

# INTERNAL

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## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Our Perspective in the Unions By Frank Powers, Seattle	1
2. From Cochranism to Stalinism By Daniel Roberts, Seattle	24
3. Excerpts from Educational Report on "SWP Policy and Practice in Defense of Civil Rights" By Jean Simon, Cleveland	28

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## OUR PERSPECTIVE IN THE UNIONS

By Frank Powers, Seattle

(Editor's note: The reader should bear in mind that Comrade Powers' article was submitted prior to the November 1953 Plenum and thus reflects the state of the internal situation before the Cochranite split. We are nevertheless publishing the article because it deals with some of the basic aspects of Cochranite policy further discussion of which should be profitable to the party. We regret this unavoidable delay in its publication.)

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The discussion thus far in Seattle has been concerned mainly with the question of Stalinism and our orientation toward the Stalinist-led organizations in America. This was inevitable in view of the reckless charges of "Stalinophobia" hurled against the majority\*

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\*At the time of the Seattle branch conference in March, the Cochranites had a majority of the branch. A three-way split in their faction, and the recruitment of three people to the majority, has since altered the situation. The national majority is now the majority in Seattle and the Cochranites have dwindled to a tiny minority.

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and the existence of a pro-Stalinist tendency among the Cochranites, which has since split from them. It would be wrong, however, to consider this the main question in dispute.

If the Cochranites had a clear perspective on our most essential work of making our program, members and party an integral part of the life of the American labor movement and setting the stage for our future leadership of the American working class, the question of tactics with respect to the Stalinists would have fallen of its own weight into its rightful subordinate position in the discussion. We would not now be discussing Stalinism, but the tactical implementation of our perspectives in the labor movement. The Cochranites, however, display a tremendous overconcern with the Stalinists precisely because of their complete disorientation on the trade union question.

They have attempted to conceal this disorientation by citing the support given their faction by many of our trade union cadre. They have not even hesitated, as in their fantastic references to a "proletarian opposition" in Seattle, to manufacture such a cadre where they don't have one. Nevertheless, the support given the Cochranites by our trade unionists in Michigan and Youngstown cannot be lightly dismissed. It registers how deeply the sectarian disorientation introduced by Comrade Cochran in his Trade Union Report at the 1952 Convention, and bolstered by Comrade Bartell's Report to the New York Branch Convention, has sunk into the party. In Seattle, Comrade Black's report for and debate at the Branch Conference only carried this disorientation to its logical conclusion.

The various presentations of the minority on trade union issues have had one thing in common. They have uniformly demanded that we turn our backs upon the task of increasing our influence in the unions, in favor of a more "realistic" perspective. It is not made clear just what this realistic perspective is (apparently there is

some disagreement on this among the minority members), but it is clear to them that the party's traditional perspectives aren't worth very much. Comrade Black informed us that "we need a perspective worked out on the basis of openings and opportunities actually existing locally and now." As Comrade Clara Kaye stated in debate against him at the time: "This is 100% wrong. We already have a perspective, based on what is national, what is to develop later, how we expect the class struggle to unfold. . . The present conjuncture, the current complex of events and the temporary relationships of today affect our determination of tactics alone, not our basic perspectives. . . Comrade Black's pragmatic method makes a farce of motion in the class struggle." Bartell proceeds with the same empirical method as Black, but does not put it so blatantly. For Cochran, the old perspectives are OK; they merely have to be put on a shelf so they don't get in our way today.

It should be pointed out that Comrade Black has now left the Cochranites for the Marcy tendency and may be in disagreement with some of his previous statements, since the positions of the Marcy tendency and the Cochranite faction have nothing in common. At the time of the Seattle Branch Conference, however, he was a leading member of the Cochranite faction, and was selected by the faction to be Branch Organizer in Seattle. He was in constant contact with the Cochranite leadership in New York, boasted of contributing to the "Roots of the Party Crisis," and participated in their faction meetings in New York in preparation for the May Plenum. Consequently, I think it correct to deal with his remarks at the time of the Seattle Branch Conference in March as pure, unadulterated Cochranism.

#### DOES THE REACTION ELIMINATE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE UNIONS?

In the Seattle Branch Conference debate, Comrade Black assured us that there was no disagreement on the necessity of the comrades being in the unions. He agreed that these organizations in America were the unions and the Negro organizations, particularly the NAACP. He informed us: "We must be there, we go there now!" But to him the real question in dispute was: "What do we do now in these mass organizations or anywhere else?"

The question was an excellent one and should have been the substance of our discussion, so we waited with bated breath for an answer. Comrade Black then repeated the question: "What do we do NOW in this period of ever-deepening reaction? . . ." We waited -- then we got a half-hour presentation of why we should stress and emphasize work in the Stalinist milieu.

I have listened to the wire of his debate three times -- no small ordeal -- and found not a single word in answer to his own important question of what to do now in the mass organization of the working class. (It apparently is to be considered that one answers a question by asking it twice.) He thought he answered it by his method of posing it. The period of reaction, he was saying in effect, eliminates all opportunities to do anything in the mass organizations now. He was only feeding on Comrade Bartell's report on the "Struggle in the New York Local" which cites numerous quotations from both the SWP Political Resolution and the IEC pointing to increased reaction, and concluding therefrom a growing quiescence and fear among workers

in their mass organizations. The quotations were omitted by Comrade Black, but the same wrong conclusions were advanced.

### The Source of the Quiescence

This attempt to deduce a growing quiescence among the American workers from the growing reaction, and determining therefrom a lessening of our opportunities of doing work in the unions, demonstrates a failure to appreciate the sources of the quiescence, the nature of the reaction and the interrelationship between the two. It leaves completely out of account the effects of the reaction on both the quiescence and the political consciousness of the workers.

Although the period of reaction since the post-war upsurge has had a parallel development in a growing quiescence of the American workers, these two conditions do not operate on a one-to-one relationship and are not necessarily parallel.

Our political resolution has correctly attributed the apathy of the American workers to the relative prosperity in the United States and the prolonged maintenance of the standard of living of the working class. This is certainly the root cause.

In addition, the trade union bureaucracy has made a major contribution to this quiescence. Growing closer and closer to the government apparatus and its program, the bureaucracy has become one of the main props of the war drive and Wall Street's imperialist policy. It has, as a consequence, played a most significant role in restraining every manifestation of proletarian opposition to the effects of the war drive on living standards and opposition to the war itself. It has hounded out militants who would lead a fight for better conditions and for a class-conscious program in spite of the war, and clamped an iron rule upon the unions.

The reaction deepens the quiescence of the labor movement. By limiting the legal scope of union activity through the Taft-Hartley Act, injunctions, fact-finding boards, right-to-work laws, Supreme Court decisions, etc., Wall Street seeks to suppress the militants and give a legal cover to the restraining activities of the bureaucracy. The government initiated a witch hunt against the radicals but designed also to terrorize the vanguard elements in the unions and intimidate union activists. But it is completely wrong to believe, as Comrades Bartell and Black apparently do, that this deepening of the quiescence is the only effect of the reaction, or that the two go hand in hand. The reaction has had a profound effect upon class relations in this country and upon the thinking of the workers; the reaction threatens daily to overcome the prosperity-created apathy.

### Quiescence Is Not the Sole Result of Reaction

The Cochranites fail to see the full scope of the reaction and are impressed only by its more obvious manifestations -- its effects upon the Stalinists and radicals. Comrade Black described the reaction in this period as consisting of "Witch-hunt, red-baiting, screening in the unions and attempts to illegalize us here and there already." He ignored what should be for us the most significant fact:

the reaction in America is an attack upon the working class and the labor movement. He was enamoured only by the reaction's most publicized and more obvious features.

This omission could be considered the product of a temporary error or the omission of what was obvious -- if Comrade Black had not re-emphasized it in his rebuttal. When he asked rhetorically, "Who else (besides the Stalinists in this period) is in the same camp with us?", Comrade Roberts answered from the audience, "The American proletariat." From the leader of our "proletarian" opposition came a curt rejection: "Well, they're not now!" And with that he divorced the party from the class and rejected completely whatever effect the growing reaction has had upon the thinking and class consciousness of the American proletariat. To the Cochranites, apparently, the workers are impervious to the effect of the reaction in retarding the legal scope of their organized activity and driving down their working standards and conditions. The workers ignore the twenty to eighty dollars or more lifted monthly from their paychecks in taxes, deductions, etc. They are impervious to the loss of old leaders and co-workers through screening and witch hunt. It matters little to them that they have no political voice in the U.S., while their friends and relatives are killed overseas. All this can play no part in working out our tactics in the unions and in getting closer to the workers in the mass organizations.

We have made the point in the Party's civil rights campaigns and it appears necessary to make it again so that it is thoroughly clear: The attacks of reaction upon the civil rights of the Trotskyists, militants and Stalinists is the foundation for and part of an attack upon the unions themselves and the standard of living and working conditions of the American working class. This is not just a slogan to get some unwitting trade unionist to support our fight for free speech!

