

Bulletin

OF THE WORKERS PARTY

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TRADE UNION RESOLUTION

The Fourth Convention of the Workers Party takes place eight months after the close of the Second World Imperialist War. In a very important sense our party can be called a product of the Second World Imperialist War. The party was born in a struggle, inside the Socialist Workers Party; a struggle directly connected with the war and with issues growing out of the war. Virtually the entire life of the party was lived during the war years. The party got its first opportunity to enter industry; to enter the unions, to emerge from a dreary isolation, to begin to acquire genuine experience in the class struggle; with the rapid and prodigious expansion of industry during the first years of the war.

It was only in the last two years of the war that the party really emerged from an "underground existence", and made the first appreciable break away from the status of a propaganda sect. This was the real meaning and content of what was called "the proletarian orientation of the party", "the industrialization of the party membership." It was during the war years that the Trotskyist movement in the U.S. for the first time had a real opportunity to begin sinking its roots in the proletariat, in the unions and in the mass production industries, where the decisive and most progressive section of the working class is employed.

It was during this period of vast industrial expansion that our young and inexperienced comrades had the opportunity, for the first time in their lives, to become an integral part of the working class and to participate in the struggles of the proletariat.

Almost the whole party had the opportunity to acquire this experience to some degree. While more than 150 of the male comrades, who entered the factories at the beginning of the war, were called up; their places were taken by younger male comrades and female comrades, who carried on to the close of the war. Thus the party, as a whole, was able to gain invaluable experience in the class struggle: to learn what the working class is like, to acquire much needed experience in the practical aspects of trade union activity and to begin that all-important lesson: how to advance the political program of the party for the trade unions.

To attempt to evaluate the activity of the party in the unions over the past six years without understanding this can only sow confusion, engender pessimism and lay the foundation for a retreat from the factories and the unions. It is necessary therefore to emphasize and re-emphasize, that the past six years were a period during which the Trotskyist movement, as exemplified by our party, for the first time shook itself loose from a predominant literary and propaganda participation in the class struggle, and took up the class struggle in the factory, the union and on the picket line. This is where we begin; where we begin to appraise our course in the past, and where we begin to organize our perspectives for the future.

We cannot talk about our perspectives in the trade unions, however, or even about the situation in the unions, in any fruitful way for the party until we face frankly the situation in which the party finds itself today. With the close of the war the trade union work of the party was all but disestablished. Our comrades, who were young, who had entered industry late and who therefore were among the lowest in seniority, were laid off and the party found itself out of the factory and out of the active life of the unions. This was the situation which the party found itself in at the beginning of the "reconversion period"; and while there are signs of improvement, this is pretty much the situation with the party today.

We expect to be back in the factories and back in the unions, but we are not there today. This was borne in on the party with tremendous seriousness at the time of the GM strike. Here when an important section of the working class was carrying on a struggle against a powerful section of the bourgeoisie, our party could only stand on the sidelines and distribute LABOR ACTION. And this at a time when the GM workers had raised the most advanced slogan ever developed in the labor movement, in the U.S., during the strike. We had to stand on the sidelines because we had no members in a single GM plant. It was to be in the discomfoting position of being revolutionaries without a union, of being divorced from the most advanced of the striking workers and with no opportunity to intervene save through our press. This is a serious question, for revolutionaries with a correct program and with an unblemished record to find themselves with no place to apply that program; without the opportunity to test that program with the most advanced workers, right at the time when these workers have reached a high point in the class struggle.

The Active Workers Conference approved a resolution entitled "The Role of the Party in the Trade Unions". The analyses contained in that resolution are valid today. But that resolution or any document on the role of the party in the mass movement, can have merely a pedagogical value so long as the party remains out of the factory and out of the unions. No amount of analysis, of interpretation, of comment and advice, is or can become a correct substitute for active participation in the concrete and organized struggles of the workers and toilers. It is upon them that we base ourselves. It is in their ranks that we sink our roots. It is from their struggles that we draw our strength and renew our strength. It is they whom we call upon to assume leadership of the masses and the leadership of the nation. We pose the question of the leadership of the proletariat and the toilers for every struggle of the masses as a whole, or for any section of the masses: for the Negro in the struggle for democratic rights, for the veteran as he seeks to solve his post-war problems, for the women workers, for the lower ranks of the urban middle class and for the working farmers.

