most devoted elements.

The organized labor movement and the great masses of the people have shown no tendency whatever to oppose the draft, least of all because of a sympathy, however genuine, for Negro protest against discrimination.

The SWP therefore considers that this appeal to Negroes and whites to refuse to obey the draft can behead the Negro movement, and to the limited extent that it can gain support from the white population, will do far more harm than good. Thus both from its tried and tested program and the actual situation in the country today, the SWP cannot countenance its membership joining this movement and therefore wearing

and selling buttons with the inscription "Do Not Join a Jim Crow Army," signing cards to the same effect, or carrying out propoganda and agitation for these purposes in the organized labor movement and in the population at large.

8. The SWP however is clearly aware of the fact that the desire for action among the Negro masses in opposition to the draft is fundamentally different from that of the population at large. It further realizes that the readiness to defy Jim Crow in the army represents the highest stage of development of the struggle of the Negro people. Mindful of its program and the experiences of the past, the SWP therefore proposes to this movement a correct tactical course: The task of this movement is not to begin by inviting supporters indiscriminately to refuse to obey the draft law. Their business is to organize the sentiment among the great masses of the Negro people for organized mass action against Jim Crow in the army. It is necessary to build a nationwide movement, involving the great majority of the Negro population, by means of monster mass meetings, mass demonstrations, community-wide strikes, marches on state and municipal government centers, on Washington. Such a movement will bring home to the Negroes the conviction and consciousness of their own strength and nerve them to still greater efforts.

This movement must furthermore appeal to organized labor, and could do this with a power that would compel support. The disorganized action of individuals defying the draft, however, will only provide the enemies of the Negroes with the opportunity of obstructing sympathetic action and support for the Negro protest among the organized workers.

9. With the mobilization of a mass movement, the further concrete actions to be taken can then be decided upon. They may then assume a scope of defiance and determination far beyond the actions of isolated individuals.

10. The SWP does not identify the struggle of the Negroes for their democratic rights, in war or peace, with the socialist struggle against the war. That the leaders of the Randolph-Reynolds movement proclaim their devotion to the war if the Negroes get their rights, or that the Negro masses accept this protestation, does not alter the determined and devoted support which the SWP gives to all actions which mobilize or seek to mobilize the Negro people against the persecutions they endure. But the SWP reaffirms that all Negro struggles for democratic rights, will in this period very quickly be confronted with the necessity of taking a position on the war itself and will have to come to the conclusion that the struggle for democracy is part and parcel of the struggle against war. The same class which oppresses the Negroes is the same class leading the population into the war.

The SWP is confident that the previous experiences and present struggles of the Negro people will lead them inevitably to recognize the character of their oppressor and the unity of the struggle with that of all other oppressed classes in society.

11. The struggle against the draft runs a great danger unless it is democratically controlled by the Negro rank and file. A. Philip Randolph, the leader of the movement, has rendered great service to the Negro people in the organization of the Pullman-Porters' union. How-

ever, in 1941 when the struggle of the Negro people was at its peak in the March-on-Washington Movement, Randolph, forced to choose between still further mass mobilizations of the Negro people, or support of the war-making Roosevelt government -- decided on the latter course. He capitulated to its pressure and betrayed the struggle of the Negro people. This is a great warning to the mass of the Negro people. Whether A. Philip Randolph may or may not go to prison will not decide the future fate of the Negro people. Randolph and others may go to prison and yet by encouraging Negroes to take individual anarchist action against the draft, do great harm to the Negro cause. His course may invite heavy reprisals from the government and vigilante groups without organizing the Negro people to defend themselves. It is the task of the determined fighters among the Negro people to see to it that a truly mass organization is formed, resting upon the great masses of the Negro people, functioning democratically and controlling the leaders. This would prevent any of its leaders from undermining the movement the way that Randolph did with the March-on-Washington Movement.