The capitalist class underscored their objectives in this attack during the last national election when it put in the Eisenhower administration. The Democratic Party could serve the purpose of hounding out the militants, destroying the promising development of a left wing in the unions and could even cut away the legal base for the existence of unions. It could serve the purpose of isolating and repressing persons and organizations standing in opposition to the imperialist war. But to carry out a full-scale attack against the working class, Wall St. needed a more reactionary and class conscious leadership composed of businessmen themselves. The ever-deepening reaction is not merely more witch hunts, screenings, and attacks upon us; it is the centralizing of the attack more and more upon the working class and the unions themselves.

This deepening reaction threatens to upset the class equilibrium in the U.S. For at the same time that the witch hunt raises fear among the militants, the reactionary offensive threatens the living standards and working conditions of the whole American proletariat; that is, it threatens the very basis of the quiescence. In addition, it threatens the support, or rather the passive acceptance, of the imperialist war program by the workers -- that program upon which the bureaucracy has been able to base itself in gaining and maintaining control of the ranks. This effect of the reaction is completely

overlooked by the minority comrades, who see only apathy and fear emanating from it.

### HOW THE REACTION AFFECTS WORKERS' THINKING

Reaction, apathy, fear all exist in the unions and demand of us caution and patience in our trade union tactics. But caution and patience are not the key to our perspectives in the unions. They are only fetters put upon our activities at the present time. Our present activities must find as their starting point, not the apathy and fear on the part of the trade unionist, but the profound effects, which have already been manifested, of the reaction upon the thinking, class consciousness and militancy of the workers. We must determine what processes are now going on in the labor movement that give the Party the opportunity to place itself at the head of the vanguard in preparation for the coming upsurge of the labor movement, to recruit from the unions and build our influence there.

### Working Conditions

If the living standards of the American working class have been maintained over the last years, its conditions of work have not met with the same success. The sporadic battles and wildcat strikes over the last years in steel, auto and other unions have resulted primarily from resistance to the attempts of the major corporations to put the workers in conditions of actual slavery on the job by elimination of jobs, multiplication of tasks, doing away with rights and privileges won in the past and intensification of work without compensation in increased pay. The workers have managed to maintain their living standards by working longer hours, holding down two jobs, or increasing their productivity -- that is, working harder.

The 1952 steel strike was the most excellent manifestation of this resistance. From beginning to end it surrounded the battle for maintaining working conditions. It began over a demand for twenty-two changes in the provisions of the contract, and was prolonged essentially around the question of maintaining past practices. In the end the bureaucracy settled for a wage raise and gave the go-ahead signal to the corporation to undercut past practices wherever they could get away with it. Thus, the workers paid for the maintenance of their living standards by a worsening of their working conditions. In Bethlehem, the Company operated with a clear and open hand. In the Seattle plant, the Co. representative informed the grievance man in a past practice case that the International had agreed on the matter during negotiations; that is, that the right to undercut past practices was given in exchange for the wage raise. The local bureaucrats deny this, of course, but insist there is no grievances on this score; that the past practice case was without merit, although the violations are of past practices that have existed for over 40 years.

The workers in steel are no more immune to the effects of these agreements to change their working conditions than the workers in auto are immune to the effects of their 5-year contract. These new conditions are manifested every day and every hour on the job by an increased class polarization, with management down to the most petty foreman becoming more and more arrogant, more antagonistic to the

most reasonable demands of the workers and more open in their attacks upon the rank and file leaders and shop militants. The workers, as a consequence, begin to see the corporation representatives as "capital personified," as the "soul of capital itself." A development in their class consciousness thus takes place in spite of and even because of the high standard of living.

### The Political Expropriation of the Workers

The class polarization in the plant is reflected on the political level with a complete expropriation of the working class from government. The Marxist concept of the state as an agency of the ruling class is not only a glaring reality but is explained daily by the boss press as the normal manner of the state functioning. The class consciousness of the ruling party cannot but affect the class consciousness of the workers. The American worker long ago understood that the question of foreign policy, of the death and militarization of his children and himself was a matter over which he had no control. He had however hoped that he had some control over national policy. But he has seen over the last years the weekly deductions from his paycheck grow ever greater, and he sees clearly the threat to further deductions involved in the Republican administration's new move for economy, and the sweep of the Millionaire Tax Bill through the state legislatures. He sees the ever-widening scope of the laws directed at his organized power by the national government and the passing of the "right-to-work" bills by the state governments. Laws favoring capital as against the working class are a part of everyday existence. Public housing, price controls, national health plans, pensions, etc., etc., all go by the board. If at present the worker is apparently quiescent under the attack he is not immune to its effects upon his thinking. The capitalist class has set the objective conditions for proletarian political conclusions of the most radical character. Such conclusions have already been arrived at by many of the more advanced workers, but their expression in action has been restrained by the dominance of the trade union bureaucracy.

### Polarization Between the Bureaucracy and the Ranks

But just as the reaction, by attacking the working conditions, living standards and political rights of the workers, tends to destroy the foundation of the quiescence, it destroys also the influence of the bureaucracy over the union ranks. What exists today, as the most obvious manifestation of the reaction in the plants, is the antagonism it has created between the organized workers and the trade union bureaucracy. This antagonism results from the objective collapse of the class-collaboration program of the bureaucrats in the face of the anti-labor offensive; their program has collapsed as a weapon to protect and advance the hard-won gains of the labor movement. The average worker, who does not pose a class program against the bureaucracy, sees the labor officials only as sell-out artists and professional strollers. Yet the tenacity with which the bureaucracy holds on to and seeks to carry out their time-worn policies, inevitably increases the subjective understanding of the workers as a whole, and the militants in particular, and leads them to seek a new program more in keeping with social reality.

During the war years, Golden and Ruttenberg, then officials for the United Steelworkers, had the courage to put out a masterful exposition of the program and tactics of the labor bureaucracy in a work entitled "Dynamics of Industrial Democracy," still recommended reading at CIO schools. The book was intended for the consumption of labor officials, would-be bureaucrats, college students and liberal capitalists, and is a rather complete exposition of the bureaucracy's methods. It explains clearly the techniques of union class collaboration; of labor-management cooperation on the economic and political level. The strikes in 1945-46 prevented the immediate carrying out of these techniques and policies, but the labor officials have been in a rush to put them into effect since.

During World War II, the officials of the United Steelworkers put this program into effect by collaborating with the Steel corporations on a settlement of inequities. The settlement settled nothing for the workers, but tied them down to a set of wage and job formulas from which there is no escape and no appeal without the approval of management. In the automobile industry, the CIO officials collaborated with management in working out a five-year contract which stabilized everything for the corporation but the hostility of the auto workers. On the political level, the labor officials cemented themselves with the government apparatus, tied the unions solidly to the Democratic administration and the Democratic Party and declared themselves opponents to every manifestation of political independence on the part of the working class.

The labor officials sought to prevent the radicalization of the ranks, cover up the nature of their program and still keep the support of the union members by launching an all-out witch-hunt campaign in the unions against the Stalinists, our comrades and the leftward moving militants. They intended thereby to lump together with the already discredited Stalinists all opposition to their bureaucratic rule and program and remove all pressure upon them from the ranks.

This campaign succeeded in virtually wiping out Stalinist control and radical influence in the leadership of nearly all major unions and imposing the greatest bureaucratic domination over the unions on the national and local level. But to accomplish this, the bureaucracy had to pay a price. To organize the fight, they had to drag in all the company men and company stooges. All the worst anti-union elements made themselves as one with the "anti-communist" cause. By the time the bureaucrats had gotten rid of their opposition, they had alienated themselves from a good share of the union activists, were without a solid base in the locals and were at the mercy of the company men. The rank and file worker, who had gone along with the witch hunt, found he had swapped Scylla for Charybdis. If anything, he was worse off than when he started. The bureaucrats were left with the support of a few former militants who remembered them from the '30's, a number of company stools, a score of petty bureaucrats and would-be bureaucrats, and a hostile -- if for the time being, apathetic -- rank and file.

As the reaction became more intense, and the smoke screen of the initial witch hunts began to lift, the workers got a clearer view of what they had been saddled with by the bureaucrats. For the last



four years in a Seattle Steel local, the workers have tried, to no avail, to break through the strait jacket of the inequity settlement. Their grievances have invariably been rejected by the International in the fourth step or lost by them in arbitration. Nevertheless, they have succeeded in exposing the settlement for what it is: a prime example of labor-management collaboration against the interests of the steelworkers. The right-wingers and would-be bureaucrats, being unable to defend their program, attempted to conduct a red-baiting attack upon the initiator of the grievances. He answered with a simple speech to the men in his department at a special meeting. He announced that although he had been expelled from the Communist Party, he still advocated a socialist society; that he left the CP when he discovered they were not fighting for socialism; and that despite red-baiting he would continue to fight in the interests of the working man. He received a standing ovation!