In our party it should be considered a mere truism, among the older members, when we say these things. To say that in order to influence the proletariat, we must be in their midst should be

considered a platitude. To be in their midst must mean, and in the concrete circumstances can only mean, to be in the factory and in the union. If the party is to grow and prosper it must not substitute other types or areas of activity for the factory and the union.

The most excellent political and trade union resolutions can not be a substitute for the living experience of participation in the life and organized activities of the real working class. The present excellence of LABOR ACTION is no substitute for our presence in the factory and the union.

For the present WP to be in the factory and the unions, however, is not enough. Even if every member of our party were in the unions and active, the party's influence would be very slight. It is necessary not only that the party be in the factory and the union with a correct program; it is just as important that we multiply our forces and many fold by recruiting from the factory and the union.

These are pressing and concrete problems which the WP must face and work out a solution for. The general political line of the party has been tested in action. The overall trade union line of the party has been tested in action and found fundamentally correct. The main problem for us today is the organizational problem of getting the party back into industry, back into the unions and the reorganization of the party industrial concentrations. Our re-entry into industry and into the unions must be followed by planned and intensive recruitment to the party.

II. The Situation in the Labor Movement

In a communication to the party branches, over the signature of the National Secretary, the statement was made that "the end of the war has unleashed a powerful movement of the workers which was successfully restrained and even suppressed during the war by the bourgeoisie acting through its labor lieutenants, the trade union bureaucracy. This movement is manifested in the series of strikes that has swept some of the most important basic industries of the country. It is more clearly manifested in the demands the workers are making and most clearly manifested in the demands that were made in the strike against the General Motors Corporation."

It was impossible for the trade union bureaucracy to restrain the labor movement after the war was ended. The restraining influence of the labor bureaucrats and the political finesse of Roosevelt, who was no longer at the helm, did not operate successfully after the close of hostilities. The whole history of the working class in the U.S., its militancy and sense of freedom, worked against their accepting any plan for carrying over the wartime conditions into the period of peace. For the ranks of labor, the wartime concessions were only a temporary cessation of the struggle; a truce entered into with the bourgeoisie. The patriotism, the class collaboration of the working class masses must not be equated with the conscious chauvinism and the conscious class collabor-

ation of the trade union bureaucracy. While the ranks march under the leadership of the labor bureaucracy, they do not accept this leadership uncritically. From time to time they find themselves out of step with the bureaucracy; they break ranks and explore other avenues of struggle and other programs than those traditional with the trade union movement.

This is precisely what transpired in the course of the 1946 strike wave. The resentment of labor over its treatment during the war and the betrayal of its confidence by the government was further aggravated by the clear realization that the big bourgeoisie was proceeding in an organized way to lower further the standard of living of the masses by wage reductions and price increases. In order to force higher price concessions from the government, the bourgeoisie was retarding reconversion and the resumption of production and thereby threatening labor with unemployment. While this in itself could serve as an assault on the unions, the ruling class added to its offensive the demand that "company security" clauses be included in union contracts.

The latest phase in the offensive of monopoly capitalism is portrayed in the efforts of the automobile manufacturers to reduce the unit cost of production by a renewal of the speed-up technique, so rampant in the automobile industry particularly before the organization of that industry.

