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FOR AN INDEPENDENT PARTY
BASED ON A PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION

By Farrell Dobbs

Titanic social struggles heralding the doom of the outlived capitalist system are today convulsing the world. Over one-third of the world's population has already wrenched itself free from the capitalist orbit. China's liberation from imperialist oppression, and its emergence as a great world power, has given tremendous impetus to the struggles of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples everywhere. The spreading revolution has now reached the Americas. In Bolivia armed detachments of workers are leading the struggle to free their land from the grip of the foreign exploiters and the native capitalist-landlord class. Leftward currents are surging through the working classes of Western Europe and England.

Capitalism finds the problem of defeating the revolution increasingly formidable. The revolution, on the other hand, is not yet capable of abolishing capitalism in its main centers, primarily because of the continuing crisis of leadership in the working class. Although capitalism's doom is already signaled by the snapping of the weakest links in the world imperialist chain, the decisive struggles still lie ahead.

The developing conflict may in the opening phases have the general appearance of a war between nations. But this will be little more than a surface appearance for the reality will be a war between classes. Every worker must take his place in this developing class battle on the side of the revolutionary working class, no matter what peculiar forms the struggle may take, no matter what treacherous political tendencies may hold leadership over the working class sector at one stage or another.

At the present stage of this great conflict, the world Trotskyist movement finds itself a small minority tendency, but a tendency armed with a powerful revolutionary program. The task of the Trotskyists everywhere is to fuse this program with the mass movement of their country, polarize a genuinely revolutionary mass leadership around the program and thus assure final victory in the struggle against capitalism.

The Third Congress correctly urged that Trotskyists everywhere get into the main stream of the mass movement, regardless of the incumbent leadership, and stay there through thick and thin, through good times and bad. The Congress did not recommend any policy of softness toward alien political tendencies, nor did it advocate any blunting or muddling of the Trotskyist program in executing tactical maneuvers. The Trotskyist cadres were urged instead to maintain theoretical and programmatic firmness, to remain crystal-clear as to their aims, in order to properly execute the difficult and complex tactics they find it necessary to employ.

Broad lines of tactical variations were delineated as a general aid to the formulation of precise tactics according to the existing relations within the working class in each country. Three broad lines of reference were set forth: Penetrate the ranks of the Stalinists where they predominate in the mass movement. Penetrate the ranks of

the Social Democrats where they predominate. Where neither the Stalinists nor the Social Democrats predominate in the mass movement maintain a course as an independent party acting as the revolutionary leadership of the working class. No matter which of these tactical courses it may be necessary to follow, the ultimate aim remains the same as always -- to build an independent revolutionary mass party.

We here must build our party in the imperialist heartland, where capitalism remains strong and the class struggle remains at a relatively elementary level. Washington is waging a relentless struggle against the spreading revolution. It is girding for all-out war and striving to stifle all opposition to the war program at home.

The atmosphere here is charged with tension. Vast pressures are bearing down on people in every walk of life, on every class, party, organization and tendency. People tend to think and react according to the manner in which they feel these pressures.

Some who look beyond our shores at the revolutionary turmoil elsewhere in the world, and then observe the state of relative social tranquility prevailing in this country, get the mistaken feeling that American capitalism enjoys some long-term immunity from the revolutionary tide. They hear no open rumblings of social crisis here. They see no real upsurge in the class struggle. They see political reaction riding high and for the moment not seriously challenged. They react with a mood of gloom and pessimism over the prospects of the class struggle in this country.

Our party is not at all immune to this process. Manifestations of this gloomy mood, plus our external difficulties in the present political climate here, have generated a critical internal situation for us. This state of affairs has been gradually developing across six years of cold-war pressures and it is now beginning to hit us in full force.

A factional grouping has crystallized in our party under the leadership of Comrade Cochran. This faction stands opposed to the fundamental orientation under which we have been building our party for the past 25 years. The Cochranite position has not been openly presented to the party. Instead it has been peddled to individuals, hinted at in occasional remarks at branch meetings and to a limited extent in higher party bodies. Evidence of the Cochranite line is to be found, not in clearly formulated documents, but in the pattern of their behavior.

After more than a year of surreptitious opposition to the party line, we are now told by the Cochranites that they are preparing documents setting forth their views. Meantime, they have stepped up the tempo of their smuggling operation. We therefore consider a mere ruse their arguments that we, of the majority, should await their documents before opening debate with them in the party. We already have enough evidence to get a clear idea of their line. On that basis we are prepared to make a general statement of what we are for and what we are against. If and when the Cochranites do state openly what they stand for, we can discuss their position more fully.

Lenin pointed out that those too weak to withstand reaction betray their weakness in the realms of theory, tactics and party organi-

zation. When this occurs, he said, the class conscious workers must take control. Every party member should interest himself in a correct analysis of objective conditions, in the maintaining of a general line of party orientation corresponding to objective needs and in the necessary criticisms of party failings.

We hope that every comrade who feels he or she has something to say will speak out without hesitation during this discussion. It will be good for the party. The main points of the dispute will gradually become crystal-clear to all and then the party membership can make its decision.

In our judgment, the Cochranites are seeking to introduce a basic shift from our established party orientation thus giving rise to a fundamental dispute involving the following alternative courses:

1. Shall we continue our course as an independent party, or shall we change our orientation to that of a propaganda group?
2. Shall we focus our main attention on work in the mass movement, or shall we direct our main efforts toward work in and around the Stalinist movement?
3. Shall we orient toward a showdown fight against the Stalinists for leadership of the workers in the coming mass radicalization, or shall we adopt a conciliatory attitude toward the Stalinist movement?
4. Shall the paper be primarily an agitational organ aimed at influencing the workers by means of our transitional demands, or shall it be primarily a propaganda organ aimed at influencing intellectuals and politically-informed elements?
5. Shall we maintain a general program of activities as demanded of an independent party, or shall we confine our activities to work consistent with a propaganda-group perspective?

To answer these questions correctly, we must grasp the essence of the objective conditions in this country today. We must determine what general pattern the coming class battles in the United States are most likely to assume as foreshadowed by trends discernable in the present objective reality.

The convention resolution described the total situation for American imperialism today in general terms as one of irreconcilable conflicts on the international field and of unsolvable economic contradictions at home.

Imperialism has failed to smash any post-war revolutionary development through the internal strength of capitalism within countries in revolt. Military intervention by the imperialists, when limited to single countries like Korea and Indo-China, has thus far produced no more than a stalemate. Imperialism thus finds itself driven toward an all-out counter-revolutionary war, aimed primarily at the Soviet Union and China, in an attempt to crush the revolutionary mass movement now striking hammer-blows against the capitalist system. American imperialism, as the only remaining viable section

of the world capitalist class, must carry the main load of such a war.

The modern capitalist state, however, can wage full-scale war only with the support of the labor movement, or with the labor movement crushed. The capitalist state would find itself in extreme peril if it should be confronted simultaneously with all-out war abroad and serious class conflict at home. The American imperialists thus face a dilemma. Can they go to war with the expectation of preserving relative internal stability on the home front? Can they depend on labor quislings successfully duping the mass, thereby enabling the capitalist government to deal with dissenters through acts of repression? If not, can they risk, under present world conditions, provoking a showdown fight with labor before enlarging the war? Or can they go ahead with the war plans, depending on aid from the labor quislings long enough to permit preparations for a military dictatorship? Can they hope to impose fascist rule at a fast tempo? What can they do? A lot of midnight oil is being burned in Washington over this dilemma.

Some within the movement, who draw pessimistic conclusions from the present ascendancy of reaction and the ebb in the class struggle here, seem ready to concede in advance that U.S. imperialism can go a long way with its war program, trusting to improvisation to ward off any serious opposition on the home front. They seem to consider the American workers generally corrupted into conscious defenders of capitalism by their present relatively high standard of living. They seem to foresee imperialism carrying through its war program for a prolonged period with a favorable relation of class forces for it here at home.

It is true that the present relative prosperity of the American workers has acted as a conservatizing factor. Yet it is equally true that this conservatism will steadily give way to militancy as the workers experience serious cuts in their living standards. These cuts are bound to deepen as the war program unfolds and, together with the general suffering and sacrifice imposed by the war program, will lead to a profound social crisis.

Still another dilemma facing imperialism -- the ever-present danger of an economic depression -- can also serve to speed the mass radicalization. This danger can be minimized to a degree by the war program, but not entirely eliminated. In fact, a serious threat of economic crisis could impel the capitalist government to speed up the war tempo, under disadvantageous conditions both at home and abroad, in an effort to ward off the greater danger of a depression. Nor is it excluded that an unexpectedly sharp economic downturn could hit so fast that it would cause serious disruption of the present class equilibrium.