This was a resounding slap in the face to the bureaucracy and a demonstration of the limitations of the witch hunt as a method of coping with a class-conscious opposition. As the reaction deepens and management becomes increasingly arrogant, labor-management cooperation takes on a more and more one-sided character, existing only by the sufferance of the corporations. Only the joint fear of the bureaucracy and management towards the rank and file worker is able to make their collaboration more than pure fiction. The bureaucracy is being constantly exposed before the working class as the junior partners of the capitalist class. Not all the witch hunts in the world can obscure this fact.

On the political level the bureaucracy has fared no better. It entered into an alliance with the Democratic Party and the Administration, drawing the workers behind it on a straight class-collaboration line. It performed yeoman service for the administration in selling the war program to the workers (or rather ramming it down their throats) and received in return a few government jobs and a helping hand from the witch hunts in curbing the ranks and strengthening its own position. It collaborated with the FBI, the American Legion, etc., all in the interests of the anti-communist campaign and the glorious future of all classes working together. With the Republican victory, it could look around and see what it had won.

In the post World War II years, the bureaucracy has helped capitalism lay the basis for an attack on the legal existence of the unions. This is the payoff to the union officialdom for transforming themselves into the "political police" of monopoly capitalism "before the eyes of the working class." This is the main fruit of a fifteen year history of political activity by the CIO.

I think the paper made a little too much of a to-do about the workers following the labor officials in voting for the Democrats in the last national elections. In a steel local here there was an excellent expression of the feeling of the members, since the last union election had thrown off the shackles of a bureaucratic-company coalition in the union leadership. The members thus felt free to express themselves, and they did. It is true that the great majority of them voted Democrats, but not because of the trade union leadership. They refused to contribute money to the PAC collectors and rejected a proposal to contribute money to a special PAC educational banquet, on

the grounds that PAC policy of supporting the Democrats wasn't worth a damn. Most workers voted Democrat because it appeared to be the only choice, but they were convinced that PAC could have formulated a better and more realistic political program, and expressed as much at the local meeting. Not a few militants voted Republican in resentment against the Steel sell-out at the Democratic national convention and on the theory that it's better to see a knife coming at you than to be stabbed in the back.

The role of the labor officials over the seven year period since the 1945-46 strike wave has pretty much destroyed any support they gained from the ranks of the unions by their leadership in those strikes. No Marxist now in the unions can be unaware of the tremendous antagonism of the membership to the program and the methods of the trade union bureaucracy. It pervades the atmosphere. It results directly from the war program and the consequent reaction which increased the class polarization in the US and heightened the contradiction between the class-collaboration program of the bureaucracy and the needs of the American workers.

This antagonism is especially strong among the younger workers and veterans, who have not gone through the experience of the thirties and who see the unions and the officials for the first time as they are today. These workers are generally in the lower pay scales in the large industries and find difficulty making ends meet. When David J. MacDonald tells a young worker that the average wage of steelworkers is \$2.06 an hour (before the last raise) and that he can get a \$100 a month pension at 65, it turns his stomach. He can buy nothing with an "average" wage and can't eat a pension plan. The new workers see the bureaucrats as naked collaborators with the employers and as self-serving and self-seeking opportunists. They are not impressed by the political program of the officials which supports the war drive that threatens their lives. At the present time, it would be better to characterize their attitude as cynicism, rather than apathy or fear. One thing is sure, that when they begin to move, they will not look to the labor bureaucrats for leadership.

So, also, the Negro worker. Despite the support given by the labor officials to anti-lynch laws and FEPC bills, the role of the bureaucracy and their supporters in the plants is not one to inspire confidence. The struggle of the Thirties, which struck a blow against discrimination at the same time it brought into being the CIO, has to a large extent become only a memory. After fifteen years of the CIO, the bulk of the Negroes are still in the lower-paid jobs; still discriminated against in seniority and job conditions; still kept out of the center of union activity. The same conservatives, company stools, and petty bureaucrats whom the labor officials had to base themselves upon in conducting their witch hunts and carrying out their class collaboration, are generally the most prejudiced workers in the plants. Thus, in the opinion of the Negro workers, the union is lumped with the company as a source of discrimination. It will take a new leadership, inflexible in its opposition to Jim Crow in all its forms, and capable of demonstrating this in action, to win the confidence of the Negro worker.

The doubly exploited women workers have not become acclimatized, through long experiences, to the class collaboration of the labor

officials, whether they work in factories or on white-collar jobs. They see much more clearly than most men workers the contradiction between what the union should be and what the union is today. This is especially true of the woman worker performing a "man's" job at lower wages than the men receive, to whom the male union officials are a contemptible lot. Where women workers have gained equal pay for equal work, they still have to fight for advancement in the shops, and too often, they have to buck the union steward as hard as they must fight the foreman in order to obtain a merited higher rating. And they are not fooled by the patronizing officials who brag at meetings about the marvelous conditions obtaining for women in the plant or office, but who cannot hide their basic attitude toward these very women -- an attitude compounded of contempt, fear and arrogance.

Yet despite these daily pressures and irritations, the woman worker remains essentially a militant, whose fighting spirit and readiness for action and sacrifice are constantly exploited by the bureaucrats and diverted into channels suiting their own purposes. (In telephone, for instance, where the overwhelming burden of strike activity, organizing, etc., is laid on the women, yet the men get the highest settlements!) The union leadership that can gain the complete respect of the woman worker will find itself with a tremendously powerful and loyal base of support. Like every long-oppressed group, these proletarian women will surge to the forefront in a meaningful economic and political struggle.

The polarization that exists, and is ever increasing under the whip of reaction, between the trade unionists and the bureaucracy, creates a "vacuum of leadership" and affords to the party the opportunity "locally and now" of carrying out the tactical line of the Third World Congress -- that is, of acting "from now on as the revolutionary leadership of the masses." To the extent that quiescence and fear and cynicism exist in the labor movement, this task is made more difficult. To the extent that the heavy hand of the bureaucracy weighs on the locals, the carrying out of the task becomes more dangerous and our activities more cautious. But in spite of difficulties we must carry out the task now, of bringing our program and ideas to the rank and file of the unions, who are now groping for a program. We must present ourselves and the party in opposition to the labor bureaucrats and the Stalinists as a leadership to the class conscious worker-militants and those workers coming to class consciousness under the blows of reaction.

#### WHAT DO WE DO NOW? COCHRANITE PERSPECTIVES AND OURS

The Party today should be concerned mainly with the problem of how under these adverse circumstances to carry out these tasks. In his Trade Union report at the last National Convention, Comrade Cochran found it necessary to address himself to this problem. His report boiled down to the following recommendations to our comrades in the unions: (1) Act as propagandists in the unions; (2) Stay in the unions; and (3) Recruit, if you can, from the unions.

The carrying out of these tasks is of major importance, but with due respect for our leading minority comrade, they are not startlingly new and in his limited presentation, miss our needs by a mile.

Even in the periods of greatest class upsurge the Party and the trade unionists have the indispensable duty to carry out propaganda work and recruit from the unions. In point of fact, the opportunities for carrying out such tasks are far greater and the results far more gratifying in such periods than they are today.

What is new in the report is that for the first time our tasks are separated from our perspectives in the union. The report begins by separating our present tasks from the perspective of building a left wing and ends by counseling us not to think it possible for our comrades to lead masses of workers in struggle in the next upsurge of the unions. In the midst of this rosy picture -- which no one should dare refer to as pessimistic -- comes a formulation of tasks. Our trade union comrades have at least the right to ask, "For what reasons and with what objectives are we to carry out these tasks?"

To this question Comrade Cochran has an answer. We carry out propaganda tasks with "propaganda aims." But I got tired of merry-go-rounds at eight years of age. How shall we urge comrades to carry on propaganda tasks in the unions -- not necessarily the easiest task to carry out today -- when they can see no objective in it? How are we to inspire our comrades "to sacrifice, to stay in the plants year after year, braving the speedup and the isolation" without a perspective in their work? We should in the spirit of the Report advise our comrades who are working at difficult jobs and low pay in order to remain in a vital industry, to get the highest paid job possible with the least labor involved and thus support the propaganda work financially and have more energy left to be visiting people all the time. Why bother to buck the bureaucracy when we dare not consider ourselves "union leaders, or contenders for leadership?"

The Cochranites, however, are not bothered by this contradiction between their perspectives -- or rather, lack of perspectives -- and tasks, because they are not serious in their proposal to carry out propaganda tasks in the unions. While Comrade Cochran separates propaganda tasks from perspectives, his co-factionalists in Seattle and New York carry his logic one step further and separate propaganda tasks from the unions. Having eliminated perspectives, they quite logically arrive at an elimination of tasks.