The monopoly capitalist proceeded with a nation-wide offensive against the masses to accomplish their purposes. They aimed at: 1. Price control by monopolism without burdensome government regulation or restriction. 2. The hold-up of production or distribution pending the breaking of the price ceilings. 3. Consent to only the barest minimum increase in wages, with the idea in mind of using the wage increases as a talking point for price rises. The unions were expected to collaborate with the employers in putting this scheme across. Some employers sought to inveigle organized labor into acquiescence by taking the initiative in granting small wage rises. 4. Seeking tax relief and availing themselves of excess profits tax carry back provisions. 5. Reducing the unit cost of production and increasing productivity by the speed-up, time study procedures and technological improvement. 6. The capstone of the whole offensive was the demand for "Company security." This was intended not only to weaken the unions generally but to lay the base for the assumption of leadership in the locals by the most conservative and class collaborationist elements.

The unions resisted this assault. They have slowed up the drive. The lead in this counter-offensive was taken by the CIO with the UAW as the vanguard. It is of great significance, however, that the strikewave was not confined to the CIO. In it were numerous AFL unions, including the UMWA, independents and notification of the taking of a strike vote by two or three railway internationals. The first half of 1946 witnessed a real upheaval in the ranks of organized labor, aimed not only at holding the line of gains already made but to increase those gains.

The high tide of the strike wave was reached in the demand of the GM workers for an inspection of the GM books by the union and the further demand for wage increases without any corresponding increase in the price of GM products. While this demand did not catch on even in the UAW as a whole it did succeed in stirring a large section of workers to a level of thinking not reached heretofore. It was our party which really understood the GM demands and which exposed their revolutionary implications in the columns of LABOR ACTION. It was the party in fact which gave the demands the label: "The GM Program."

While Reuther, the social-democratic reformist liberal had far better insight into the real situation, he was no more equal to what was demanded of a leadership than were Murray, Thomas, William Green or any of the rest of the more conservative trade union leaders. In the manner of the reformist, Reuther could only propose a partial program and a partial solution. While it is true that his partial program was revolutionary in implication, Reuther dealt with the "GM Program" as though there were no difference between it and the simple demand for 30 cents an hour increase in wages. In his actions during the strike and subsequently, Reuther made the "GM Program" and the 30 cents demands, a matter of ordinary collective bargaining procedure. This became exceedingly clear when Reuther agreed, on the basis of his logic and his "arithmetic", that if profits were reduced to zero wages might be reduced to zero. It was only our party which gave the correct answer which is embodied in our transition slogan for the nationalization of the basic industries and enterprises.

The timidity of Reuther, his petty-bourgeois reformist proclivities and his basic class collaborationist notions, were a major factor in keeping the preponderant influence in the hands of the outright conservatives and reactionaries and the government. With such a leadership, the workers could only halt the offensive of the monopoly capitalist for a season. Right at the time when the working class was demonstrating the first faint beginnings of emergence from the suffocating effects of bourgeois pressure and applied indoctrination during the war; the trade union bureaucracy as a whole was capitulating to the Truman Administration. Not only this but this leadership was also engaging in internal factional wire-ulling and obstructionist tactics for the maintenance of the bureaucratic privileges and prestige of the various groups and cliques in the labor movement.

Because of the inane class collaboration, the political skullduggery and the petty considerations motivating the trade union bureaucracy; combined with the political backwardness of the ranks of labor, the strike wave could not become an all-powerful movement of labor against the capitalist ruling class. The full political implications in the struggle were not revealed to the masses by their leadership. Hence it was possible for the leadership to retard the development of planned and organized mass militancy among the workers themselves and to center the struggle in the White House and the government fact-finding boards. Those among the trade union bureaucracy, like Reuther, who had some under-

standing of the explosive nature of the struggle which was taking place, shuddered as they contemplated the possibility of their being called upon to lead labor in a real class struggle which would include not only the monopoly capitalist but the government as well. Here was a working class seared by its wartime experiences and skeptical of any real improvement in its condition through the agency of the employers and the government, but ready for battle. This was true not only of the CIO workers but of the AFL, railway and the workers in the independent unions. There was at least an elementary unity of feeling, unity of demands and an emerging consciousness of harmony of interest.