12. The SWP will support every step that the Randolph-Reynolds movement takes for the mass mobilization of the Negro people, will expose those elements who attack the movement from a reactionary point of view, and will struggle among the Negro masses and the organized labor movement for support and clarification of this movement so that the sentiments of defiance of the draft may find their most adequate and powerful expression.

Approved by Political Committee

May 25, 1948

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REPORT ON NEGRO WORK

In 1943 when the workers' discontent with the burdens imposed upon them by the war began to assume an open expression, our party made a turn from propaganda to mass agitation. In 1944 it entered the field of the Negro struggle for the first time as an effective organized force, prepared to work in a serious and sustained fashion. It is now possible and necessary to submit our experiences to a critical review, to survey the results, and to draw the conclusions which will serve as a guide in the next stage of our work among the Negro masses.

Progress and Gains

The gains of the last four years' experience can be summed up as follows:

1. We experienced a sharp rise in recruitment of Negro comrades especially from 1944-46. By the time of the 1946 convention, we had recruited over 350 Negro members.
2. Our increased activity in this field played a big part in the success of our most ambitious Militant subscription campaigns, in which a majority of the new subs were sold in the Negro community. This was a major factor in the general expansion of our press. Our agitational pamphlets on the Negro struggle were among the most popular we ever issued.
3. We established an excellent record in the Negro community as a defender of Negro rights because of our role in initiating or participating in a considerable number of action campaigns centering around job discrimination, Jim Crow in public facilities, tenant league work and police or vigilante brutality. The outstanding examples were the Fontana case in California, the Hickman case in Chicago and the Freeport case in New York, all of which attracted nation-wide attention. Most of our branches participated in these or other campaigns.
4. We have undergone our first sustained experience in conducting work in Negro mass organizations. We have succeeded in gaining positions of leadership in some of the local branches of these organizations, and our fractions have begun to learn the methods of fruitful work in them.
5. Within the unions we have succeeded in Detroit and elsewhere in creating groupings for action against Jim Crow through the medium of FEPC Committees, Negro caucus formations, etc. This has involved Negro party members in the unions in broader activities, brought them into contact with large numbers of Negro unionists, and enabled them to acquire invaluable experience and prestige in mass work.
6. We have begun to assemble and train a cadre of Negro leaders, the most important nucleus being workers who have distinguished themselves in union work before or after joining the party. We have built a circle of sympathetic elements, whose support can be counted on in various enterprises initiated or backed by the party and from whom we can win new recruits in the future.

Setbacks and Shortcomings

Although our Negro work has constituted one of the brightest chapters in the history of our development toward a party of mass action, we have also suffered serious setbacks in this field and have been confronted with obstacles and problems we have not yet overcome.

1. Recruiting fell off sharply after 1946 (among Negroes as well as whites). Meanwhile a large percentage of the Negro recruits had begun to drop away from the party (larger than the percentage of white members lost in this period). As a result, we today number less than half of the Negro members we had at the time of the last convention. We sustained an even more drastic decline in the number and percentage of subscriptions among Negroes.

2. The party still lacks an adequate group of Negro party and mass leaders, educators and organizers, prepared to take leadership of the party's work in this field.

3. A considerable section of the party lacks a clear and comprehensive grasp of many theoretical and practical aspects of the Negro problem, which is necessary for the successful integration and assimilation of new Negro (and white) members.

4. Our national Negro work has been under the supervision of a sub-committee of the Political Committee, but its members, burdened with other assignments, were unable to devote the necessary time and attention to it, with the result that there has been insufficient coordination of our mass work and the consequent loss of opportunities for growth.

These problems and reverses have given rise to a certain confusion in the party leadership and ranks. Some comrades at the beginning entertained the notion that work in the Negro field gave us a greater opportunity to "get rich quick" than other fields of mass work. Now, having learned in practice that this is not the case, there has arisen a tendency to ask if we have not concentrated too much attention to this field and to conclude that it cannot result at this time in any permanent gains, etc. In order to counteract this and other mistaken views, it is necessary to acquaint the whole party with the reasons for both our gains and setbacks. Only a clear understanding of what happened and why it happened can produce the most effective balance between our Negro and other mass work and arm us with a program for further progress in this field.