At the debate in the Seattle branch, and in the branch discussions preceding it, the Cochranites centered their attack on our trade union work on Comrade Flint. His crime was carrying out the tactical line of Cochran's Trade Union Report! He was contemptuously referred to as "the greenest link on the green chain" for having the stupidity to stick it out, at a most difficult job, in the most important industry in the Northwest for seven years. As to doing propaganda work in the unions -- a task which Comrade Flint has carried out earnestly and well -- Comrade Black warned him at the Branch Conference:

"George talks about socialism at this time in his shop. That's all right. I don't think it will make too much difference in the long run, anyhow. If you go around now preaching socialism to the workers, you won't be there when an upsurge comes. I have no illusions about that."

Who then do we talk politically to? Comrade Black was clear on that: we talk to politicals. As to doing propaganda work among the as yet unpoliticalized trade unionists, Comrade Black had this to offer: "Only idiots talk to people who don't want to listen! You can't talk politics to people who are not politically minded." (It should be pointed out that he was here polemicizing against talking about socialism to workers in the factory, and not against the repeated attempts of Comrade Flint, at the outset of the discussion, to discuss politics with our "politically-minded" minority.)

These were not accidental remarks. In his document for the Branch Conference, Comrade Black put it most explicitly when discussing a criticism about a forum talk.

"Should the talks be presented at a level geared for the non-political, raw worker or should we use our forums as the sorely needed occasion to acquaint interested young or old politicals with our analysis of events, etc. There was a time when our public meetings were levelled at militants who came to our meetings as a source for guidance in actions. Today, by and large the thoughtful and perplexed are coming. They want well-thought-out and clearly presented answers. Agitation and pep talks are not what is called for now. . . ."

Comrade Cannon, basing himself on Plekhanov, defined propaganda as the dissemination of many fundamental ideas to a few people, and agitation as the dissemination of a few ideas to many people. Comrade Black, improving on both, made a further division. Propaganda work is now directed at intellectuals -- "the thoughtful and perplexed" -- and agitation to the working class militants who are apparently not interested in "well thought out and clearly presented answers" but solely in "guidance in actions." When the workers are in motion we give them "agitation and pep talks"; when they are quiescent, it's best not to talk to them at all! When, indeed, are we supposed to discuss socialism with them? And the comrades of the minority are incensed that anybody should accuse them of having contempt for the working class!

### Propaganda Work

Certainly, propaganda work constitutes our main work in the unions today. Those workers now arriving at class consciousness under the impact of reaction and seeking to solve their problems on a purely trade union level are either demoralized by the futility of the task or are rapidly corrupted by the bureaucracy. The objective class polarization that has developed allows little room for a simple evolutionary development of the workers subjectively; that is, from trade union consciousness, through class consciousness, various shades of political consciousness to Socialism and the SWP. The failure of the CIO and AFL drives to organize the South has given proof of this fact on a mass scale. As soon as the worker begins to face his problems in an organized fashion, he comes face to face with the adamancy of the employer, the hostility of the state, and the collaborationist policy of the bureaucracy on both the plant and political level.

These workers coming to class consciousness can only sustain themselves and continue to work in the unions without capitulating to the

bureaucrats, to the extent that they are capable of seeing clearly their class position in the imperialist US and the Socialist solution to their problems. We have the responsibility, and with the present vacuum in leadership, the opportunity, of finding our way to these militants who are seeking a solution to their problems and are ready to give us a hearing; we must explain to these workers the political reasons for the present stalemate of the labor movement, the role of the bureaucracy, the necessity of building a left wing, the socialist solution, the need to build the SWP, etc., etc. But as long as we consider our propaganda work as connected with purely "propaganda aims" (whatever that means) and as directed toward the already corrupted milieus now under the hegemony of class-collaboration political tendencies of one type or another, we will fail miserably in this task. Our press must be geared to presenting our political program to the working class in the manner that they can best comprehend; through our transitional program and through the experiences that the workers are now going through on the job and on the political arena.

It is interesting that our minority comrades who are so concerned with tact and finding common ground when they approach the Stalinists, see no such necessity when approaching the "raw worker." When Comrade Flint criticized a forum talk for going over the head of a worker he brought down from the mill, he was roundly abused by the local Cochranites and told to take his raw worker (who apparently came to the forum under the impression that we were holding a clam-bake) back to the mill and trade him in for a Stalinist!

The ever-deepening crisis of world capitalism, the polarization between the classes and the intense pressures resulting from the delay in the class uprising in America, will give to the next upsurge of the workers a profound political character. This will be true whether the upsurge takes place during the course of the imperialist war now in preparation against the revolution in all its forms, or from an attempt on the part of American capitalism to smash the unions before engaging in it. This will be true whether the upsurge finds expression in a labor party based on the unions or jumps over that stage of development. Under conditions of an upsurge, not only the party but the worker militants in the unions will fall heir to responsibilities requiring the most intense political understanding. We must arm these workers today, with the program and the ideas which will bring them to the Party or under the leadership of the Party during the course of the upsurge, if not before, and thus provide the greatest guarantee for the victory of our revolution.

At the present time, the Party will act as the revolutionary leadership of the masses through our press, election and civil rights campaigns, and other activities. But the organizational limits on our activities do not make carrying them out less necessary nor less immediate! The growing reaction daily increases the explosive potential in the labor movement. Neither the working class nor the Party can afford for our movement to be unprepared for this explosion when it takes place. We have to win to the party through our propaganda work today a periphery of workers in the plants aware of our ideas, who have the potential of being the leaders of the left-wing in the next upsurge and who, even if not party members, recognize the political leadership of the party. Our propaganda work, as all our work in the unions, must be geared to a perspective of wresting the

leadership from the bureaucracy in the unions and transforming the party into a party of mass action and a decisive working class party in the next upsurge in America.

### We Are Not Limited to Propaganda Work

Is propganda really the only work we can or should do in the unions now? The very carrying out of propaganda tasks effectively, sets up other requirements. It requires that our comrades be in the unions now; not just as sideline observers and analysts, but as union activists.

The manifestations of class consciousness and growing political consciousness among sections of the working class cannot be dismissed as merely exceptions that prove some rule or other about quiescence, as Comrade Bartell seems to think, or as the "ebb of a stronger movement of the recent past" (Cochran). The fight to alleviate grievances arising from the speedup, the wildcat strikes over shop conditions and past practice violations, the growing sentiment for a labor party among the ranks and its expression in union discussions and resolutions, take place today in opposition to the employers and the bureaucracy, in a period of growing reaction, and a drive against labor in preparation for the Third World War. Though these struggles take place within the limits of the old union forms, they take place under new national conditions and in the midst of world revolutionary uprising. These struggles are thus not hangovers from the past but harbingers of the future. They are helping to create and build the human material for leadership in the coming American Revolution. To get to these people we must be part of their struggle. Certainly there is a risk involved, but it is a necessary risk. We will not find many workers interested in the political clacking of people who are not part of their life and who refuse to participate with them in the daily struggles. We will only find ourselves lagging behind every manifestation of political and class consciousness among our fellow workers if we are hiding under a barrel. To divorce propagan-da work from trade union activity and agitation in the unions is to degrade the party into a sectarian group.

This does not mean that we must constantly stick our necks out, but that we must seek to intervene in the class struggle as it appears daily on the job, in the grievance fights, in the union discussions, in the general activities of the local, etc. The problem of doing this effectively without having our heads cut off is of major importance in this period. Comrade Dobbs has taken up this problem in his report to the New York union fractions, and much more will be said. Suffice it here to state that it is not an insurmountable obstacle. It is possible in some cases for our comrades to function as grievance men, or in minor offices in the unions, or where fractions are large enough and the comrades in the plant solidly rooted in the rank and file, to consider participation in the local leadership. Where we do not hold a union office or find it wise not to, our comrades who make themselves familiar with the provisions of their union contract, the situation and past practices in the plant, the history of their local and International, and who keep abreast of developments in the labor movement and their own local are not likely to be isolated from the ranks. They will be sought out by aggrieved workers and any militant leadership that develops. Opportunities to bring out transitional demands, our call for a Labor

Party, our position on Civil Rights, etc., to the floor of the union meeting are not infrequent. We should take advantage of them. Our political program for the unions will not make the members suddenly jump into action, but presenting it to the union activists will gain support for ourselves and the program, especially at this time when our political opponents are hopelessly confused and their program divorced from the needs of the working class.

Of course, the fact that a comrade is not in the union does not make it impossible for him or her to carry out party tasks among the organized or unorganized workers. Not a few of our comrades have been screened or have been unable to get back in their unions (or any other unions) because of blacklisting, physical problems, etc. In these cases, the tasks are more difficult, but they are not insurmountable if the branches and the party orient their press and activities towards the militants now developing in the unions. A political candidate, a civil rights campaign, or a writer for the paper known in an area as an active trade unionist can be an excellent introduction to the party.