Inherent in this concrete situation was the opportunity for the accomplishment of many things in the labor movement. Simplest of all was the opportunity for winning the full wage demands as they were put forward. Also, any adequate interpretation of the strike wave must take into account the fact that this struggle indicated the necessity for the unification of the labor movement. If the labor bureaucracies had posed the question of unification; explaining the nature of the bourgeois offensive and the role of the government, labor as a whole would have given an affirmative reply. It is in just such situations as the last strike wave, following on the war that the unification of the labor movement can be posed realistically. In the present concrete circumstances, to put the question in any other connection is either romantic or else objectively to support the designs of the labor leadership in attempting to preserve and protect their own bureaucratic interests.

In this strike wave situation, labor was face to face, in the most realistic manner, with the necessity for making a decision for independent political action and the formation of labor's own party. Here was a mass movement of labor with demands primarily for the enhancement of its material condition but with clear undertones of dissatisfaction with being confined to the sphere of economic demands as they have been formerly understood in the trade union movement.

This primitive consciousness of the need for new directions was smothered by the bureaucracy and directed away from any program for sustained and irreconcilable independent action by the proletariat.

We have said that the proletariat replied to the offensive of the united bourgeoisie with a counter-offensive. It must be understood however that this is true only in the political sense of having advanced new slogans and on a higher level than ever before. This was the counter-offensive. It could have been made to yield tremendous gains for the masses if it had been backed up with the necessary militancy and aggressiveness. This was lacking in the strike wave. While the political content of the recent strike wave was incomparably higher than the sit-in strikes of 1937, the great steel strike of 1919 or the fierce strikes of the 70's, it had none of the type of militancy associated with these strikes.

With all of its militancy and its political progress, the working class today is faced with a grave danger, which must be resolved if the masses are to escape defeat. For the present labor movement, this danger has its origins in the New Deal and the labor policies of the Roosevelt New Deal: what has become known in the CIO as "the labor policies of the late President Roosevelt." This means in effect, the continuation by the CIO leadership of dependence on the government, that is, on the Democratic Party, so long as this Party or any leading section of it poses as the party of the New Deal. This indoctrinates labor with the idea that it must not only make demands of the government but that it must depend on the government in the struggle against the monopoly capitalist. This induces in the masses a tendency to substitute reliance on the bourgeois state for their own independent class action.

Hence there is a progressive tendency for strikes to be settled in Washington and not on the picket lines.

This danger may become particularly significant today just because labor is becoming more politically conscious. Political action of the type indulged in by the PAC, combined with tranquil picket lines can lead labor to terrible defeat. In all of its history the labor bureaucracy has executed no greater betrayal than its insistence on labor marking time on the picket line, while this bureaucracy capitulated to a government whose existence is in large part due to the political support of a working class PAC, which labor has been led to believe is its own political weapon.

Our party has not paid sufficient attention in its propaganda to the clarification of the issues involved in this situation. The CIO bureaucracy has led the membership to believe that the New Deal regime of Roosevelt or the quasi-New Deal regime of Truman is a government in which labor can have some measure of confidence. They lead labor to make demands of the government and leave the working class with the delusion that these demands can be advanced with confidence. They, all of them in the CIO put the PAC forward as genuine independent working class political action. As is to be expected of course, they at no time, expose the class role of the government or the nature of the capitalist state. What is important is that it is doubtful that the workers get a clear distinction and understanding of the differences between our propaganda for making demands on the government and the procedure of the labor bureaucrats of the CIO.

It is only through the combination of the emerging political consciousness of the masses with the traditional organized physical militancy, that the way will be opened for the development of class consciousness and the formation of any new organs of struggle which will be appropriate for a higher stage of the class struggle. This stage will not be reached of course without the conscious and effective intervention of the Revolutionary Socialist Party. Here is an appropriate place for the party's labor party slogan; to clarify the meaning of our propaganda for calling on the government and making demands on the government.