Worker militancy can also be generated by pressure from the capitalists who are eager to cash in, at the expense of labor, on their 1952 election victory. Further impetus toward worker militancy can be expected from the policies and general attitude toward labor of the present government, dominated as it is by brass hats, millionaires, career witch hunters and a large conglomeration of reactionary and ultra-reactionary capitalist politicians.

These factors that will serve objectively to generate worker militancy are heavily discounted by those who are becoming deeply infected with pessimism. They seem to hold a dark view of the prospects of any serious class struggle manifestations before the workers have experienced extremely harsh blows. They seem to take this view on the ground that America still remains a middle-class country or at least that a middle-class mentality still prevails.

This gloomy view manifests a tendency to attach undue significance to such superficial phenomena as the present relative economic prosperity and the continued political monopoly of the capitalist two-party system. Beneath these superficial phenomena lies the reality of a class polarization in the basic social structure of America that is probably the greatest there is anywhere in the world, a class polarization that has the most profound political significance.

The vast growth of monopoly capital in America has reduced the actual ruling class numerically to a relatively small gang of extremely wealthy people wielding tremendous economic power, in consequence of which they have sufficient political power to fasten a stranglehold on the government.

This growth of monopoly concentration and its fusion with the state apparatus have led to a constant decline in the specific gravity of the middle classes in industrial production. Middle-class holdings in agriculture have similarly given way on an increasing scale to the development of corporation farms, which in turn speeds the growth of a propertyless class of agricultural laborers. There has been a steady decline in rural population caused by migration of rural elements to the cities, largely to become industrial workers. In the cities, the middle classes have tended to become atomized into managers, technicians, lawyers, doctors, etc. Taken as a whole this is a picture of profound decline in the real power of the middle classes and their capacity to play an influential role on the American political scene. They can be led but they can't lead.

The only real power counterposed to that of the monopoly capitalists is the power of the workers, who have the greatest power of all, a power that is already present and is only waiting to be fully realized. The workers today constitute a decisive majority of the population. They have already demonstrated their ability through their unions to halt production, despite the combined opposition of the capitalists and their government. Once they take the road of independent political action they can soon demonstrate their ability to control production, to take the reins of government into their own hands and regulate the entire social life of the country.

Preliminary signs have appeared that the organized workers are beginning to act politically along class lines. They tend more and more to vote the way the unions officially decide. This tendency is a mark of both their already highly developed union consciousness and their ripening class political consciousness. Even though they still vote for capitalist politicians, the fact that they tend to vote more and more as a bloc is a progressive sign of class political solidarity.

This tendency of the workers to move in a body, progressive though it is, creates a problem for us at the present stage. We are

thrust into a general position of what the convention resolution called "organized" isolation. Only a social shock can radically change this situation for us in terms of the broad mass of workers. Yet it does not follow that our isolation is at all absolute because the workers presently follow the leadership of the union officialdom.

The action of the masses is determined in the long run by objective conditions and only secondarily by the policies of the leadership. Of these two controlling factors, the objective conditions will in the end be decisive because the laws of historical change are far stronger than any union bureaucrat. The masses don't always move when their leaders tell them to, nor do they always refrain from moving when their leaders tell them not to act. In the long run international and national forces determine their actions.

The policies of the union officialdom are already in gross violation of the objective needs of the workers. Here and there we already observe outbreaks of opposition to the union bureaucracy. Militant demands are raised that go beyond present official policy. As the workers' objective position becomes more difficult for them, we will find greater opportunities to win adherents to our program and party. To the extent that the union bureaucrats delay taking even partial measures to allay mass unrest, a vacuum in political leadership will be created that will give us a better chance to win new strength in the union ranks.

We do not have in mind a vacuum of leadership in the sense of the NRA period, when workers were entering the unions in such great masses that the existing bureaucracy could not begin to fill all the necessary union offices and members were swiftly elevated from the ranks into high official posts. We mean in this regard a vacuum of the objectively necessary political leadership in the unions. Our task is to fill this political void with a body of left-wing militants, armed with our program, who will become the actual leaders of more and more workers even though they hold only minor union posts or no official posts at all.

When we speak of a vacuum, we don't mean to assume the probability that we will fill this political vacuum in the total sense of stepping directly to full leadership of the mass movement at the first big scale explosion and radicalization. We mean that the greater the vacuum and the longer it exists, the better opportunity we will have in the fight for decisive leadership of the mass when the social crisis develops.

When we speak of a vacuum, we don't mean that a decline in activity on the electoral arena of opponent radical parties signifies the creation of a vacuum on the parliamentary field that will enable us to win mass political leadership through election campaigns. We mean only that to meet less opposition from other radical tendencies on the electoral arena would eliminate an element of confusion in the popular mind as to who speaks for socialism in this country. This would directly aid our work in the mass movement where the real fight for political leadership must take place.

The great body of workers who will form the basic contingent of tomorrow's mass revolutionary party are today to be found in the

unions. There will be a wide-open fight of the "left" tendencies for leadership of the workers when the mass radicalization comes.

At present Social Democrats of the Reuther type appear to have a big edge over us in the unions. However, they will not loom so formidably once the workers begin to demand action from them instead of their double-talk and fancy promises. As mass radicalization develops and the demands for action grow, we shall find ourselves in an ever-stronger position to break their grip on the official leadership of the union movement.

The Stalinists, in turn, are in a qualitative sense as isolated from the mass movement as we are. Moreover, the Stalinists no longer hold any sizeable advantage over us in the contest for influence in the mass movement as they did during the rise of the CIO. Their abominable past record is against them, as will be the new betrayals they commit. And we intend to stand in their way. We intend to fight them every inch of the way.

That is the course charted by the convention resolution which calls for a clear and consistent policy of independent struggle by our party in order to emerge as the most formidable contender for leadership of the masses in the coming radicalization.

We anticipate the probability of a Labor Party development in the first stages of the mass radicalization. However, a Labor Party in the United States would not pass through so prolonged a stage of reformist politics as the British Labor Party. In this country there should be a substantial left wing in the Labor Party from the start. We should have large influence in such a left wing if we maintain a firm orientation of primary and major attention to work in the mass movement.

A Labor Party could be expected to have a turbulent existence. It could be expected to serve essentially as a preliminary stage of the political radicalization of the workers, helping to speed their preparation for direct leadership by the revolutionary party.

We believe that the mass radicalization when it comes will probably arrive with explosive force and that its initial manifestations can be expected to appear in the unions. We recognize, however, that under conditions of the present relative prosperity, the occasional outbursts of class militancy that now occur reflect only the first waves of resentment against the present cushioned shock of the war policy and can therefore be only restricted and transitory in effect.

These circumstances warn us to watch our step today in our mass work, not to engage in reckless ventures or take careless risks. Yet we cannot avoid risk entirely because the element of risk is present to a degree in all motion and there is some definite forward motion we can maintain right now.

It is from this overall evaluation of the objective reality in this country that we, of the majority, derive our basic position on the fundamental issues of orientation now in dispute within the party. We consider it vital to the future of the party that our organization in its entirety adhere firmly to the following main line of orientation:

1. Continue our course as an independent party, based both in principle and in practice on a proletarian orientation.

2. (a) Focus our main attention on work in the mass movement.

(b) Carry on work among opponent radical tendencies as a secondary tactic subordinated to our main orientation toward the mass movement.

3. Prepare at all times for a showdown fight against the Stalinists for leadership of the working class in the coming mass radicalization.

4. Publish the paper as a fighting agitational organ aimed primarily at influencing the workers by means of our transitional demands.

5. Maintain a general program of activities as demanded of an independent party commensurate with our forces and resources.

This main line of orientation is clearly defined by the political resolution adopted at the last party convention. Yet the Cochranites give only lip service to the central line of the resolution. They focus their main attention on secondary formulations concerning subordinate tactical points. These secondary formulations, they now claim, give them the right to interpret the resolution in support of their efforts to smuggle into the party a different central line.

The main thing the Cochranites have in common, with regard to their false orientation, is a sentiment of frustration and defeatism in relation to the American working class. They are losing faith in the fighting abilities of the working class at this stage. Therefore they can have no faith in an independent role for our party in the mass movement. They manifest a desire to restrict our party to a propaganda-circle existence. They show a tendency toward a conciliatory approach to the Stalinist movement on the ground that it constitutes the only element in this country presently susceptible to revolutionary propaganda.

When we object to their false orientation, the Cochranites accuse us of "conservatism," "sectarianism," "Stalinophobia," and "capitulation to the pressure of American imperialism." They charge that we have not taken sufficiently into account the basic changes of Stalinism, especially on the world scale.

When we insist upon sticking to our independent course, the Cochranites sneer that we cannot just sit and wait, clinging to our independent party in the fatuous belief that we are foreordained by history to lead the American revolution. We know that. In fact, you don't even have to be a genius to figure that out.