Propaganda work to be effective must be supplemented by agitation on political questions and on our transitional demands, and by active participation in the attempts to solve the problems facing the workers on the job today. But our agitation need not be limited to serving propaganda tasks. The relationship between agitation and propaganda cannot be divided into formal categories, so that at one period we do agitation and another period we do propaganda; or to one section of the population we address propaganda and to another, agitation. Propaganda and agitation are distinct but intimately connected tasks in raising the political class consciousness of the working class and building the party of the socialist revolution. They can be unified, however, only in the light of perspective. Our trade unionists, with the help of the party and its press, can do consistent agitational work today around points of our transitional program, and especially around the questions which Trotsky projected as the programmatic basis for a left wing in the unions: The fight against government control of the unions and the fight for union democracy.

### Building a Left Wing

Since the inception of the CIO, the orientation of our party has been toward the formation of a left wing in the unions. This orientation flowed from the objective necessity for such a formation and was not at all contingent upon our ability at any particular stage of organizing such a left wing. From our successes and failures in carrying out the perspective of leading left wing formations and in helping to organize them, very important conclusions can be drawn in order to make our orientation more real and our perspective more realizable.

Comrade Cochran, in his Trade Union Report, began with an attempt at such an analysis, but only washed over the problem lightly. Then convinced that everything had been cleaned up, he threw out the baby with the bath water. Gone is our orientation toward the left wing, because we cannot organize a left wing today!



In his New York debate, he develops on this theme. Under the guise of a polemic against carrying out activities that may break the necks of our trade unionists, he attacks our orientation toward a left wing. Starting with a quote from the Los Angeles Organizer's Report, that "the main task of our fractions is to work for the building of a left wing in the unions," he conducts a polemic against the "building of a left wing in the unions today."

Substitution of the word "today" in place of "for the" is neither accidental nor a debater's trick. For the Cochranites, the militancy of the American workers lies in the past and the difficulties of today represent the future. Thus we arrive quite logically at Comrade Black's "perspectives. . .from opportunities. . .existing locally and now." Or rather -- no perspectives from opportunities existing locally and now. The future is mixed up with the present, and the task of the party is not only not to build a left wing today, but also not to work towards the building of the left wing. In fact, the logic of Comrade Cochran's position is that building a left wing is not a task of the party at all! Comrade Black, who does not play with subtleties, was more explicit on this subject. In his Seattle debate he had the following to say on the left wing:

"Now, as to the building of a left wing. Frank said building a left wing was a long term perspective -- but not the task for today, because we don't build the left wing. The left wing is built by the workers when they surge forward under the impact of the class struggle. We go in there. We politicalize it. We don't create the left wing. We participate in it and give it leadership. We never substitute ourselves and our self-exhortation for the actual struggle of the working class."

There we have a real program for our comrades in the unions! Rely on the spontaneity of the labor movement. Wait until they create a left wing and then hop in waving a red flag and demanding the right to lead it. Above all, don't think for ten seconds that our comrades presenting the program of the party, which is nothing but self-exhortation, can have any effect upon this development.

This is what our minority comrades consider a "realistic" approach to trade union problems. Lenin called this realism "economism" and had this to say about it:

"Subservience to the spontaneity of the labor movement, the belittling of the role of the 'conscious element,' of the role of the Social Democracy, means whether one likes it or not, growth of influence of bourgeois ideology among the workers." (Page 39, What Is To Be Done.)

". . .the spontaneous development of the labor movement leads to its becoming subordinate to bourgeois ideology. . .for the spontaneous labor movement is pure and simple trade unionism. . .and trade unionism means the ideological subordination of the workers to the bourgeoisie. Hence our task. . .is to combat spontaneity, to divert the labor movement with its spontaneous trade-unionist striving, from under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of the revolutionary Social Democracy." (Page 41, *ibid.*)

Thus, our tasks in the unions are not merely to observe and wait for their spontaneous development, but to divert them in the direction of the American revolution. In the building of a left wing, our tasks are not confined to working in power caucuses or actually organizing left wings or patiently waiting for one section of the bureaucracy to learn which side its bread is buttered on. We not only have the task of organizing a left wing, but the task of providing it with a program and with cadres armed with that program. Carrying out this task means agitation for union democracy and against government intervention in the unions by injunctions, labor boards, etc. It means agitation in the unions around our Labor Party slogan, which may well develop as the central issue around which a left wing will be formed. It means consolidating the militants in the plants today around the left wing program and the party so as to facilitate the actual organizing of a left wing when the opportunity arises.

The carrying out of these kind of tasks appear as "Ypsel adventurism" to Comrade Cochran. He has decided that the best thing we can do now in the unions is, to paraphrase Lenin, "to fold our useless arms across our breasts and leave the field to the trade union bureaucrats," who, endowed with super wisdom and complete control over the stupid and reactionary workers, can handle any militancy that may develop in the ranks.

#### CAN THE LABOR BUREAUCRACY LEAD THE NEXT UPSURGE?

To Comrade Cochran, the most significant aspect of American labor reality is "that the American working class is strongly, superbly, organized today, that it is dominated by an entrenched and politically conscious labor bureaucracy, and that when this working class becomes radicalized, it will move in its first stages, and probably for a whole period thereafter (my emphasis) as a mass, through its organizations, and not jump over the heads of its organizations." Thus, with no trouble at all, he tosses the militants and the left wing into the mass, and makes supermen of the labor bureaucrats. What happens to the radicals in such a situation? Comrade Cochran is more specific in his Trade Union Report:

". . .The specific situations of the recent past that enabled radicals to play big roles in the labor movement will never reappear again in quite the same way. The labor movement is superbly, tightly organized, huge in numbers and terribly innoculated against radicals, left wingers, progressives. It is doubtful that there will ever again be a vacuum of leadership such as existed in the NRA period, and which we took advantage of to step into the leadership of the Minneapolis Drivers, or that the Stalinists utilized to assume the leadership of the West Coast Longshoremen.

"Neither is it probable that small groups of radicals will be able to play the role that they did in the upsurge of the CIO."

It would certainly be a sad future for the American proletariat -- and no future for the American Revolution -- if Comrade Cochran's prognosis of things to come in the labor movement had any validity to it. Fortunately, American history as well as the present conjuncture of events -- to say nothing of Marxist theory -- speak against him.

The size and scope of the present bureaucracy are indeed impressive and are highly significant features of the present period. But they are by no means decisive in determining the leadership of the coming upsurge and radicalization.

Is it really necessary at this stage of the Party's history to prove this? Have we not already seen the tremendous and apparently all-powerful AFL bureaucracy, which had withstood over forty years of radical rivalry, crack at the seams and for a while be threatened with complete destruction by the rise of the CIO? The bureaucracy of the CIO will fare no better -- in fact, they cannot help but come out worse -- than the AFL leadership did.

Social transformations, resulting in qualitative changes in the thinking, methods of struggle and organizations of the working class, leave the bureaucracy far behind. This is by no means an accident; the bureaucrats are essentially pragmatists -- albeit "politically conscious" pragmatists -- who derive their perspectives, program and methods from the present conjuncture. They seek to make permanent the social conditions and the political and class relationships from which their special privileges derive, and on the basis of which they have managed to build up their strength and cohesiveness. History, as a consequence, is not exactly replete with examples of bureaucratic formations who transform themselves overnight from defenders of the status quo into leaders of revolutionary struggles.

The transformation from craft to industrial unionism involved a qualitative change in the thinking and organization of the working class of major importance. The AFL bureaucracy could project the possibility of such a transformation and even include industrial type unions in its structure. It could even, under pressure, create a CIO. But, when the class struggle was aggravated during the Thirties, and the working class began to move, when the sit-down strikes broke out in rubber and auto, when the Steelworkers Organizing Committee got into motion -- when, in a word, the contradiction between craft unionism and industrial unionism was taken out of resolutions and into the class struggle as it was developing -- the AFL leaders were incapable of transforming their program, their organizational structure or their methods of struggle upon which their bureaucracy was rooted and take advantage of the upsurge when it took place. Only a small section of the leadership was capable of doing so; that section, primarily the miners, which had experience in industrial organization within the AFL, and whose past history had prepared it for such leadership.

Even this section of the bureaucracy, however, was incapable of substituting itself for the rank and file leadership which was a necessary part of the upsurge. Their attempt to do so in the SWOC resulted in CIO's first great defeat in the Little Steel strikes. The uprising of the CIO -- not to mention the pre-CIO upsurges in Toledo, Minneapolis and the West Coast waterfront -- brought whole new and young layers of the working class into leadership: workers attuned to and sensitive to the rank and file of the unions and capable of giving real expression to their class needs and aspirations. Without them the whole CIO drive would have been a repetition of the SWOC fiasco. Even the best of the piecards could not attune themselves rapidly enough to events and methods of struggle that were

understandable to the more class-conscious and less "experienced" rank and file workers but went completely over the heads of the petty bourgeois officials.