It is necessary, for labor to understand the difference between political action on the part of the bourgeoisie, which already has social power and attempts at political action by a class which has only its numbers. When this is correctly understood by labor it will perceive the necessity for maintaining the traditional forms of struggle in the most militant manner and integrating these forms of struggle with independent political action. Otherwise, the proletariat will fall victim to the most insipid and defeatist forms of reformist parliamentarism.

It is important that the party come to a full and complete understanding of the situation in the labor movement. While it is imperative that we do not overestimate the level of development of the working class, it is no less imperative that we do not underestimate this development. We must not develop moods of pessimism or cynicism (e.g., the "dumb workers" attitude of the petty bourgeois radical). Our faith in the proletariat to come to its own aid if it receives support and guidance from the vanguard, particularly from the revolutionaries, is based on the accomplishments of the proletariat in the U.S., which are clear to be seen. The past ten years have witnessed tremendous progress by the working class. From the formation of the CIO to the organization of the PAC is a period of remarkable progress. This progress continues and is accentuated today by the projected organizing drives of the CIO and the AFL in the South. No matter what the conflicts between the two organizations may be, the southern workers will be organized for the first time in history. The economic, social and political implications in this campaign of organization go far beyond the intentions or the understanding of the trade union leadership. The social and political forces which will be unleashed will extend far beyond the confines of the South.

Here, for the first time, a really effective blow will be dealt the poll tax. For the first time since Reconstruction, an effective assault will be made on oppression, exploitation and jim-crow in the South. The drive to organize the South cannot but be a campaign to dry up the rivers of hate and jim-crow at their geographical source. The material to be organized is the poor whites and the poor Negroes. With the elevation of the economic standards of both groups the way will be prepared for their common social and political development. The organization of the poor Negroes and the poor whites into unions together is the broad highway over which the masses of the South and of the nation must begin the march toward the acquisition of their common and their particular demands and the fulfillment of their class interests.

The progress of the working class is hindered and retarded by the existence and activities of the totalitarian and anti-working class Stalinist party. This police party is especially dangerous today. Its activities and machinations are a barrier in the way of the political development of the proletariat and to the intervention of our party. With its recent "left turn", the Communist Party again placed itself in position to draw support from the working class. It can do this because this party is rooted in the unions. It has not only thousands of members in the

unions and complete control over several internationals of the CIO but it also has people in leading positions in the CIO and the AFL.

It is not enough for our party to take the position that the "left turn" is not a genuine left turn, that the turn was dictated from the Kremlin, that when it suits Stalin, he will order a right turn. These things are clearly understood by the WP but they are understood only vaguely by the working class. While, in any case, the agitation and the propaganda of the WP against the Stalinist party will be limited due to the small forces of the WP, we can and must make such agitation and propaganda as we can carry on, more concrete than we have in the past. To say correctly that we must wage political warfare against the Stalinists should not mean that it should be over the head of the average worker.

The most potent blow which can be aimed at the Stalinists today is the call for independent political action and the formation of the labor party. In order to make such an attack effective, however, the party and its members in the unions must be prepared to combat the confusion in the heads of the workers about the meaning of independent political action. In order to head off independent political action the Stalinists are today very slyly giving aid and comfort to notions about a "third progressive party", a "broad party with a not too narrow base", and a "party of labor, farmers, the middle class and small businessmen."

To put the Stalinists to rout by even the most radical economic demands will present some difficulties today in the period of their new "Marxist-Leninist" turn. The party members in the unions, however, can accomplish something here if they aim always to use and exploit what distrust and skepticism about the Stalinists among the workers, in connection with the past positions taken by the CP.

The working class in the U.S. occupies a favored and advantageous position among the world's toilers. Our trade unions do not struggle for reconstitution in a land ravished by fascism and war. We have had no experience with the concentration camp, the military conqueror, the vicissitudes of civil war, colonial exploitation or Stalinist barbarism. We do not attempt to function and raise our standard of living in a country which, in order to carry on must seek loans from another and wealthier country. The working class in the U.S. is a relatively free working class. This freedom and this favored position however places great responsibilities on the working class in the U.S. We and our trade unions have first of all the responsibility to combat any and every tendency of our own bourgeoisie to coddle and pacify the working class here through the exploitation and degradation of the European and Asiatic masses.

