

C O P Y

Seattle
January 12, 1968

Dear Farrell:

I'm writing to submit the following proposals for the consideration of the Political Committee although I'm sure you have already considered the matter.

1. That our trade union comrades nationally intervene in the Labor Leadership For Peace movement.
2. That the Party prepare for publication a pamphlet on labor and the war in Vietnam.

I don't think it is necessary to motivate these proposals, but I do think a few comments are in order.

Leaving aside the obvious shortcomings of the Chicago Labor "leadership" Assembly which can best be described as pusillanimous, it nevertheless was an unprecedented action. In the modern period -- to my knowledge -- notably World Wars 1 and 2, labor opposition has occurred before and after, never during the war itself. This of course affirms our general appreciation of the dynamic of the general antiwar movement which we have already called attention to.

When we add to this the again obvious inclination of American workers to place their class interests first and the war second, it is not difficult to realize that there is something serious afoot that requires some serious attention and action on our part.

From the point of view of Seattle, for example, I think it is significant that Ken Munson, editor of the IAM paper that represents some 50,000 Boeing workers participated in the Chicago conference and we know of several other local leaders that supported the conference position paper.

Equally important is the fact that if we properly utilize this labor development, we can do a great deal more to cut across a growing tendency of atomization and adventurism that is beginning to occur among layers of youth in the antiwar movement.

In the past, the ruling class has been successful in maintaining a cleavage between labor and the antiwar movements, I think it is our responsibility to fight against this happening again.

If there is any problem with personnel in preparing material on the above subject, I will be glad to collaborate with research, exchange of views, etc.

Comradely yours,

s/ Tom Leonard

C O P Y

New York
January 16, 1968

Tom Leonard

Dear Tom,

Our thoughts here have been running along lines similar to yours concerning the antiwar trends in the unions. You will note in a recent Militant a piece I wrote about the gestation of new oppositions in the union ranks stimulated in large part by the adverse impact of the war on the workers. In fact the war appears to be a major precipitant of the developing crisis of leadership in the unions. I will give a talk on the subject at a forum here this week, making the following key points:

Meany doesn't speak for the union ranks. Opposition to the war among the workers closely parallels the situation in the country as a whole. Rebellious moods are growing as the workers tend to put their own class interests ahead of the imperialist war needs. The incipient revolt in the ranks is causing some union bureaucrats to differentiate themselves from Meany's jingoism. Their line is adapted to that of the liberal capitalist doves and fails to meet the needs of the situation. They are timid about their opposition to Meany and they fear starting something in the ranks that will get out of control. Even so we can gain advantage from the rift in the union bureaucracy over the war issue. It helps promote antiwar trends in the ranks, presents openings to fight out the policy issues involved at every level in the unions and sets in motion forces capable of going beyond the control of any wing of the union bureaucracy. We should intervene in the Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace, adjusting our tactics to the present stage of developments. Starting from the positive aspects of the present break with Meany's line, we can work to promote all-out opposition to the war and the creation of a leadership capable of the necessary struggle. Along these lines the antiwar trend in the unions can become a major ingredient of our work to build a class struggle left wing.

Tapes of the talk will be available to the branches where it can help develop awareness of the changing situation in the unions and stimulate thought on the subject. Also I am planning to write an article on union developments in general for the May-June issue of the ISR. As we advance further into this vital aspect of the fight against war pamphlets and other material will be needed as well.

In response to your offer I will welcome any background material you may be able to supply, along with your further thoughts on the general subject.

Comradely,

s/Farrell Dobbs