One of the reasons we made such relatively strong headway in this field in 1944-46 was that we entered it with great energy and enthusiasm. But that was not the only reason, and probably not the major one. It is necessary to recall that we turned to this work in an organized fashion following the outbursts in Harlem, Detroit, etc., in 1943, when a wave of revolt was sweeping the Negro community, generated by the Jim Crow oppression of wartime conditions. This Negro upsurge anticipated and to a certain extent even stimulated the general upsurge of labor militancy after V-J Day. The warm reception accorded to our party beginning in 1944 was in part a consequence of this spread of radical moods among the Negro masses. The existing national Negro

organizations were too conservative. The Stalinists at that time were curbing labor and Negro struggles, the trade unions were still relatively quiescent, and our party was the only organization speaking the things the Negro people were eager to hear. This accounted strongly for our gains at that time.

But the Negro struggle fluctuates no less than the struggle of the working class. Moreover, although these two social movements are distinct and do not proceed uniformly, they are closely connected and affect each other. Beginning in 1946, when capitalist reaction was beginning to thrust the labor movement onto the defensive and when red-baiting was beginning to assume mass proportions, the Negro mass movement ran up against obstacles it proved unable to surmount (lack of adequate leadership, clear goal, etc.) and began to subside. Organizations like the NAACP, which at that time set themselves ambitious expansion programs, found it impossible to even hold their own. The ebb in the mass movement found expression within the party in a withdrawal of some members, feelings of disappointment, inactivity, etc. This was the chief objective cause of our reverses.

The majority of the new recruits had little or no previous experience in political organizations, and they therefore were subject to the same illusions as other workers joining their first working class party. The Negro recruits were attracted to us primarily because of our revolutionary program on the problem that most concerned them, the Negro struggle, just as many white workers have been attracted by the leadership we provide the workers inside the plants and unions. Coming to us because we preached the need for militant action against Jim Crow, they naturally expected us to provide them with the opportunity and arena for such action.

The party branches, realizing that such action is indispensable for holding, educating and training new members, made impressive efforts to break out of their isolation from the Negro community and to provide it. That was the source of the excellent action campaigns referred to above. But, side by side with this activity, arose the tendency to believe that the party itself could at this stage become the main instrument of mass struggle by the Negro militants, rather than serving as the guiding center of their work in the mass organizations.

Our experience has proved that action campaigns conducted by the party can be a powerful means of strengthening the party. But the same experience has also proved that such campaigns have strict limitations unless they are accompanied by measures to penetrate into the mass organizations which must serve as the chief vehicle of daily struggle. Their permanent value depends greatly not only on recruiting but in teaching our recruits the importance of entering the existing mass organizations for sustained activity and revolutionary propaganda.

In our past experience Negro militants, brought forward by the upheavals of the war, turned from the conservatism of the existing mass organizations and the treachery of the Stalinists and sought avenues of direct action. Many were attracted to the revolutionary party.

But many of these Negro militants showed a decided reluctance to undertake fraction work within those organizations whose very inade-

quacy had propelled them towards the Marxist movement. The party on the other hand lacked trained and qualified Negroes to initiate this work, to convince less experienced members of its necessity and value, and to build a left wing within the existing mass organizations which would serve as a point of attraction for work by the new party members. Where the Negro recruits had a basis in the unions, where they found it possible to work with our existing fractions, the task of assimilation was easier. But on the whole the turn-over was disproportionately large.

Our experience in this field can be summed up as follows: The militancy of the Negro masses gave us our first opportunity on an extensive scale to win recruits to the revolutionary party on the basis of agitation on a particular issue, instead of by propaganda embracing our full program.