It is the responsibility of labor in the U.S. to demonstrate its solidarity with the wretched millions of Europe and Asia by rendering them material aid, always under the control of workers organizations. The demand by labor for high production in the

U.S. should not be for the purpose of supplying this country alone, nor for export in the regular channels of commerce, but in order to supply the material needs of the millions of labor outside the U.S. Labor should not succumb to the propaganda of the bourgeois hypocrites and their petty-bourgeois menials who tell the masses to tighten their belts so that others may have a few more calories. Labor in the U.S. must demand that the whole world be fed, housed and clothed, that production here be advanced to meet the demand. It is in this concrete way that American labor can demonstrate its solidarity with its class in Europe and Asia.

A significant phase of the transformation of the trade union movement is the ever increasing number of Negroes and women who are entering industry and the unions. This was tremendously accelerated during the war. While it may be true that white women will not remain in industry in such large numbers as during the war, there will be a far larger number of female workers than before the war. In many instances, these women were middle class women who were only attracted by the higher wages paid in industry than in the white collar occupations. But because of the probability that women will represent a larger part of the labor force than before the war, it will be necessary for the unions to give greater attention to the problems connected with the integration of female workers into the unions, to the problem of equal pay for women workers and to the very difficult matter of dispelling the reactionary cultural attitudes of male workers toward women workers.

In the case of Negro workers, it will be imperative for the unions to be continually on the alert against discriminatory practices by employers and the unions themselves. The post-war period will be one where there will be a tendency for the employers to revert to their former jim-crow practices in connection with the hiring, classification and promotion of Negroes. It is only the labor movement which is in position to deal with this question effectively and in the proper working class manner. The only effective manner of dealing with this complex question is in the development of class solidarity, both in the economic and political arena and not through any extraordinary procedures and proposals for special considerations for Negroes, such as the recent super-seniority proposals made by the Stalinists and others.

Negro women workers present an opportunity to the unions today to express class solidarity in a most outstanding manner. During the past four years Negro women for the first time have become factory workers in large numbers. This is a radical change in the economic status of these women, who have been confined heretofore largely to domestic service and the most menial and laborious labor in the fields, laundries and as scrubwomen.

(The situation with the veterans in the unions is discussed in a special resolution on this question.)

III. The Role of the Party

It is only by giving mature consideration of the questions considered in sections I and II of this resolution that The Role of the Party in the Trade Unions should or can be considered in any concrete way. Furthermore, it must be emphasized again and again that in discussing the role of the party we must keep constantly in mind that we are talking about the Workers Party as it is today, and neither a large mass party nor some ideal party which has been conjured up in a resolution. Also the role of the party must be outlined to fit the present situation in the working class and the actual and present level of political consciousness among the real workers, including the "advanced" workers.

Not only must the party consider its role for the present and future in the manner of the above but we must keep these things in mind when we appraise the trade union work of our party for the past years of its existence.

Our party and every member has ample reason to be justly proud of its record of activity in the trade union movement. We do not mean by this that we did not make serious mistakes, that the work was always properly and adequately directed or that we could not have done better. This is particularly true in the matter of the low recruitment and in our laxity in presenting, for instance, the party labor party slogan in the unions. What we mean, first of all, is that the party worked out and applied to considerable degree a correct line for the unions. We conducted excellent propaganda against the no-strike pledge, the WLB and incentive pay. The high mark of our activity for the revocation of the no-strike pledge occurred at the 1944 convention of the UAW. Here we supplied the political and a large part of the organizational leadership for the struggle which took place in that convention and for the formation of the Rank and File Progressive Group.