We intend to work every day to build the party just as we have been doing right along. We intend to carry out our work with confidence that the working class will produce an increasing flow of vanguard elements for our party if we go out after them. Such an approach is certainly a whole lot better than preaching pessimism, contending that nothing of importance can be done in the unions in this

period, running up and down the dead-end street of Stalinism, and thus utterly disorienting the party.

When we object to the manner in which they are trying to smuggle their new orientation into the party, the Cochranites claim we are "persecuting" them. When Comrade Hansen wrote a discussion article polemicizing against their demonstrated views on Stalinism, they yelled "frameup."

The Cochranites claim that we are really opposed to the world program, but that we are afraid to say so openly. We predict they won't get away with their attempt to smuggle in an exaggerated, soft tactical line toward the Stalinists in this country under the smoke-screen of a false accusation that we who oppose them are blood-brothers of the Bleibtreu tendency. We are against the false policy of the Bleibtreu tendency which stands opposed to the application of the world program to France. We are against all such tendencies who orient toward sectarian abstentionism, including the Cochran tendency.

The only issue in the present internal dispute with respect to the world program has to do with its proper application, as dictated by the specific objective conditions, to this country. We are acting in full accord with the world program when we advocate the preservation of our independent party with our main activities directed toward the mass movement. The Cochranites, as can be demonstrated by the accumulated evidence of their sneak attack on the party, propose an orientation for this country that is in direct contradiction to the spirit and text of the world program. Their line has virtually nothing in common with objective reality in the United States.

Let us begin our examination of the evidence revealing the essence of the Cochranite policy by turning to Comrade E.R. Frank's article, "Notes On Our Discussion," published in the August 1951 Internal Bulletin. In this article, Comrade Frank stated:

"Our theoretical magazine, however, occupies a special place (our emphasis) in relation to our work, and has a special function to perform. As I conceive it, the theoretical magazine has the high duty of keeping the thinking of our cadres sharp and clear, (his emphasis) and of breaking new ground in Marxist thought and development by following and analyzing all the new problems, trends and experiences of our epoch, especially as they relate to America."

As we shall see, this commendable suggestion that we improve the quality of the magazine was intended as something more than a mere attempt to help strengthen the party's work under our established orientation. The magazine is to have a "special" place.

A few months later the Cochranites presented to the National Committee proposals for a general overhauling of the magazine to transform it from a primarily "cadre organ" into an instrument for the broad propagation of Marxist ideas. Raising of a special fund was recommended to help streamline the magazine and launch an extensive circulation and publicity effort.

About the same time another Cochranite proposal was presented for the launching of a "Marxist Propaganda Campaign." Their proposition

contained the assertion: "This work of propaganda and analysis must become a central task (our emphasis) of the party leadership in the next period. . . Leading comrades should be freed, as much as possible of other tasks, material means placed at their disposal within the financial resources of the party and subordinated to the needs of maintaining a functioning national center and press."

This proposal assigns propaganda the status of a "central" task for the party. It calls for a full-time staff to perform this task. The proposal was presented, by the way, in such a manner as to counterpose it to the Trotsky School. However, they did seem to concede some limited function for the Trotsky School as a vocational training center for writers.

Still another Cochranite trend in this general direction is their grumbling about the paper containing "too much agitation and not enough education." It is also said we must recognize to whom we "are" selling the paper and not to whom we would "like" to sell it.

We find in these examples tangible evidence of proposals and criticisms, introduced in the guise of strengthening party work under our independent party orientation, that actually serve to shift a step at a time toward a new orientation -- convert the magazine into a broad propaganda organ; finance a special department of thinkers and writers; cut out the agitation in the press; don't kid ourselves that we can sell the paper to workers just because we would "like" to -- in short, an orientation toward a propaganda group aiming at intellectual and politically-informed elements.

We come next to the Cochranite attitude with regard to union work, toward which our main attention is supposed to be directed, as was once again reaffirmed by the last party convention.

At the May 1952 Plenum of the National Committee, Comrade Cochran stated that for years yet socialism will not be the common ground on which we can meet union militants. It is clear from this remark that we and Comrade Cochran had altogether different thoughts in mind in voting to approve the political resolution which described the labor movement as being in a state of "relative quiescence." We place our emphasis on the relative character of the quiescence. He tends to stress the quiescence.

Comrade Cochran's attitude in this respect is made more explicit in his union report to the last convention. He called upon the party to nourish and tend with care those tender shoots that we possess in the labor movement. He called upon the young people to sacrifice, to stay in the plants year after year, braving the speedup and the isolation. He declared that we must enrich, make more profound and real our role as left-wing propagandists in the broad labor movement.

The question arises, what beyond his propaganda perspective did Comrade Cochran have to recommend to the comrades concerning their day-to-day activity in the unions? The only remark we can find that may deal with this question is a reference to "mechanical effort" which we shall discuss later.

Comrade Cochran's line on the unions appears in crassest form in Comrade Bartell's report to the New York membership at the beginning

of the Local's pre-convention discussion. Comrade Bartell stresses in his report that opportunities for work in the union movement have become "extremely limited." In a polemic later with Comrade Stevens, published in No. 2 of the current Internal Bulletins under the title, "The Struggle in the New York Local," Comrade Bartell asserts that there is "absolutely no evidence" to indicate "a serious trend" in the direction of a Labor Party at the moment.

Having squelched any false rumors that something can be done in the union movement and having ruled out any immediate prospects of agitation for a Labor Party, Comrade Bartell tries to burlesque the supposed activities of comrades who want to do some serious mass work. He writes on Page 12 of "The Struggle" a description of our alleged approach to mass work as follows: "the organization of left-wing groups inside the unions, mass distribution of leaflets and literature at plants, open-air meetings at factory gates, public meetings designed to attract industrial workers, consistent and extensive literature sales and distributions door-to-door in workers' districts and on the streets in Harlem, the organization of Negro masses in struggle for equal rights, etc."

One must conclude that Comrade Bartell is trying either to make fools of the comrades or to provoke them into undertaking adventurist actions, beyond the limits imposed by the present objective conditions, in order to prove that nothing can be done.

A bit of evidence appeared recently of his eagerness to show that any attempt to become active would prove adventurist. A worker comrade suggested the possibility of getting out a small paper to facilitate Labor Party propaganda among his fellow-workers. More experienced comrades explained to him that this particular approach was not practical in his situation under the present conditions. He accepted their opinion and everybody thought the matter was settled. But when Comrade Bartell got wind of it, he made a special point of denouncing the proposal as "adventurism" before a New York branch meeting.

These examples demonstrate the following Cochranite precepts concerning mass work: We won't be able to talk socialism to the workers for years yet. In the broad labor movement we can be nothing but left-wing propagandists. There is no real basis for Labor Party agitation in the unions. Activity in the unions will lead to adventurism. In short, the mass movement is pretty barren ground for us today, according to the Cochranites.

Where then can we find a milieu that will offer us opportunities for fruitful work? In their quest for an answer to this question, the Cochranites claim to have hit a real bonanza. To begin the story let us return again to Comrade E.R.Frank's "Notes On Our Discussion."

"While our program is based, and will continue to be based upon the international experiences of the working class," he wrote, "and while Trotsky was, in the immediate and most direct sense, the teacher and the leader of our movement, it does not at all follow from these two propositions that we will have much success in rallying workers to our banner by trying to straighten them out on the rights and wrongs of the Stalin-Trotsky fight, which has now receded into his-

tory -- or that it is our revolutionary duty to try to do so."

This arbitrary abstracting of the subjective from the objective is a classic piece of miseducation. Comrade Frank reduces the "Stalin-Trotsky" fight to the level of an argument as to whether or not Dempsey got a raw deal in the Tunney fight at Chicago.

Statements like this serve to obscure the fact that the "Stalin-Trotsky" fight is still going on in dead earnest, that the living followers of Trotsky are still battling the living followers of Stalin for the leadership of the working class, and that the success of the world socialist revolution hinges on the victory of Trotsky's followers.

It could be that Comrade Frank fell into this crude and misleading formulation through his overwhelming desire to prove that we are "sectarian." The results he obtained demonstrate the dangers involved in playing with important historic questions for the purpose of grinding a factional ax.

This statement by Comrade Frank helped open the way for Comrades Clarke and Bartell to indulge their well-known flair for impressionistic and experimental politics, this time with regard to the Stalinists.

Comrade Clarke proposed at the May 1952 Plenum that in dealing with the Stalinists we should first establish points of agreement with them before proceeding to points of difference. Subsequent experience has shown that he intended this policy to apply not merely to comrades working directly within Stalinist organizations, but even to our own paper, disregarding the need to have the paper back up comrades contesting with the Stalinists for influence and recruits in the mass movement.