As a result of the collapse of the program and organizational methods of the bureaucracy in the face of the rapid changes in class relationships and class consciousness of the Thirties, "small groups of radicals were able to skyrocket into positions of importance and influence" in the labor movement. The radicals entered the vacuum of leadership left by the AFL bureaucrats with a class program and a political understanding, at a time when these qualifications were at a premium. The measure of success that the Trotskyists enjoyed, in spite of our numerical weakness, comparative obscurity and lack of deep roots in the labor movement, was not ascribable to an ability to "dazzle a membership, because of superior speaking ability, or special knowledge of how to organize going picket lines, or set up strike machinery or how to issue leaflets or a local newspaper," as Comrade Cochran asserted in his Trade Union Report. These assets help, but are not decisive. Our real assets were Marxist analysis and a revolutionary Party, which when put to the test -- especially in Minneapolis -- proved their superiority over our political opponents, within and without the labor movement. Comrade Cochran in his New York debate insists that the 1952 report is substantially the same as that of 1950, but I am, nevertheless, inclined to believe that it is something new in our movement to make the difference between us and the bureaucracy a simple question of speaking ability and technical knowledge.

The crisis which now faces the labor movement runs far deeper than that which faced the AFL in the Thirties. It involves no less than the transformation from union consciousness to class consciousness, from class collaboration to political independence, from the unions as purely defensive weapons to offensive weapons of the working class. This will certainly not be a change so minor in character that the labor bureaucracy, unlike all preceding bureaucracies will be able to transform itself overnight from labor lieutenants of the capitalist class into leaders of class-conscious workers in struggle against the ruling class.

### The Political Consciousness of the Bureaucracy

"The trade unions of our time" wrote Trotsky, in Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decline, "can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or on the contrary, the trade union can become the instrument of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat." The ability of the union leadership to transform themselves from leaders of the former into leaders of the latter of these two antagonistic roles of the unions, is not guaranteed by the unions being "superbly organized" or led by "politically conscious" bureaucrats. In fact, it is precisely their "political consciousness" that stands in the way of the bureaucracy playing such a role.

In what manner have they demonstrated the political consciousness that will serve to give them the leadership over the radicalized workers? Have they in the face of the witch hunt and its obvious

assault against labor begun to conduct an offensive or even a concerted defense against it?

Quite the contrary. They work hand in glove with the FBI, using and compiling FBI files in order to get rid of the militants in the ranks. They conduct no defense against the Smith Act, the Un-American Committee, or against State laws, such as the Kimball Act in Washington, designed to kill all free expression and activity including their own. The political consciousness of Joseph Curran on this score, was demonstrated in his ability to use the New York police and coast guard screening against his opponents in the union; similarly, Reuther's reticence to fight against the Trucks Act and his tacit acceptance of the help of the Un-American Committee in his fight against the leadership at Ford.

Have the union officials, in the face of repeated government interference in strike struggles and union activity against the interests of the workers, begun an offensive in opposition to the use of injunctions, fact-finding boards, etc., against labor? On the contrary. During the Steel strike, Murray not only welcomed government interference, but after the board handed down its decision, went so far as to demand compulsory arbitration as a principle of settling the dispute.

The imperialist policy of the American ruling class and its drive toward a Third World War lie at the base of the present reaction. American capitalism attacks the proletariat and the revolutionary masses everywhere and seeks to take the cost of that attack out of the hides of the American worker. On the American proletariat has fallen an ever-increasing burden of taxation and over its head rests a constant threat of further tax shifts from the corporations to the working class. A steady inflation prevents the workers from keeping up with living costs. The whole welfare program of the unions goes up in smoke before the rising demands of the war machine. Have the labor officials as a consequence begun an attack upon foreign policy?. There is no argument here. Not only do they support it, but they consciously recognize that the source of their own bureaucratic control and the extension of their privileges lie precisely in support to Wall Street's policies.

### The Labor Party and the Bureaucracy

It is apparent that in the Congress of the U.S. sit barely a handful of Congressmen who could even cynically be referred to as "friends of labor." It is apparent also that the Administration has been turned over to business executives who by tradition, training and interests are hostile to organized labor. They wield powers and possess laws that are a threat to the very existence of the labor movement. Has the labor leadership as a result of its own political expropriation begun a campaign for independent labor action, for the formation of a labor party based on the union?

Hardly. They are now, more than ever, opponents of the Labor Party and supporters of the Democratic Party. This support is not merely a political maneuver, as is their attempt to work out a deal with the Eisenhower Administration against Congress. Despite the anti-labor legislation instituted during the regime and under the

auspices of the Democratic Party, the gains for the bureaucracy under the Truman Administration were considerable. They got rid of the organized opposition in the unions, cemented their dictatorial control and secured their positions and privileges against assaults by the rank and file. They increased their own wages and expense accounts. They became junior partners of the government, serving as imperialist foreign policy agents in Europe, and received the privilege of hob-nobbing with important people.

During the last Steel strike, an International Representative on tour for Murray announced amid deafening silence that Truman was "the greatest President in the history of the U.S." He was not just blowing bubbles. To the bureaucrats, the change to a Republican Administration is a qualitative political transformation with respect to them. They are fearful that the Administration will not only attack the working class but the bureaucracy as well, and are more and more vocal in their support of the Democrats. At the same time they are fearful of the rank and file, and are eager to repress all talk of a Labor Party. The PAC director on the West Coast, who under the less politically conscious Philip Murray spoke about a Labor Party "sometime in the future," now, under the "politically conscious" Reuther, is opposed to its formation at any time, and revives the illusion that it is possible to take over the Democratic Party.

Precisely as the necessity of a Labor Party becomes more apparent and its postponement more dangerous to the working class, the bureaucracy becomes more adamant in its opposition to it. They are politically conscious enough to know what the Cochranites apparently do not know -- that a Labor Party will set into motion the proletariat, fighting in their own interests, and cannot be twisted and shaped at will. They cannot but be aware that the formation of such a party in opposition to the combined strength of the Republicans and Democrats will spell doom for their whole political and economic program and open the door to all political tendencies with a class program and a class analysis. Above all, they fear that the Labor Party will be a rallying point for a whole new left wing in the unions which will have the strength and political cohesiveness to challenge their authority and privileges.

As a consequence, expression for a Labor Party at the bureaucrat-ically controlled ("superbly organized") conventions of the CIO or its affiliates is at a low point. This does not mean that Labor Party sentiment among the rank and file is today at a low ebb. On the contrary it received a sharp revival with the collapse of the PAC program and the Republican victory. But the militants in the locals are leery of presenting resolutions for a Labor Party to the rigged conventions and thus opening up an all-out fight with the bureaucracy at this time. In the steel local here, for example, such a resolution could be carried almost any time, but it has been considered tactically more important to widen the base of support by utilizing the reports of PAC directors or CIO lobbyists to turn the floor of the Local into a Labor Party forum, rather than invite an attack upon the small local by the International. Thus it is sought to solidarize the members around a program in opposition to the bureaucracy and lay the groundwork for forthcoming struggles.

The bureaucracy's political consciousness which Comrade Cochran believes will serve them so well in leading the new radicalization,

is revealed to be nothing more nor less than "bourgeois political consciousness" which can serve them well in repressing any militancy in the ranks during periods of reaction and quiescence, but will serve them not at all in leading workers in an offensive struggle. The main task of the bureaucracy has been "the subordination of the trade union movement to the democratic state," as Trotsky wrote, and this task they have carried out with maximum energy and intelligence. But, in the long run, it will prove all to no avail. The bourgeois political consciousness of the bureaucracy and the fact that the unions are superbly organized, which appear as twin assets of theirs in the present period, will appear as a basic contradiction during periods of mass radicalization, when the superbly organized unionists move toward class political consciousness, and their very size and cohesiveness add to their momentum. "All the efforts of the labor aristocracy in the service of imperialism cannot in the long run save them from disaster."

### THE PARTY CAN LEAD THE NEXT UPSURGE

The campaign for a Labor Party, the struggle for union democracy, the energetic work to build a left wing and the influence of the Party in the unions are all intimately connected and involve a struggle against the labor bureaucracy. The political consciousness of the labor officials is an understanding of how best to fight against the ranks and the militants, as they move toward a class program and the Party. The bureaucrats have added to their core from college students in economics, from demoralized and corrupted ex-radicals, from those workers from the ranks most adept at compromising with management -- from people, in a word, with a clear petty bourgeois orientation and thinking. They know how to get along with the Democrats and the Republicans politically as well as possible. They know how to get along with plant management. They know everything except how to lead workers in struggle in their interests.