The Labor Secretary or some other members of the Party were assigned to cover all the important trade union conventions for the party and for LABOR ACTION. The presence of leading party people at these conventions not only gave us the opportunity to deal with the concrete questions of the labor movement, but these trips also were the source of valuable contacts for the party. In any number of instances, the party was able to intervene directly in the procedure of the conventions and in some small way, at times, be instrumental in determining the results.

We distributed hundreds of thousands of copies of LABOR ACTION and pamphlets in the mass organizations and among the workers employed in the factories. The Educational Department issued an excellent manual on certain theoretical aspects of the trade union question. A great weakness in the conduct of this work has been that no trade union pamphlets have been issued and far too little educational literature for the party and for general distribution.

While our fraction work has been spotty and generally weak,

there have been notable exceptions. These exceptions occurred in the ship, electrical, automobile and railroad workers unions. Outstanding here, for a party the size of the WP, was work in ship local 42 in Philadelphia, Local 425 in New York, in the auto locals in Detroit and Chicago, the formation of the RWJAC among railroad workers, in the steel local at Reading.

Recently the party has recruited some excellent workers in the Iron Range section of Minnesota, who are going ahead with a full program of activities in the unions and making headway in their efforts to establish a party branch in this region.

It may be necessary to call the attention of the party again to our activity in S.E. Mo., among the sharecroppers and tenant farmers, especially to the strike of 1942 which was organized and lead by the party.

In the matter of party propoganda, the outstanding accomplishment were around the miners' strikes of 1943 and the GM strike of this year. In both of these struggle our party took the lead in propoganda through the columns of LABOR ACTION. In each of these struggles, it was our party alone which provided adequate and correct agitational, propoganda and interpretive material to the working class.

These are a few of the highlights in the activity of the party in this field. They are included here to call the attention of the party to these important facts and to aid the party in considering its activity for the coming days. What is necessary to impress on the party is the pertinent fact that the accomplishments of the WP, being what it is and with the forces at our disposal, has made an extraordinary record in the field of trade union work. There is no basis whatsoever for gloom, pessimism or for the party to be influenced by any agitation suggesting the superiority of other arenas of party activity.

During our trade union life, the WP as a whole has resisted correctly sectarian and ultra-radical approaches to its trade unions work. This, too, is one of our accomplishments, considering that we are a party preponderantly comprised of politically educated, loyal, active, but inexperienced youth. On the other hand, we have not succumbed to the trade union conservatism of the SWP. Even during the war we did not establish caution and watchful waiting as a line of policy, in the manner of the SWP.

In playing its proper role in the unions, the party must always keep uppermost a clear conception of the nature of political activity and the responsibility of the Marxist party to assume the main responsibility for giving political education to the working class. We are not primarily or distinctly trade union organizers. The party is and must continue to be that instrument whose chief function is to provide a political program for the unions. It is only by emphasising this that we will be able to make the ranks of the party understand that TRADE UNION WORK IS POLITICAL WORK, that along with the political propoganda carried in LABOR ACTION,

trade union work is the main political work of the party. It is the failure to understand this which is in part responsible for petty-bourgeois or sectarian proposals to reduce the amount of trade union activity which the party engages in or to suggest the possibility of greener fields elsewhere than in the factories and the unions.

New proletarian members of the party must be drilled in this fundamental conception until they clearly distinguish between the party and the union, and between political propaganda and the routine day to day trade union activity.

In playing its proper role in the unions, the party will find it necessary again and again to distinguish between the most conservative section of the trade union bureaucracy and those in the bureaucracy who for whatever reason, from time to time play a progression role. While the party does not give advice, even to the progressive trade union bureaucrats, we do demand that they carry out in action any progressive program which they advance. Not only this, but we agitate the workers to support such programs and always to demand that the program be made effective in the union.