Comrade Clarke moved a step further toward reorienting the party in the direction of the Stalinist movement in his circular as National Campaign Manager on "Our Aims in the 1952 Election Campaign." In this circular he recommended that the comrades work "primarily by a pinpointing of campaign activities aimed at contacts and prospective contacts and at the politically most advanced elements who are most susceptible to our propaganda." In referring to the "elements who are most susceptible to our propaganda," he had in mind primarily the Stalinist movement but he wasn't yet ready to say so openly.

In objecting heatedly at a Political Committee meeting to the action of a comrade who designated the Huberman tendency in the Stalinist periphery as an enemy, Comrade Clarke said: "Whether in the final analysis Huberman is an enemy or not is an academic question, just as the question would be academic in discussing Bevan or John L. Lewis."

It is indeed striking that an experienced Marxist should be so careless in his thinking as to sweepingly equate politically a Huberman, who represents at most a thin layer of Stalinoid petty-bourgeois intellectuals, with Bevan or Lewis, who have powerful mass followings in the working class. There can be only one explanation for this far-fetched comparison. Comrade Clarke has been searching so hard for a

radicalized milieu to enter that he is beginning to see mirages.

Comrade Bartell has been running neck-and-neck with Comrade Clarke in the quest for a radicalized milieu, and like Comrade Clarke, he claims to have found a red-hot proposition. In his recent report to the New York membership, Comrade Bartell told the comrades to "maintain contact with the rest of the left-wing political world and to propagate our ideas to people who are equipped to understand them and are willing to listen." He gave as the address of these people "equipped to understand" our ideas, the Stalinist movement, which he announced could be said to be "rife with 'Trotskyist conciliationism.'"

This orientation of the Cochranites toward the Stalinist movement has led them into an attempt to soften and minimize our criticism of the Stalinists in the press. They seem to wince when the Stalinists are forthrightly attacked. They are sharply critical of articles in which we differentiate ourselves from the Stalinists.

Adding up these examples, we find the following pattern of Cochranite line: Aim our activities at people who are equipped to understand our ideas. These people are to be found in the Stalinist movement which can be said to be rife with "Trotskyist conciliationism." Don't be sharply critical of the Stalinists. Establish points of agreement with them before proceeding to points of difference.

Their line represents an attempt to shift the main axis of party work away from the mass movement and toward the Stalinist movement. Since this line implies a clash with our established orientation as an independent party, let us see what has been happening in that regard.

At the last party convention, Comrade Cochran delivered a trade union report which he obviously intended to be in large measure a counter-report to Comrade Cannon's political report. In his report, Comrade Cochran stated: "We cannot just shout promiscuously at the general mass, for that would be like hurling seeds into a storm, hoping that by good fortune a few would find their way into productive soil."

This statement was aimed against our campaign activities as an independent party. It was made at the very moment when the convention was mobilizing the party for a maximum effort in the 1952 presidential campaign. Hesitating to openly attack the campaign, he just projected his sour note into the convention activities and let it go at that.

By December of last year Comrade Cochran was ready to be a bit more specific about his opposition to party election campaigns, but not entirely specific, really not much more forthright than he was at the convention on the subject.

The Los Angeles Local had requested the approval of the Political Committee to conduct a mayoralty campaign. Comrade Cochran introduced a motion in the Committee to the effect that he thought it incorrect for the branch to enter the campaign in the light of the party's financial difficulties. His motion added that he believed it wise as soon as feasible to "raise a special fund to invigorate our propaganda work around the magazine and allied work, with a full-time man to carry through that project."

Comrade Cochran's motion counterposed to the election campaign, which he wanted called off, a proposition based on his propaganda-group perspective. This action on his part constituted a thinly-veiled attempt to shift the party's position without first openly presenting a fundamental political justification for the change in line. It was in effect an attempt to freeze all external activities of the party involving the expenditure of any money until a special fund had been raised for his pet propaganda project.

So obsessed have the Cochranites become with their abstentionist propaganda orientation that they find it increasingly difficult to attach importance to any of our activities as an independent party. Take, for example, their attitude toward sub work for the paper. In his report to the New York membership, Comrade Bartell advised the comrades not to indulge in door-to-door sub campaigns "aimed only at obtaining the maximum number of subs." He asserted that the guiding line should be that sub work is an important part of contact work and "not an end in itself." That is to say, selling a sub won't make a contact, you must make a contact in order to sell a sub. Speaking in the same vein, he also discouraged mass street sales of the paper as a general practice.

During our preparations for the current national sub campaign Comrade Bartell interposed an objection to the publishing of a campaign scoreboard in the paper. He seemed to think a scoreboard would put too much pressure on comrades to go after subs as "an end in itself."

Comrade Clarke showed his opinion of independent party activities in writing a year-end review of events in 1952 for the paper. He mentioned Stalinist civil liberties cases but he didn't make a single reference to the Kutcher case or to the Trucks Law fight. Yet we have produced some significant results in both these cases.

The Cochranites claim that the present change in the public attitude of the Stalinists toward our democratic rights is a sign of their "Trotskyist conciliationism." Not at all. It was our impressive work in cases like the Kutcher and Trucks Law fights that caused the change.

The CP ranks and periphery were compelled to pay attention to us; the CP officials were prevented from disposing of us by slanders; and they had to accord us recognition in an effort to woo support for their own cases from liberals who were enough impressed by our work to demand that our fights receive support.

These examples of Cochranite policy illustrate their attempts to change the established party orientation through sneak attacks, such as: An attempt to shift the presidential campaign into propaganda-circle channels, especially after the main series of radio-TV broadcasts were completed. Demanding their "propaganda offensive" have priority over election campaigns. An effort, in effect, to freeze external party activities until a special fund is raised for propaganda work. Attempts to straightjacket within the framework of their propaganda-circle perspective all efforts to expand circulation of the paper. A growing disinterest in party campaign actions against the witch hunt.

From all the examples previously cited to disclose the true nature of Cochranite policy, we are now in a position to present a broad description of their general line. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to examine yet another covering device they have employed in an effort to conceal their real aims.

The Cochranites argue that their policy, as revealed most fully by Comrades Clarke and Bartell, is intended for New York only and has no implications for party orientation in general. They contend that people outside the New York Local should keep out of the argument over policy, including members of the Political Committee who don't happen to agree with the Clarke-Bartell line. However, Comrade Bartell, in his eagerness to prove the wisdom of his policy by a study in contrasts, has given their game away.

At Page 12 of "The Struggle" he writes that it has been "precisely those branches in the purely industrial factory towns that have been the hardest hit in these years" and that "a number of these dried up and disappeared altogether while others barely survive in a stagnant condition." These branches, he goes on to say, "only wish they had some Compass Clubs or Monthly Review forums or universities in their cities."

He then declaims against "our super-proletarian critics" who propose that "we unnecessarily and artificially impose on ourselves the conditions of Pittsburgh, Akron or Flint." "That, in my opinion," he adds, "is a sure road to ruin."

We hear of a young Cochranite in a midwest town, no doubt inspired by Comrade Bartell's polemic against Comrade Stevens, who is bemoaning the fact that there are no colleges and no CP periphery in town and that the only work there is to do locally is to contact industrial workers.

These examples should make it clear to all that the dispute in New York is not a dispute over local issues. What may not be so clear to some comrades is that Comrade Bartell's line in New York was never intended as a local line but as a national policy. An effort was made to smuggle it unchallenged into the New York Local, under the guise of strictly local policy, in order to establish a bridgehead for a further projection of the line throughout the country.

This business of smuggling in their line a step at a time, without any open declaration of their intentions before the party, without giving a basic political motivation for their policy, without submitting it for open discussion and decision in the party, and with cries that they are being "persecuted" everytime somebody raises a question about their policy -- this unprincipled method, which is in complete violation of the whole party tradition, has become stamped upon the Cochranite faction as their hallmark.

Through this unprincipled method the Cochranites are attempting to smuggle into the party a change in basic orientation that can be summarized as follows:

1. Adopt the perspective of a propaganda group.

2. (a) Focus our main attention on work in and around the Stalinist movement.

(b) Confine our function in the mass movement to that of left-wing propagandists.

3. Take a conciliatory attitude in our approach to the Stalinist movement.

4. Transform the paper into a propaganda organ aimed primarily at influencing intellectual and politically-informed elements.

5. Confine party activities within the framework of a propaganda-group perspective.

The Cochranites will learn that they can't maneuver the party into an acceptance of their false line by attempting to smuggle it in one piece at a time. They will learn that the party is not simply a tractable instrument in the hands of the leaders. It is a conscious, self-acting instrument. The membership will demand that the Cochranites disclose their full tactical line and show how it squares with our strategic orientation.

Our strategic orientation is to build an independent mass revolutionary party. All our tactical maneuvers must be subordinated to and coordinated around this strategic aim. To build a mass party our primary tactical orientation must at all times be toward the mainstream of the organized working class.