It is hard to imagine how the should-be members of Alcoholics Anonymous who frequent the taverns on the west coast and bear the title "International Representative," the ex-college students and the time-worn ex-militants can constitute a guiding force in leading the working class in the next upsurge. Especially in the "first stages, and a long time thereafter" they will demonstrate their incompatibility with the movement. It is possible that the move for a Labor Party will be initiated by some bureaucrat from the top, who, like Lewis, possesses more foresight and more flexibility -- and a bit more guts -- than his colleagues. The Labor Party movement, though it will have profound effects upon the whole labor movement, cannot be expected to rapidly transform the entire bureaucracy or even a major part of it. The weakest link in the whole CIO was the amalgamation of the Lewis-trained and Lewis-developed bureaucrats who formed the Steelworkers Organizing Committee. A Labor Party move requires new and fresh layers from the ranks: militants keyed to and part of the sentiment and aspirations of the workers, people with a record of shop struggle and political class consciousness who have earned the confidence of their fellow unionists. A bureaucracy that boasts with Steel's MacDonald of achieving "a degree of cooperation with industry which never existed before" cannot supply such people.

We can and must supply them. Our orientation should be in the direction of finding and being a part of the nucleus of the militants and thus taking the leadership away from the bureaucrats and our political opponents in the coming upsurge.

All the objective conditions point to the opportunity in the period ahead for the American proletariat and the SWP to fulfill their historically assigned roles. It remains only for the Party to attune itself subjectively to these opportunities and to prepare for our role as leaders of the American Revolution.

# # #



FROM COCHRANISM TO STALINISM

By Daniel Roberts

Four former members of the Cochranite caucus in Seattle have gone over to Stalinism. They left the party as convinced Stalinists -- more viciously Stalinist in their outlook than scores of members of the Communist Party. In their final statements to the branch they justified the liquidation of the Trotskyist opposition in the Soviet Union; avowed that Trotskyism was counter-revolutionary and a "parasitic formation" on the real revolutionary movement (i.e. the Stalinists); and supported the war-time record of the Stalinists of strike breaking and collaboration with the FBI.

What brought these four to the renunciation of any revolutionary positions and to the defense of counter-revolutionary Stalinism? What is the relation of their present Stalinist positions to their earlier Cochranite beliefs?

The relationship is an intimate one. They evolved from Cochranism to Stalinism. Cochranism served these four as a stepping stone to Stalinism. Two of the four had been recruited only two years ago from the Stalinist movement and had never been fully won to the Trotskyist program. In their case, Cochranism served to turn them around and head them back to Stalinism. The other two -- Bud and Sylvia Nelson -- though recruited from the Stalinist movement six years ago, had at one time been won over completely to the party's program. They travelled from Trotskyism to Stalinism by the following stages. They first moved to Stalinist conciliationism -- that is, to a rejection of our intransigent line of opposition to Stalinism and to the belief that the American Stalinist movement represented the anti-imperialist camp in this country. They put forward this notion -- echoing the Cochranite line as enunciated by Bartell in New York -- in the context of a terrible defeatism about revolutionary prospects in America and an utter loss of confidence in the ability of the American working class to march forward to Socialist consciousness for a long time to come. From Stalinist conciliationism they moved to pro-Stalinism -- namely, to the idea that the Socialist Workers Party could sustain itself as an independent party only on a Stalinophobic program, and that the program of Trotskyism would be realized through the Communist Party. This second stage was thus characterized by a formal adherence to the Trotskyist program, side by side with the belief that the party to build was not the Socialist Workers Party but the Communist Party. From there they moved to outright Stalinism.

During the course of their evolution the four made all the Cochranite catch-words and formulas their own.

1. They moved from the Cochranite discovery of the "new world reality" in which the world revolution was everywhere unfolding irreversibly through the channel of the Stalinist movement to the affirmation that Stalinism is the revolutionary leadership in the world today.

2. They moved from the discovery of the two "global class camps" and the dishonest struggle waged by the Cochranites against the Majority's alleged "Third Campism" -- by which the Cochranites mean the

Majority's insistence on maintaining an intransigently hostile attitude toward the Stalinist misleadership of the working class camp and our unceasing struggle for hegemony over the proletariat in mortal opposition to Stalinism -- to a pronouncement that the Trotskyist opposition to Stalinism is reactionary and counter-revolutionary.

3. They moved from the Cochranite denial that the Stalinist bureaucracy is counter-revolutionary through and through ("it is half revolutionary and half counter-revolutionary," their most unre-served spokesmen proclaimed) and from the notion of the self-reform of the Stalinist bureaucracy which "can no longer betray" to the assertion that Stalinism always was revolutionary, never betrayed, and never was bureaucratic.

4. They moved from the liquidationist line of the Cochranites -- the denial of the independent role of the SWP and the world Trotskyist movement -- to full acceptance of the Stalinist party.

Let the Cochranites ponder a bit on this phase of the evolution of the four. The Cochranites oppose the orthodox Leninist and Trotskyist concept held by the Majority that the revolutionary leadership must be consciously prepared in advance and that the role of our movement is to supply the leadership of the coming revolution. They counterpose the right of the masses to push forward their own leadership in the unfolding struggles. But the logical outcome of liquidationism -- as revealed in the pattern of evolution of the Seattle four -- is capitulation to and glorification of the bureaucratic formations that today dominate most of the working class movement. Thus liquidationism opens the door to endorsement of Stalinism or the American labor bureaucracy. The denial of the key role of leadership in the revolutionary struggle and the blind worship of the "irreversible objective process" concludes with submission to the rule of the misleaders of the labor movement.

5. The four moved from the Cochranite denigration of the Socialist Workers Party, its traditions and its leadership to the assertion that Trotskyism is a "parasitic formation" on the real revolutionary movement and to a justification of the reign of terror unleashed by Stalin against the Left-Oppositionists in Russia. The judgment of the Trotskyist movement as a "parasitic movement" is also the ultimate rendition of the Cochranite attack on the Majority for its alleged "sectarianism."

6. The four moved from the deep pessimism of the Cochranites as regards the American working class -- from the emphasis on the political backwardness of the American proletariat and the denial that this backwardness can and will be overcome in the next series of battles -- to the acceptance of the Stalinists' Popular Front line as the only realistic approach to the American workers.

7. The four were strongly impressed with the Cochranite argument that a party's record counts for nothing in the future stages of the class struggle. They bought wholesale the notion that our revolutionary record is of no special advantage to us and that the foul record of the American Stalinists will not plague them in the future. They moved from this notion to the wishful thought that the

American workers will forgive the Stalinists their betrayals and indeed come to realize -- when they gain "class consciousness" -- that these were not betrayals at all, but valid and justified moves for the defense of the Soviet Union.

8. The four moved from the slanderous attack on the majority leadership as "Stalinophobes" who kowtow to reactionary prejudices of the American workers to a denunciation of the Trotskyists as servants of the witch hunt. They swore to the last day of their membership that there is no such thing as healthy anti-Stalinism among the American workers -- only reactionary anti-Communism.

The Cochranites shielded the four throughout the whole course of their evolution to Stalinism. When the Majority caucus in Seattle first pointed to the problem of the emergence of a pro-Stalinist tendency and called on the Minority for help in winning this tendency back to the party, the local Cochranites charged the Majority with seeking to bust up their caucus. A new offer of collaboration -- made after the Minority itself had put the pro-Stalinists formally out of its caucus -- was likewise turned down. It was branded a "cheap maneuver designed to discredit the Minority." The problem of the emergence of a pro-Stalinist grouping was waved aside as insignificant and as lying off the main track of the discussion between the factions. Minority spokesmen in Seattle and New York proclaimed that the pro-Stalinist grouping was the natural reaction to the Majority's "Stalinophobia" and was even to be welcomed as an offset to the most extreme expressions of this "Stalinophobia." The Minority accused the Majority of launching a witch hunt against the four for daring to designate them by their right political name and for warning against the further possible evolution of this grouping to outright Stalinism. The Majority was accused of conducting a "witch hunt" also against the Minority because it traced the genesis of pro-Stalinism in the various formulas of the Cochranites.

By thus interposing themselves between the Majority and the pro-Stalinists, by refusing to make common cause with the Majority against pro-Stalinism, the Cochranites effectively prevented any possibility that might have existed of winning the four back to the SWP through straight-out discussions of Stalinism versus Trotskyism. On the contrary, the utterly disloyal behavior of the Cochranites guaranteed that the four would complete their evolution to Stalinism.

Finally, Cochranite unprincipledness, its grievance mongering, its venom, denigration, and hate for the Bolshevik party -- the subjective, emotional responses to the pressures of American imperialism to which the Cochranites are succumbing -- was the motor force that kept the Cochranites-turned-Stalinists moving throughout.

That is what they began with together with the rest of the local opposition in Seattle. This opposition fought initially for "correct organizational procedures and concepts" and for a congenial atmosphere in the party that would be free from the "pressures" of party building activities. But the grouping could not remain on the plane of organizational proposals and criticisms. Their overpowering defeatist moods needed political rationalization and expression. For the four the Cochranite arsenal provided all the primary material and Stalinism supplied the finished expression.