The large turn-over must therefore be seen as an expression of the difficulties which must face the party at this stage in applying the methods of a mass party while the party itself remains as yet small. These difficulties, always present in such a transition, apply with exceptional force to the Negro question. But on the basis of the experience gained, the cadres we have developed and the clarification of our ideas in the Draft Resolution on the Negro Question, we are now far better equipped to tackle the same tasks wherever opportunities are opened at subsequent stages of the Negro struggle.

Balance and Emphasis

A key problem which the party must solve is the achievement of the proper balance in its emphasis and concentration on work in the Negro field and in other fields. It is naturally impossible to define the precise relationship in any abstract sense, because so much depends on the concrete conditions facing the party at any particular time. While work must be continued in all fields, with the Negro comrades playing the major role within the Negro organizations, under certain circumstances it will be correct for the party as a whole to concentrate in one field, under other circumstances in another, depending on the relationship of forces, opportunities, etc. Nevertheless, our experiences of the last four years have already furnished us with a general guide, which is summed up in the final paragraph of the Draft Resolution on the Negro Question.

The Negro militants are instinctively seeking powerful forces to buttress their strivings for equality. They are attracted to us because we point to the labor movement as their strongest and best ally. But the majority will not come to or stay with us unless they come to recognize us as the force which, despite our present small numbers, can most effectively and realistically cement the alliance of the labor movement with the Negro people. As the Draft Resolution puts it:

" . . . the party's Negro work, important as it is, depends upon the general progress of the party in securing and extending its influence in the organized labor movement. Experience has shown us that it is where the party possesses real strength in the labor movement that its activities among the Negro masses meet with the greatest

response. Only to the extent that the party successfully carries out the Transitional Program and rises to the level of its general political tasks will it be able to take fullest advantage of the great contributions to the socialist struggle inherent in Negro work."

Conclusions and Proposals

1. Mass Organizations. While we were tardy in making the turn to Negro mass organizations, the 1946 convention resolution specifically oriented the party toward the NAACP as the principal arena for mass work. This task of entering and integrating ourselves within them has been largely carried through since then. The NAACP continues to be our main point of concentration in the Negro organizations. Most of our Negro comrades and some of our white comrades are now active members of Negro and inter-racial organizations; and in the FEPC groups and similar committees for Negro work in the union movement; some have already assumed positions of local leadership, have become executive committee members, have been elected as delegates to national conventions, etc.

It is necessary now to stress the importance of persistent, patient, long-term work, even in situations where the prospects do not look particularly encouraging right now. Success in such work cannot be achieved overnight, and calls for the same kind of hard work needed in the unions. New organizations may appear with the resurgence of mass activity and may even become more important than the existing organizations, but our activities in the latter will not be wasted if we devote ourselves to learning how to function within them, making contacts for the party and winning a reputation as the best and most consistent fighters against Jim Crow. More than ever before, it will now be necessary to establish and maintain close communication and relations between the various fractions in this field.

The special characteristics of the Randolph-Reynolds movement require a special tactical approach toward it, and the closest attention to its future development. See the document, "Policy on the Randolph-Reynolds Proposal," approved by the Political Committee.

2. Education. The main internal task with regard to our Negro work is the education of the party -- of the white as well as the Negro members -- on the theoretical and practical aspects of the Negro struggle, and its relation to the socialist revolution. Only a party intimately acquainted with these questions can win Negro militants, train them to become Marxists and help them to spread the party's revolutionary message among the Negro masses.

The Draft Resolution on the Negro Question is intended as a beginning along that line. The branches should devote the necessary time to a thorough discussion of this document, and the Internal Bulletin should be used for the exchange of views and the clarification of disputed points. The party press should be used to simplify and amplify its main ideas for the benefit of our sympathizers. The resolution must be regarded as only a beginning, however. It is necessary to make a study also of the Marxist position on the national question as it relates to the Negro struggle, Leon Trotsky's writings and discussions on the Negro problem, pertinent lessons from American history, the international experiences around this question, the

erroneous views of the CP, SP, WP, etc. In addition to new agitational pamphlets, the party should prepare a pamphlet dealing with the more fundamental sides of the questions.