The Cochranites, in their futile attempts to get around the present difficult objective situation, have sought to maneuver into an orientation toward the Stalinists.

Should the Stalinists happen to predominate in the organized working class, as they do in France for example, it would be necessary to adopt a tactic of penetration into the Stalinist movement to facilitate the task of getting into the mainstream of the workers' movement.

In the United States, however, the Stalinists are isolated from the mass movement. To orient toward the Stalinist movement under these conditions would mean to turn our backs on the mainstream of the organized working class. Opponents work among Stalinists in this country must therefore be strictly subordinated to our main orientation toward the unions, and it must be subordinated not only in words but also in practice.

The truth is that the Cochranites commit a fraud when they accuse the majority of "sectarianism" because we oppose their false orientation toward the Stalinists. The "clear and present" sectarian danger to our party is not in underestimating the importance of the Stalinist circles but in neglect of the living labor movement where the masses of workers are to be found.

We do not minimize the importance of opponents work against the Stalinists. We are fully in favor of opponents work in Stalinist organizations, to whittle down their strength and increase our own forces at their expense, and to loosen their hold in the mass movement

wherever we can. But we won't win over any Stalinists, or beat them in the contest for influence and recruits, by being soft or by slurring over questions of program. In our work in the mass movement we must appear as rivals of the Stalinists, not as people having friendly differences with them.

We recognize that the Kremlin bureaucracy, in defending its privileges and power against imperialism, sometimes finds it necessary to go along with a powerful revolutionary mass movement so long as it remains essentially subordinate to Moscow's basic aims and general control. However, we concede no historic revolutionary mission to Stalinism. On the contrary, we warn that counter-revolutionary Stalinism will yet commit some of its most abominable betrayals.

We have a current example of Stalinist betrayal right here in the United States in a draft resolution recently published by the National Committee of the Communist Party. This resolution contains the following passages: "It was incorrect to have favored the departure of the Wallace forces without masses from the Democratic Party. . . . The Progressive Party cannot be a major vehicle in the emergence of a mass people's party led by labor. . . . We must exert our maximum influence toward bringing into being a coalition of forces which will work toward the development of forms through which labor can exert a unified class influence on the national political life and on the Democratic Party. . . . forcing on sectors of the Democratic Party to the maximum extent and wherever possible a genuine program of struggle against the pro-war and pro-fascist course and measures of the Republican Administration. The formation of blocs of legislators in Congress and state legislatures that will fight for this program."

This announcement of revised Stalinist policy means much more than a declaration of their intention to scuttle the Progressive Party. It means they are going to join the union bureaucrats' game of playing footsie with Democratic and Republican liberals against the "main enemy" of right-wing Republicans and Democrats. It means Stalinist demagogy, parallel to Reuther's demagogy, serving to disorient the workers from taking the road of independent political action.

Any doubt about what the CP leaders mean by their resolution can be cleared up by the following report of a debate over the Labor Party in a Flint UAW local. A left-wing militant was pushing from the floor for adoption by the local of a resolution in favor of a Labor Party. The chairman and the leader of the biggest caucus in the local had indicated that they feel strongly about labor putting up all the money and work while liberals run the show in the Democratic Party. They did what they could to help get the resolution adopted. The leader of the Stalinist fraction in the local offered an amendment to the proposal that "the Labor Party shall feel free to endorse liberal Democrats like Williams and Moody."

We can't take a conciliatory attitude toward this kind of class treachery on the part of the Stalinists.

The Cochranites, by the way, insist that there is no evidence to indicate a serious trend in the direction of a Labor Party at present.

Apart from such evidence to the contrary as that manifested by the Flint episode, they forget something Comrade Trotsky stressed.

It is dangerous to base ourselves on secondary oscillations of disinterest in questions of this kind, Trotsky often explained. As the need for a major movement in the direction of a Labor Party becomes more imperative, he pointed out, objective necessity will find its subjective expression. We must stress that necessity in language the workers will understand. If we were to adopt instead the Cochranite propaganda group orientation and begin talking to political high-brows who are "equipped to understand us," we will be talking over the heads of the mass of the workers.

The Cochranites also contend that you can't talk to the workers about the war. Yet a Milwaukee comrade recently sent in a report of developments at an educational conference of his local that indicate otherwise. He reported the following:

"I started a conversation with several workers about a Labor Party. . . there were other discussions about shop grievances going on. These were stopped by the workers themselves by such remarks as 'Let's forget about these petty problems and listen to the discussion.'

"From then on the group of workers numbering 40 to 50 men and women concentrated on political discussion. The Korean war was discussed and condemned in no uncertain terms. . . The American foreign policy toward the colonial nations was condemned. . .

"The people who made up the group were very interesting. There were about a dozen colored workers and the rest were young ex-GI's or even younger workers. . . I cannot believe that these young workers exist only at my plant. They too are subject to the influences of their family, friends and social groups in which they mingle. Certainly some of their ideas must come from influences outside of themselves.

"It is the task of the party to fill this vacuum in the best possible manner. At my plant we have a lot of opportunity and a lot of hard work."

This is, of course, the experience of only one worker in one plant. But we think he is right when he says, "I cannot believe that these young workers exist only at my plant."

Comrade Bartell, on the other hand, says that we must get together with the Stalinists to oppose the war because we are part of the same anti-war camp and because the Stalinists are the only other current of conscious opposition to the war. To justify his line he even tends to slur over the sharp differences between the Stalinist peace policy and our class anti-war position. He also glosses over the fact that the Stalinist peace front in this country actually amounts to very little.

In our opinion, the most vital place to carry on anti-war agitation and participate in anti-war actions is in the unions where the masses are. We have always envisaged the struggle against war as an

extension of the class struggle onto a higher plane. The fight against the war can really be effective only to the extent that the workers adopt class-struggle policies in defending their interests. If we are to help this process along we must be in the unions. That means the party must become re-inspired with our proletarian orientation, which is precisely what is being challenged by the Cochranites.

We freely admit that our own neglect of union work, our failure to give union comrades the full attention they deserve, has made it easier for the Cochranites to de-emphasize work in this vital field. This condition must be corrected, as must the disorientation caused by Comrade Cochran's pessimistic trade union report at the last convention. Before we take up the major omission in his report, let us first examine an important error it contains.

A big section of the report was devoted to a review of our tactics with regard to power blocs in the unions. In speaking of our blocs with the so-called "progressive" bureaucracy in the early years of the 1940's, he states: "The alliance afforded us more elbow room in the unions, strengthened our ability to recruit, and provided us with a greater audience for our ideas and program. And that is its sufficient justification."

Comrade Cochran's statement is not accurate. We have been excessively preoccupied with power blocs in the unions to the point that our policy has in reality tended to impair recruitment. We can't afford to take the attitude now that since such blocs are not feasible today there is no problem to discuss. Unless we analyze the element of error in our past policy, we can fall into the same error again. In taking up this question we are not looking for a scapegoat. The leadership of the party is collectively responsible for this mistake. But the mistake must be recognized and corrected.

There has been a tendency in the past to push too far in contests for union leadership from too narrow a base of our own in the ranks. This tendency has often led us into excessive preoccupation with bloc politics in the unions. Comrades have often tended to get too "practical" in developing contacts, paying too much attention to union politicians, who are seldom party material, and too little attention to workers who stand out as militant fighters and could therefore be attracted to our program and party.

This tendency has sometimes given rise, especially where comrades were elected to union office or played a key role in a power caucus, to a policy of excessive caution in carrying out political activity. On occasion there has been an inclination to reduce our program below the level imposed by objective conditions for the sole purpose of getting deeper into union politics through power blocs. Unusual openings to present our program with special force when some big event occurred have sometimes been missed for the same reason. These unnecessary omissions of political effort have helped to impair our ability to recruit in the unions. In the days to come there will be greater need than ever for us to be alert to this problem.

In times past we have had experiences where comrades appeared to be making remarkable headway in their union work through participation in bloc politics. But when such blocs could no longer be held

together, or when they became politically untenable, we found ourselves high and dry with little to show for the entire effort except the experience that the comrades themselves gained.

We don't mean to imply that we cannot under any circumstances have anything to do with bloc politics in the unions. We must take a practical attitude toward this question in internal union struggles. It is sometimes profitable for us to intervene in a limited way, supporting this or that candidate or slate of candidates to help our cause. With respect to union posts for ourselves, we will advance or withdraw according to the climate. Under favorable objective conditions we can go a limited distance in a coalition around an acceptable program. But even then we shouldn't get out beyond our base in the ranks to the point that we become captives of the coalition.

Above all, it is vital that we entertain no idea that we can either be active or do virtually nothing in the unions according to whether we can fight for posts. Leadership of the masses in the real sense is gained not by title and office, but by energy, ability, confidence in ourselves and in the workers, consistent participation in the workers' struggles, and constant effort to build a solid base of class conscious workers in the ranks on the foundation of our program. We should work always in the unions with a view toward recruitment into the party, to build our own party fractions around which a left-wing can be polarized.