It gives one a weird feeling to read the full Stalinist line presented by the four and to still be able to distinguish the Cochranite components of that line. And yet their Stalinist position is not a hybrid. It is authentic Stalinism. Nor is this because Cochranism per se is Stalinist in its leanings. It is rather because Cochranism and Stalinism are both revisionist currents. It is the essential revisionism of Cochranism that is above all demonstrated in the evolution of the Stalinist grouping in Seattle from Cochranism to Stalinism.

Seattle  
September 28, 1953

EXCERPTS FROM EDUCATIONAL REPORT ON -  
"SWP POLICY AND PRACTICE IN DEFENSE OF CIVIL RIGHTS"

By Jean Simon

(Cleveland Branch Meeting, Oct. 18, 1953)

At our last branch meeting, in the course of a heated interchange, Lou Cooper made the extremely serious charge that the Socialist Workers Party does not defend the civil rights of Stalinists. When I challenged the factual truth of that statement, he said we merely give lip-service to their defense, we "defend them like they defended Kutcher."

His charge might be dismissed or ignored as polemical exaggeration made in the heat of factional dispute, if it did not involve two very serious issues:

1. It implies that the party follows the unprincipled practice of hypocritically preaching one thing and practicing another in the fight for civil rights.

2. It represents a distortion of the facts in order to try to prove the minority contention that the majority in the internal dispute is guilty of vulgar anti-Stalinism, of lining up with American imperialism to attack the Stalinists from the right instead of from the left -- that is, if Cooper still recognizes the need to attack the Stalinists at all.

His charges can be quickly disproved from our record, by reference to the facts alone. But I want to deal primarily with the problem of clarifying what I think he muddled: the question of our basic position on civil rights, and how we implement it in practice.

In the Declaration of Principles adopted by the founding convention of the SWP in Jan. 1938, while warning against the illusions of capitalist democracy, the party stated:

"Democratic rights are necessary for the masses at all times in order for them to organize, and to facilitate political education and propaganda in the ideas of socialism. The SWP therefore stands at all times for the defense and extension of the democratic rights of the masses, and advocates the broadest possible united fronts for such defense." (p. 26)

In the political resolution adopted by the Tenth National Convention of the SWP, Oct. 2-4, 1942, and published in the pamphlet, "The Workers and the Second World War," we further elaborated our position on democratic and civil rights in war time. (p. 41)

In the Minneapolis Trial of 1941 we acted on this. We demonstrated in practice how we stand up for our rights as a minority, and further developed the strategy of defense of the rights of a minority political group. ("Socialism on Trial," p. 83)

In "The Road to Peace," which first appeared as a series of articles in the paper in 1951, James P. Cannon elaborated in popular,

easily understood language why we defend democratic rights. He said:

"I am interested in democracy and profoundly believe in it as the mechanism by which the masses will organize the victorious struggle for their own emancipation from capitalism. I further believe that only by direct participation can the masses work out and solve the many and complex problems of the transition period after the proletarian revolution." (p. 39)

And, since by that time the war-time alliance and united attack by Stalinists and the government on democratic rights had ended, and the Stalinists themselves had become the objects of attack by the government and labor bureaucracy, Cannon expressed our attitude toward the defense of the civil rights of the Stalinists. (pp. 4-5)

Finally, the most recent expression by the party on specific application today of our policy on defense of civil rights can be found in the Political Resolution adopted by the May 1953 Plenum, as follows:

"The intensification of the witch-hunt which intimidates so many likewise engenders opposition in widening circles menaced by McCarthyism. This provides a broader basis for organizing resistance to the witch-hunters. Our party has never failed to support any struggles against encroachments on democratic rights or in defense of the victims of reactionary attack from the Stalinists in the Smith Act and Rosenberg cases to the Quakers and Jehovah's Witnesses.

"On its own behalf the party has carefully selected those issues and cases to fight back on which had the widest appeal and promised to rally the widest support. It has been practically impossible and politically undesirable to openly contest every act of victimization. At the same time, wherever the basic rights and legality of the party was threatened by federal, state or local legislation and effective forces could be mobilized, the party has accepted the challenge, as in the Seattle ballot case, the attempt to rule the SWP off the ballot in New York, the Illinois petition law 1030, and above all the Trucks Law in Michigan and the Devine Bill in Ohio.

"This series of actions springs from our determination to fight the witch-hunters for the utmost freedom of functioning under the given conditions. The party is resolved not to yield an inch more to the reaction than is necessary or compulsory. The revolutionary vanguard has the duty to contend for the broadest scope for its political work submitting to restriction and repression only against overwhelming odds and irresistible force, and returning to the open field as quickly as changed circumstances permit.

"The principled character of our policy in defending all victims of reaction, and the vigor of our defense work has enlisted broad labor and liberal support, exposed the Stalinists by contrast, and made the witch-hunters a bit more cautious in applying measures of repression against our party."

Our policy, then, can be summarized as follows: We defend democratic rights and civil rights as a whole not from any abstract, idealistic considerations, but because it is in the interest of the

class struggle and the proletarian revolution to do so. We attempt to organize the defense on the broadest possible basis consistent with principle, to get the widest support for such defense.

Until the current dispute in our midst, no one criticized our policy or practice on this question. In fact, we were usually recognized in left-wing and radical circles and minority groups, such as the Negro movement, as the one consistent, principled tendency on this score. Even our enemies in bourgeois circles did not challenge our record on this point.

But the specific question that is the root of the confusion raised by some people in the party today concerns our policy in regard to the defense specifically of Stalinists.

First, let us remember that defense of the CP, as we see it, is a part of the defense of civil rights. To substitute a part for the whole, or to consider the defense of the CP the whole fight, even today when they are the most immediate victims of the witch-hunt, is a serious logical error that could disorient the struggle and result in wrong tactics.

For example, it could result in putting the chief emphasis in the paper and elsewhere on the defense of the Stalinists, and subordinating the defense of non-Stalinist victims, of the Negro struggle for civil rights, of the defense of democratic rights of the labor movement, etc.

Second, let us remember that we owe no special obligation to the Stalinists for their defense, separate from our defense of the civil rights of all. We have no obligation to jump into action primarily when they are victimized, any more so than when others are victimized. They have no special claim to the sympathy of the working class. As a matter of fact, their own policy and practice of knifing the defense of working class victims whom they could not compel to follow their line; their own policy of making exceptions to united defense of working class victims -- this was what set the precedent and provided the rationalizations for other unprincipled elements in the labor and liberal movement.

Despite their record, not because of it -- despite what they stand for, not because of it -- we defend their civil rights.

The next question, and apparently the one Cooper is most confused about (to give the most generous interpretation to his statements), is: How do we defend their rights?

First, our principled support is expressed in our press, on all cases, Stalinist as well as others. We express our defense of their civil rights while distinguishing ourselves from their politics. We attempt to win sympathy for their defense, but not for their unprincipled or even counter-revolutionary policies or actions.

Second, we try to pick out the best cases around which to organize campaigns and conduct actions. Our considerations in making the selection are, among others, the issues around which the broadest support can be mobilized, our own resources and strength in the

situation, and the relative importance of all current demands on our energies and resources.

Third, we conduct our defense activities in such a way as to avoid as much as possible being identified with the Stalinists. We do this (1) to avoid misleading workers into support of Stalinism; (2) to avoid reducing our effectiveness in mobilizing broad support for their civil rights from other opponents of Stalinism; and (3) to avoid being linked with them and isolated along with them from the workers movement.

We think the conduct of the campaigns against the Trucks Law and the Devine Law and the Rosenberg case are examples of the correct application of these considerations. In fact, a review of the paper for the past six months will show a consistent and principled line on all defense cases.

A final bit of clarification on the Rosenbergs and others accused of sabotage or spying:

We do not advocate spying or sabotage as a means of defending the Soviet Union or furthering the world revolution, just as Marxists and Leninists have never advocated terrorism. The Bolshevik party of Lenin grew up in political opposition to the earlier terrorist movement. We oppose to those policies the proletarian revolution as the means of furthering the interests of the working class, and as the best means of defending the Soviet Union from imperialist attack from without and counter-revolution from within.

Hence, our defense of Stalinists against charges brought against them is based not on any sympathy for their methods, but on our recognition that civil rights and democratic rights must be defended for all -- the right to fair trial, to freedom of speech, press, etc., the right to think and to advocate unpopular ideas.

To say that we support the civil rights of Stalinists in the same way they supported Kutcher is a lie. We call for their defense; they called for opposition to the defense of Kutcher. We characterize their victimization as an attack on the civil rights of all; they characterized our victimization in Minneapolis as justified and not vigorous enough, and the Kutcher case as a "phoney" civil rights case.

The record is clear.

We will continue to stand on our principled policy on civil rights, because it is the only one that can further the struggle against capitalist reaction.

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