3. Negro Cadre. The main leadership and execution of the party's Negro work belongs with the Negro comrades themselves; in the field of the Negro mass movement, the white comrades are necessarily confined in this stage to the role of assistants and auxiliaries. The party must consciously train and assist these Negro comrades to fulfill this responsibility as Trotskyist leaders, just as it trains and assists the comrades for the positions of leadership which they must aim at in the labor movement. The consolidation and education of our present Negro cadre is an indispensable condition for further recruiting; a group of firm and experienced Negro Trotskyist leaders in every level and branch of the party would serve as an example to new recruits and enormously facilitate their integration. Particular attention should be paid to the development of Negro comrades in the unions, who are living links between organized labor and the Negro community and among whom the party has made its most durable gains.

4. Negro Committee. The incoming Political Committee of the party is charged with the task of establishing a sub-committee to assume direction and co-ordination of the party's Negro work on a national basis, under the supervision of the Political Committee. This committee on Negro work should meet regularly, answer correspondence from the branches, circulate information and reports to the membership, guide the work of the fractions in the mass organizations and furnish assistance to the party's editorial staffs in covering important developments for our press. At least one of the members of this committee should be assigned this work as his primary party task.

5. 1948 Election Campaign. The warm response of Negroes to our petition campaigns this year, as in the past, testifies to their continued receptivity to radical ideas. The Wallace movement, whose demagoguery is designed to divert Negro sentiment from revolutionary channels, presents a special threat to the Negro movement and a special challenge to our party. Exposing the deceitful propaganda on the Negro question by Wallace and the Stalinists is one of our main tasks in this election campaign; we are the only party that can do it. It will not be an easy task, but the difficulties only make it all the more mandatory that we approach it with persistence and precision. Even where we do not meet with immediate success in this effort, our warnings to the Negro people will be recalled, and will redound to our benefit, on the day when Wallace betrays them. Our party's revolutionary program to abolish Jim Crow by abolishing capitalism can, if vigorously advanced, will not only expose the skillful demagoguery of the Wallaceites and the other misleaders of the Negro people, but must also bring substantial gains to the party in the next period.

Approved by the Political Committee

June 19, 1948

New York, N.Y.
June 10, 1948

To the Comrades of the Political Committee:

IN RE: THE POLICY ON THE RANDOLPH MOVEMENT

I have studied the communication on the policy of the party with regard to the Randolph movement and consider most of its points to be correct. The weaknesses of the movement and the dangers inherent in these weaknesses are apparent, but it is also recognizable that this movement has the potentialities for becoming the most important movement of the Negroes since the Civil War and that it could have profound effects on the struggles of colored peoples throughout the world. It is for this reason that I think that there should be some reconsideration and modification of the present stand on the movement.

In my opinion the main aim of this organization is to end the Jim Crow segregation in the armed services. The main tactics to be used, as expressed by Randolph and Reynolds, is to refuse to serve in the Jim Crow army. While the leaders of the movement subscribe to this type of civil disobedience as their weapon for fighting this Jim Crow it does not necessarily follow that the Negroes who do join the movement look upon this method as the way to win this fight. The majority of the Negroes who joined the Garvey movement did not desire to return to Africa. What they wanted was a vehicle through which to express their resentment and an organization which they could use as a battering ram to break down Jim Crow. Would we have prohibited our comrades from entering this movement and working for a change in program and policy? Such, I think will be the case with the Randolph movement. And the militant Negro workers who are going to sign pledge cards and wear buttons are not going to sit back waiting for the day when they will be carted off to prison for refusing to answer the draft call. They will desire a change in policy and it will be necessary for someone within the organization to give expression to their desires.