We called attention in a previous connection to Comrade Cochran's advice in his trade union report that the comrades play a role as left-wing propagandists in the broad labor movement. We mentioned that the only remark we could find in his report that may deal with the question of day-to-day activity in the unions was a reference to "mechanical effort." Here is the full quotation:

"In the present period our trade union forces are often augmented by mere mechanical effort. But to really maintain and integrate trade union groups in these difficult days, the mechanical aspect is the least of the problem."

What Comrade Cochran dismisses by his reference to "mechanical effort" is obviously the daily activity in the unions which is the essence of all mass work. He seems to think that the most important need for our work in the unions is to rush through his project to organize a committee of high-powered thinkers and writers. However, the comrades who carry on the foot-slogging day-to-day work in the unions know their work is important. They like to have their leaders think it is important too. They want their leaders to give some attention, some thought and some aid to them in the ever so important daily grind out of which our union cadres are being forged today. They even like to have their leaders help them do a few chores now and then, and they do have chores because there are things that can be done in the unions.

It is true that the workers are at present in a state of relative quiescence, but the labor movement has not been put in mothballs, as the 1952 strike statistics will testify. The workers are not tired or defeated, nor are they universally contented with present conditions. They only lack a class-struggle program and leadership to

help them defend their interests. The efforts of our comrades in their day-to-day relations with the workers, going through with them the many small, often indirect, but yet important manifestations of class struggle that occur in an almost routine way, will enable the comrades to win the workers' respect and confidence. If political discussions based on our transitional program are carefully woven into this activity with reasonable skill, the comrades will find it possible to recruit at a modest rate in the unions.

One of our comrades recently made the following comment about a factory worker who was about to join the party: "Some may say she is an exceptional person; she's not. She's the average semi-conscious union militant. What has made a qualitative difference is personal contact for 18 months. If not for that, she would be basically a fighter, but a disillusioned one, because of the union situation."

In Los Angeles a slate of left-wing militants recently led the field in the election of delegates to a union convention. They drew their main support from a new strata of young militants and from Negro, Mexican and other minority workers. They had been consciously directing their attention toward this section of the workers for some time.

The young worker militants can in many instances be expected to show a lively interest in our program if we pay proper attention to them. Their services are invaluable in putting juice in the unions, the fractions and the party. They will also be most helpful in putting class-struggle shoes on young intellectuals.

Negroes and other minority elements already constitute a significant component of the industrial working class and they are steadily gaining in numbers in industry. Because of the racial discrimination and double exploitation they must undergo as second-class citizens, they tend to be above-average in their militancy. What they need most is a class-conscious outlook. They need a proper understanding of the inter-relationship of their struggle as a minority people and the struggle of the working class.

As a worker, regardless of color, the Negro worker must take his place in the vanguard of the daily struggle to win the maximum gains possible under capitalism for the workers. As a Negro, he must take the leadership of his people to win the maximum gains possible under capitalism in the daily struggle for equality. As a Negro and a worker, he must play a key role in uniting the Negro people and the entire working class in the fight to abolish the capitalist system and create a socialist society.

In their fight against discrimination, the Negro workers, spearheaded by those in basic industry, should take over the leadership now largely held by the Talented Tenth. The fight for equality, which they begin in the plants, should be carried under their leadership into the communities and onward throughout the nation.

Demands for equality right now for all Negroes should replace the old program of gradualism with its token gestures of equality to "representative" Negroes. Mass action should supercede legal and parliamentary maneuvering as the principal weapon in the fight against discrimination.

Because of the important position the Negro workers now hold in industry, most union officials find it necessary to give at least lip-service to the demands of the colored workers for equality, whether these officials believe in it or not. They can therefore be compelled to respond in a certain degree to pressure for action in the fight against discrimination in the plant. With a carefully worked out approach, taken in collaboration with white militants, the Negro workers should be able to compel these union officials to go a certain distance in helping to throw the weight of the union behind the struggle for equality in the communities. These undertakings should help both the struggle for equality and the development of a greater degree of militancy in the unions.

To the extent that we may be able to aid Negro and other minority workers in shaping and developing an action program along these lines, seeking to acquaint them with our political program in the process, we will be in a better position to win recruits to our party.

Our work in the mass movement can be made more effective if we are able to get out a paper better suited to the needs of mass work. It is not necessary to have literary supermen to improve the paper. However, it would be most helpful if we could find a way for the editorial staff to get more cooperation from the party leadership, including the leaders in the field.

We need to correct a mistake that has crept into the paper of tending to write for a highly political audience and one moreover under heavy Stalinist influence. We need more attention to issues that preoccupy the workers in their present state of consciousness, like the speedup, prices, taxes, housing, the Korean war. We need to hammer home the Labor Party slogan with all the arguments we can marshal. We must be fully alive to the grievances and struggles of the workers.

We used to get out a fine socialist paper for workers. To do so again, we must find the necessary ties with the workers' thinking. We must establish contact at the workers' present level of consciousness, help them generalize their grievances and demands at a higher political plane. If we let the situation drift any longer we will get more and more on the wrong track under pressure of the Cochranite opposition. Our course must be corrected, not by new propaganda cure-alls of the Cochranite variety, but by getting deeper into the union movement and by reflecting the life and problems of the mass movement more adequately in our press.

The party educational system likewise needs some overhauling, but not through the Cochranite propaganda-circle touch. We must not allow ourselves to be jockeyed into an abandonment of the Trotsky School. This valuable institution should be preserved; it should remain a party university; it should not be transformed into a vocational training center. The Trotsky School needs, however, to be better organized, its schedule of study courses more thoroughly planned and systematized.

Still more is needed than the preservation and improvement of the Trotsky School. Our entire educational system throughout the party needs a thorough going over. There is too little over-all

planning and too little general supervision in our educational work. The branches are left too much on their own resources. They don't get enough help from the party center. These problems can't be solved overnight, but we must get to work on them as soon as we can and keep at it from then on, because education is a never-ending process.

Yet another shortcoming we need to correct is the tendency toward local autonomy that has developed in main lines of branch orientation. Divergences in branch perspectives have appeared that are not fully explained by variations in local conditions. The main lines of divergence appear about as follows: Different approaches as to the extent to which mass work should be supplemented with other party-building activities. Wide variations in branch participation in national party campaign actions. Major differences of emphasis on opponents work. In a somewhat similar connection we should add that an increasing lack of cooperation and coordination has become manifest in the functioning of national union fractions.

These divergences in branch orientation, together with the trend toward a breakdown in fraction coordination, tend to impair the party's capacity to function as a homogeneous national unit. The method whereby the Cochranites have sought to smuggle their line into the party has contributed to this divergence. But that is not the only cause of this trouble. There has been an element of general drift involved for which the party center must assume primary responsibility.

Lenin taught us that we can't have a real united movement if the center is isolated too much from practical local work, or if the center fails to keep the branches fully informed of the general party plans and experiences. The center must know what is being done locally, who has learned or is learning to do party tasks well, who is going off the beam and why. It must know the internal conditions, activities and perspectives of all the branches. In general, the center must establish closer touch with the branches to get a more accurate feel of the mood, thinking and activities of the comrades in each locality.

The branches give voice to this need through their demands for more tours by national leaders. A real effort should be made to fulfill this request, because the tours help a great deal to establish closer contact between the center and the field, and to provide direct help for the field comrades from the party leadership. With proper planning, it is important to note, our experience has shown that such tours can be made virtually self-financing.

Another task to which the party must give its attention is the need to improve collective leadership throughout the party. It is not too good for party units to find themselves heavily dependent upon a single leader. These circumstances sometimes tend to blunt individual initiative and thereby to a certain extent restrict progress in the party units. We need to establish collective leadership everywhere in the party and develop a working pattern suitable for their cooperative effort according to the nature of their tasks. This concept of collectivity must also include a spirit of close team work between leadership and membership.

Numerous problems have arisen in our party work out of the complex situations that can easily develop in relations between the branch membership, the branch executive committee and the branch organizer. The national leadership must help the branches work out adequate solutions for these problems.

We have sought in this article to sketch the objective difficulties before the party and the course of action we, of the majority, believe it necessary to follow under present conditions. Our first task, however, is to ward off the Cochranite attack on the party's basic orientation. That means the entire membership must become aware of the profound issues at stake in the present internal dispute and take a position.

For our part, we shall fight to defend our course as an independent party with our main attention focused on work in the mass movement. We shall fight any attempt to sidetrack the party through a false orientation.

New York
March 19, 1953

AN OPEN LETTER TO COMRADE BARTELL

By Cooper

Akron
Feb. 27, 1953

Dear Mike:

In answer to your letter of Feb. 21st asking my opinion of the internal struggle that is unfolding, I must state that I am in complete disagreement with the course you are pursuing. I cannot see anything but an incorrect basis for the faction you are now forming. You are in search of differences on the international program and you may end up forgetting about the dangers of Stalinist rule, etc. Cannon, you infer, doesn't appreciate the F.I. approach. Are you saying that Cannon does not stand shoulder to shoulder with the 4th in defending the colonial revolution, the Chinese and Yugoslavian revolutions?

Your proposition in the New York bulletins that we should propagandize those "who will give us a hearing" can be supported in the abstract. When we get down to cases however, you tend, it seems to me, to think that selling at schools, union meetings, and even non-party forums are a bit of a waste of time. Within these groups (and you concede, even in the shops) there's the fully round and firm individual who can "understand" our program. What are we preaching, Einstein's theory?

You infer that there are 12 wise men in the world capable of understanding the Marxist program, but you also warn that we must not expect them to join the Marxist party. Ah, there's the rub, so why seek, above all else, to rub elbows with this gentry. If the beautiful rich girl is so elusive in the final analysis, marry in your class. Look for the poor but honest working girl. She'll "understand" you.

Under fire of debate you retreat somewhat from your unrealistic major perspective. Also, it must be obvious to you that your orientation could only occupy the time of a minimum of comrades. There are not that many Compass clubs consisting of the alleged "politicallized" elite to go around.

So you must turn to the working class and student youth in general. But you're dragging your feet and carrying the old microscope. Was it really so difficult for example, to see the East Side from 116 and sell a few hundred papers, door to door, dealing with the frame-up trials, to Jewish workers there. (I was in NY before Christmas and was told that a sale to Jewish workers was attempted, "with poor results." Unfortunately, the comrade in charge picked an orthodox Jewish meeting as a place to attempt sales. Certainly you would have sold, door to door, and many workers and youth would have purchased the paper. My own experience in Akron testifies to that.)

Now you propose in the bulletins, an ALP orientation as an allegedly major derivative flowing from your line. Whether you recognize it or not, your ALP perspective would afford us the opportunity to get "close" to the Marcantonio rank and file who will be in conflict with the Stalinist liquidationists (if the political picture develops along the lines indicated). This means that the Stalinist rank and file will be our direct enemy in the same sense as they were in the NMU (when we fought their leadership's bureaucratic rule of the union). Our recruits and contacts came from our allies in the anti-Stalinist caucus in the NMU. As in the latter experience, the winning of sympathetic response from a Stalinist rank and file would be the exception, in the agitational campaign you outline for ALP work.

Or do you think that the Stalinist rank and filers are going to give you a "hearing" as against their own CP leadership, on a tactical question such as this?

You seek a posse in your "Struggle" bulletin, to bring in the culprit who claims we can build a Trotskyist Negro cadre today. At the same time you become deeply indignant at any assumption by your opponents that you are burying Negro work. Although there are no Negro comrades available in New York, you inform us, to carry on propaganda in Harlem, one can rightfully ask, is it possible to instill a fire and desire in some white comrades to do consistent work up there?

In your debates, you are completely discouraging New Yorkers from going into the horrible "factory towns," where there are few non-party forums, etc. Public forums, meetings, student gatherings, etc., are valuable places for us to distribute propaganda, but it is totally unrealistic to view such opportunities or lack of them as a criteria for judging the value of party work in any locality. (As it is there are plenty of union meetings out here. We lack forces to cover most of them.) You say that the way of Flint, Akron and Pittsburgh is "the sure road to ruin." (p. 13, "Struggle") It is startling to see how easily you write off the basic proletarian centers, the lengthy tradition of the party in Flint. The "factory towns" can get along without forum distribution spots if need be, in the same manner as a fat man can get along without cake. So we look for people in the shops, door to door, place the paper in the library.

You give a totally one-sided meaning to the term "advanced political" (that is once you get away, as you were forced to do in the NY debate from the pure Stalinist type). Can an average worker be "political"? Do you really believe that the fellow sitting next to you in a Compass club understands politics much better than the Chevrolet unionist who has gone through the sit-down strikes in struggle against the capitalist state? Also, the auto unionist has, in many instances, been aware of internal disputes in the union about labor party and other political questions. Are you looking for a "finished" article? You may find a "reject."

Although Akron workers haven't experienced as much political discussion in the unions as have the Detroit or Flint workers, they have gone through some of the fiercest class battles. Militant strike struggle is second nature to many of them. Certain class criteria

are so much the norm of the workers here that in comparison, it would put the Stalinist co-op house dwellers in NY to shame. Rich and poor, capitalist vs. workers, unionism vs. corporation are a,b,c, dividing lines for the workers here and they have no social desire to get out of their class. Their unchecked will to struggle in the recent past must indelibly remain in our memories as a complete verification of how far "advanced" they actually are. True, they passively accept the capitalist state's national unity, war program, but it is only their lack of familiarity with our program that aids our relative isolation. Those people whom I get to know in the shop, for example, and whom I agitate, are invariably quickly receptive to our analysis.

You speak of reaching people who can understand our whole program. (p. 6, "Struggle" document.) You lack comprehension of the need of cementing an alliance with workers who agree or most fully understand some important parts of our program. Workers of the type I describe above find substantial agreement with the Militant on "taxes," "Korea," etc., and even if they "disagree" with other sections of the paper (I'm not referring to white chauvinist "disagreements," for this is not a serious ailment in the Akron working class), they'll still consider it a class paper.

Because they are dominated by factories instead of non-party forums, you say that Flint and Akron are "stagnant." Would the Flint branch have been better off if new comrades had not been colonized there two years ago? This manner of estimating progress or retrogression escapes you.

In Akron, the responsible leadership was given an important assignment elsewhere a year and a half ago. Had there been no comrades to replace them, the work in Akron would, in all likelihood, have become dormant. From dormancy to "stagnation" is an advance, not a retreat, Mike.

Just how "stagnant" have we been in Akron, for example. Twenty articles in the Militant from Akron in 20 months, excluding Militant sales reports; public meetings and a good propaganda campaign in the national elections; a number of new subs and maintenance of old ones; one recruit from the election campaign, a retired bricklayer; a few new solid political friends and a core of old friends. These are some of the tasks even our small branch has accomplished.

I happen to be the only one in a shop out of a half-dozen comrades. (One comrade is out of town most of the time.) Most any week I take a half-dozen to a dozen papers into the shop, and give them out to individuals. I have a job that allows me to see many different workers and I shift distributions, weed out uninterested people, etc. The above views about receptivity to the paper are based on these experiences. I also have obtained 3 subs in the shop, of which one has already renewed.

In factory towns like Akron the workers remain in the same industry all their days. The people we influence over a period of time will provide us with powerful leverage for swift party advance in the future, in this vital industry. We need a concentration here and similar "factory towns."

What I have to say about proletarianization in the field applies of course in many respects to the question of proletarianization in New York proper. The two questions are intertwined for New York has traditionally provided a number of people for the field. You cannot rest on your laurels of having aided proletarianization in the past in New York and the field, and disparage the national proletarianization policy, i.e., the "factory towns" today.

I hope that we can see eye to eye on a number of these questions again. You know, of course, that Kay and I hold you in high esteem as an outstanding comrade who has done yeoman's work for the party and trained, developed and influenced many comrades in the ranks. Certainly your dynamic leadership has been an inspiration to us.

In view of the fact that Farrell also asked me, in the same vein as you, for my views of the dispute, I am sending him a copy of this letter.

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REMARKS MADE ON FLOOR OF DOWNTOWN BRANCH MEETING - JAN. 29

by Joyce Cowley

New York

Because of illness, I missed a good deal of this discussion in its early stages. When I did get to the second membership meeting on Sunday afternoon, it was something of a shock. First, I was surprised to hear so many of the comrades supporting Bartell's resolution insist that there are no real differences, at least as far as perspectives for New York City are concerned. Milton in particular referred to the basic question of orientation as a "phony" issue. Coming in cold as I did, in the middle of the discussion, the differences seemed pretty glaring.

By now, of course, everyone admits that there are differences on Stalinism. The statements made by a number of comrades were startling to me. Either I have completely misunderstood the line of the party on Stalinism for the last three years, or these comrades are actually taking a new position although they refuse to admit it is new. I thought it was the masses in Yugoslavia and China who were revolutionary and that they pushed the Communist parties into revolutionary action. Since Stalinism itself is counter-revolutionary, to the extent that the Communist parties in these countries do engage in revolutionary action, they cease to be Stalinist, develop independently and become centrist parties capable of evolving in several different directions - toward a genuine revolutionary party, back to the Kremlin or toward social democracy and capitulation of Western imperialism.