In the policy communication a general program of mass action is proposed as an alternative to the present one. Who, how, and where is this program to be presented in order to have the best effect? Can we remain outside of the movement, taking no part in its organization, and hope to exert any influence on its program or actions? Paragraph #3 of point #7 excludes the possibility of any party member working in the organization for the purposes of agitating for a change in tactics. This I think is an error. There is no better place for the party member to work toward changing this program than in the organization itself. There we could conduct a fight for our program while exposing the present false program of the leadership. Whether we are in it or not this movement, or one similar to it, is going to grow into a mass movement and the SWP should be in it, officially or unofficially, to help in the forging of a correct policy and program for this movement. For these reasons I believe that the party should open the door to allow, nay, urge or even direct, comrades into the organization to work for these ends.

In the event that no successful fight could be conducted around

the issue of changing policy and organizational set-up nothing would be lost. The movement would break its head against a stone wall, but much of the membership would be exposed to our program and it would be possible to form a left wing within the organization during the fight. For the party the formation of a programmatically sound left wing within the Randolph movement could mean that a large section of the most advanced Negro workers would be brought so much closer and if many were not actually recruited to the party this group could form the nucleus of a new movement which had within its leadership elements with a socialist understanding of the Negro struggle in particular and the workers struggle in general.

Joe Morgan
Harlem Branch

June 19, 1948

Dear Comrade Morgan:

Your letter of June 10 was discussed by the Political Committee and I have been designated to write the following reply.

1) The Political Committee memorandum states the policy of the party on this question. The party, as a Marxist party, with a program and methods of struggle against imperialist war, must make it unambiguously clear that it cannot allow its members to join an organization which would demand of them that they propagandize and agitate for individual refusal to join the army. Party members cannot do this and at the same time advocate a Marxist policy against war. On imperialist war, least of all, are such contradictions permissible. Some of our Negro contacts in particular will best understand our objection to such a course when we make it clear that for us it is a principled objection on a fundamental question for society and for our party.

2) The memorandum however, states clearly the difference between the Negro struggle for democratic rights in the army and the general anti-war struggle. We do not confuse the two. Neither does our objection to our party members joining the Randolph Movement mean that we propose to turn our backs on the Movement or ignore it, or merely attack it for not having a Marxist policy. On the contrary. The potentialities of the Randolph Movement as you describe them, and the possibility that militant Negro workers who join it will seek to change its perspectives and broaden its methods of struggle are understood by the Committee. The party must seek to influence this movement; we are certain however, that the party today has ample opportunity to do so in its own name, as a party and through party work within the labor movement, and more particularly in the Negro organizations and groups with which we have contact. Through these, but especially through Negro organizations, the party can bring the ideas contained in the document (and further elaborations of them) to many of the Negroes, who today are actively discussing precisely the value of Randolph's proposals and the possibilities of that method of struggle. This at the present time is our most valuable method of work on this question. There is as yet no Randolph organization to speak of. We can contribute substantially to the future direction an actual Randolph Movement may take by the work we do now. If at a later stage the Randolph Movement were to develop into a movement involving masses of Negroes we would, as always, review our tactics in regard to it. We would then have to consider how to reach thousands of Negroes in an actual movement.

We need not be afraid that we shall miss opportunities unless we get in on the ground-floor of a potential mass movement. In view of the forces and influence that we have in the unions and the Negro organizations we need have no doubt that we shall make our ideas felt in any mass movement and attract valuable elements to the party. The problem is to establish our connections and influence and build our cadres.

The question of an individual party member or members joining a given organization, despite our expressed disagreement with its

general policy, is no problem at all. It is a practical question which the party in this or any other sphere, decides according to the concrete situation. But that is not to be confused with the political line and broad tactic of the party on a given question.

Fraternally yours,

A. Jones
For the Political Committee