I thought this was the position of the party but a number of comrades, to my amazement, characterized Stalinism itself as revolutionary. Milton gave voice to an even more extraordinary formulation when he said that the Stalinists are now in a position where they cannot betray. I'm in complete disagreement and I don't believe this is the position of the party. Obviously, such a fundamental difference on Stalinism will result in a difference in the basic orientation of party work - including the work of the New York Local.

The second jolt I got was from the complete pessimism of so many comrades regarding the basic task of reaching and recruiting workers. Everyone gave lip service to a trade union orientation but it ran like this -- of course, we agree that we should work in the unions but we can't do anything there. We can't talk to workers - they're very reactionary. We have to talk to people who can understand us. Even in the unions, the only people we can talk to are politicals. Milton said that so far no one has challenged the statement that regardless of where we work, the only people we can talk to at the present time are politicals. I want to challenge it right now.

If we don't know how to talk to the workers we'd better learn fast or go out of business as a revolutionary party. Everyone agrees that's it's difficult. Everyone agrees that it's going to get worse before it gets better. If we can't do anything now, we won't even exist when things get worse.

For some time I've been uneasy about what looked like pessi-

mism and inertia on the part of a number of people in the city leadership. I didn't realize until the discussion got under way that this was not accidental but the result of a different point of view, of moving or wanting to move in a different direction. For instance, when I discussed some ideas I had about propaganda work with youth, one comrade told me that I had the happy illusion that I was talking to the masses while actually we are not talking to the masses and we can't recruit youth. I was stunned for a moment, then I said: "What are we going to do, close up shop?" He explained that he didn't mean that we couldn't recruit any youth - but just a few young people, special types - politicals, etc.

Last year's discussion on the forum is an example of this pessimistic attitude. Comrade Bartell is taking credit for the success of the forums but I remember quite clearly that the Downtown branch stuffed them down his throat. Most of you can recall the arguments --- we won't be able to get anyone to do the work involved in running a forum, we won't be able to get speakers every week, we may have a good attendance for a few weeks, then it will peter out, etc.

About a year ago when I suggested starting a Militant route in the ___ project I got a similarly cool reaction. I was told any number of times that if I wanted to visit contacts there were plenty of names in the files upstairs, that if I started the project work I would never keep it up and in any case I was not likely to get results from it.

I didn't want to visit contacts at random in scattered neighborhoods throughout the city. I wanted to concentrate on a few people in a working class neighborhood - fairly close to headquarters so that there would be a chance of getting contacts to meetings. Also, if possible, convenient to my home so that I could get there frequently. The ___ project where Pauline and I had already done some work in a previous sub campaign seemed to answer these requirements.

Once I got started, the comment and praise I received was out of all proportion for anything accomplished. I still think it is a sound idea, and that if we had an active committee of four or five people who could follow up leads, work on tenants problems, get into the NAACP in the area, build up a discussion group, that some excellent work could be done. Most of the time I was working alone and couldn't do all these things. I don't want to give a false impression so I should mention that in the first months comrades Berta, Pauline and Edith G. worked in the project but now they're all too busy with other assignments -- forums, literature sales, etc. During the sub campaign, Ruth, Milt and Miriam made deliveries and sold a number of subs. The last six weeks, comrade Murray worked with me but his philosophy class will probably make it impossible for him to continue.

When Ring and Stevens brought out their second bulletin with their criticism on the neglect of Negro work, one comrade in our exec exclaimed: "What has Joyce been doing if not Negro work?" If my few contacts in the ___ project represent the Negro work of

the New York local, I certainly agree with Ring and Stevens that it has been neglected.

Every once in a while someone says to me in a surprised tone: "You certainly are persistent!" But I can detect a note of doubt as if to say - "persistent - but to what purpose?" I admit I have a personal reason for doing this project work - I enjoy it. I work in a petty bourgeois atmosphere and it's refreshing to get out and talk to workers. Also, I've been writing some Militant articles. There are a number of working wives and mothers on my route and this personal contact each week gives me a good many of my ideas. I've talked to a great many workers this last year not only in the project but in my own neighborhood and I never found it difficult. They're against the war -- it's been months since I heard anyone - even the white collar group where I work or my mother's middle class friends - say a kind word for the Korean war. Of course they are not politically opposed to the war - they have no program. To me it would seem a lot easier to talk to a worker who is against the war and doesn't have a program than a Stalinist who is against the war and has an incorrect program and has to be re-educated. Most of the people I talk to are frightened by the witch hunt but very few support it. Only occasionally I run into the reactionary anti-Communist hysteria which Edith Bartell seems to think is universal.

The question of The Militant came up a couple of times during this discussion. If we can't talk to workers and our efforts are to be primarily directed toward Stalinist circles and liberal intellectuals, this will inevitably affect the contents of The Militant which should, of course, be directed to the people we are trying to contact. When I first heard this idea expressed by a comrade from Chicago, I got a cold chill. My criticism of The Militant is that it is not sufficiently popularized and lacks mass appeal. Any tendency to make it more intellectual and difficult to understand than it already is would cut off hope of getting ordinary workers to read it. I consider it the worst error that the party could make.

People who feel that we can't do anything with workers are quite optimistic about doing something with Stalinists. As confirmation, they point out the friendly gestures made toward us by some Stalinists. This is not surprising. Obviously, the Stalinists are lonely and frightened people these days, ready to look for help in any direction - even ours. I'm not opposed to taking every possible advantage of this and of course we should recruit as many Stalinists as we can. But I would be very much interested to see recruitment figures throughout the country for the last year. We haven't done enough recruiting in New York to have statistics that we can analyze, but some branches have been recruiting. A comrade from L.A. mentioned that they recently recruited four workers - not Stalinists. No one denies that it's difficult to recruit. But I still believe we have just as good a chance of recruiting workers as Stalinists - if that's what we're trying to do. And the workers are the people we've got to reach and recruit if we are to have any future as a political organization. Most of the Stalinists we get will be miseducated petty bourgeois intellectuals. I'm not against recruiting them or anyone else but I

don't feel enthusiastic either. As far as the Stalinist leadership goes, I stick to what I consider the position of the party - it is counter-revolutionary through and through and it can and will betray whenever the opportunity arises.

Talking to workers and recruiting them is our fundamental task. This is what we must do if we are to remain a revolutionary party.

ON PRECISE FORMULATIONS

By Jeff Thorne

A second unfortunate formulation, within three years, which might seem to place the Negro struggle in a secondary role, prompts me to renew an old protest. The two errors are on a different plane, so I will deal with them separately.

The first error was the very first words of the party's resolution on "Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism," published in the F.I. May-June 1950. This escaped my notice until the objectionable part was reprinted in The Militant August 18, 1952. I wrote a protest then to the national office and editors. Now I regret I did not follow through more energetically.

That resolution begins (my underscoring): "Next to the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, the liberation of the Negro people from their degradation is the paramount problem of American society."

Paramount, unquestionably; but next to sounds like second to or after and doesn't sound a bit like inseparably linked with, which was surely the intent.

The entire balance of this otherwise fine resolution completely refutes the first two words, but next to remain the first two and most emphatic words of the official party document, not yet publicly corrected.

Now Comrades Stevens and Ring in their PERSPECTIVES FOR THE PERIOD AHEAD, Part II, write about (again my underscoring): ". . . a field of work that the entire party has come to understand as second only to trade union work. We refer, of course, to the Negro struggle, which is ignored in the REPORT AND TASKS." Right at the point where they are emphasizing the great importance of Negro work their formulation appears to give it a secondary rating. I deny this is the understanding of the entire party, or of Comrades Stevens and Ring.

They were dealing not with an estimation of the Negro struggle itself, but with that field of our work, allocation of party forces, etc. However, the arrangement of their words can appear to give the Negro struggle itself an importance secondary to trade union work.

Marx wrote: "Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded." Clearly the Negro struggle is a vital, integral, inseparable sine qua non of the class struggle, the fight for socialism. In no sense, for any purpose, can a secondary position be implied from Marx' epitomy. No one can actually separate the Negro struggle from, nor subordinate it to, any other phase of the class struggle nor even to the class struggle itself.

Negro work and understanding the Negro struggle must be so thoroughly integrated into all party work and thought that such slips could not be made.

Our attitude, work and successes in various other fields may very well be as impressive to Negroes and as helpful to their cause as any particular effort directed specifically toward them. At the same time, of course, we must be alert to and participate in every one of their progressive struggles, to the limit of our capacities.

Negroes may be won by correct trade union work, civil rights struggles, opposition to imperialist war, labor party agitation, election campaigns, correct grappling with opposition parties, student work, etc., not to forget socials, etc. For instance, our Negro cadre may come mainly from trade unions, in which are many of the most advanced Negroes, rather than necessarily from some other field of our work.

This document is not intended to delineate a program, but to emphasize the importance of precise formulations.

March 3, 1953
New York