The party must at all times make a clear and consistent distinction between the labor bureaucracy as a whole and the bourgeoisie. This must always be clear in our propaganda, our agitation and in our activity in the unions. Because the labor bureaucracy is a part of the labor movement, and an important part, the party assumes responsibility for and a protective interest in the labor bureaucracy, whenever this bureaucracy is in conflict with the bourgeoisie. Whenever we defend or support the labor bureaucracy, we do so for the prosecution of the class struggle and for the defense of the working class as a whole against the ruling class.

In this connection it is necessary to discuss the position which the party should take in relation to conflicts between the non-Stalinist labor leaders and the Stalinist Party. To begin with it is necessary for the party to understand that the labor bureaucracy has its roots in the labor movement as well as its chief interests. There it moves and lives and has its being. Without the trade unions it is nothing. While it is criminally class collaborationist, its class collaboration cannot be complete due to its place in capitalist society, to the economic pressure of their memberships and also due to the fact that they are not fully acceptable to the bourgeoisie. Furthermore the trade union bureaucracy is politically, a bourgeois-democratic bureaucracy and supports all the forms of bourgeois-democratic political social and economic life.

The Stalinists, in the labor movement, on the other hand, are the agents of a totalitarian anti-working class political party. They seek to use the labor movement for the ends of Stalinism. They do not operate, except conjuncturally, within the framework of bourgeois democracy but within the framework of Stalinist totalitarianism.

It is these political and social disiderata which determine the attitude of the party when confronted with a conflict between the Stalinists and the old line trade union bureaucracy. In conflicts in the union: election for union officers, etc., it should be the position to support the genuine trade union leadership, over against the Stalinists. This does not mean nor should it imply an uncritical attitude toward the labor bureaucracy. Nor does it mean nor should it imply that we give political support to the trade union bureaucracy. We retain our political independence as well as our trade union programmatic independence. In relation to the trade union bureaucracy we do not abstain nor do we support the Stalinists.

Where there is another alternative as for instance in the case of the existence of a progressive group with influence and a mass following, indicating that support of this group will not assure the victory of the Stalinists, the WP should of course support such progressive group.

Properly understood and when presented in such a way as to reduce the possibility of it being used demagogically, such a position can become the basis for the political education of the workers and the advancement of the line of the WP.

The general trade union program of the party must be one suitable for the proletariat and the toilers as a class. We must begin with an appeal to the entire class and based on the interests of the working class as a whole. Specifically the WP program will not be directed at that mythical person vaguely and cryptically known as the "advanced worker." In the concrete situation today in the U.S. such an appeal would in reality be directed nowhere and would be without living influence in the real labor movement.

We direct our propaganda, agitation and our efforts at recruitment toward the militant and aggressive workers in the unions; Negro and white, male and female, the shop stewards, committeemen and the individual militant workers with whom we make contact.

It is among these workers that the main activity of the party must be concentrated. It is in their ranks that we must concentrate our fire and among whom we must struggle for recruitment to the party.

Among the chief tasks of the party in the unions is to lead in the struggle for inner democracy and against the bureaucratization of the unions. This is a political and organizational task of the first importance. We carry on this struggle against the old line trade union bureaucracy and the Stalinist bureaucrats. Such a course not only has the positive value of opening the way for the organizational and political advancement of the workers but it is also a safeguard against our own comrades falling into bureaucratic attitudes and into servile attitudes toward individual trade union leaders.

A component part of the struggle for inner union democracy is the struggle for complete equality for Negroes and for women workers. Our Party must not falter in this struggle but in a very conscious manner assume leadership in this activity.

Our main strategical slogan for the trade union movement is the Party labor party slogan. The tactical application of this slogan revolves around the PAC. In the past the Party and the Trade Union Department have not given sufficient attention to the organization of the work in the unions around the labor party slogan. Our members must become known as the champions of independent political action and the independent labor party.

IV. Perspectives.

The first act for the Party is to get back into the factory and the unions. Without this nothing else is of fundamental worth. A party with a large number of its members living off unemployment insurance is a party of no consequence in the class struggle. A party with any sizable portion of its membership working in offices or as professional people cannot be a party respected by or listened to by the proletariat.

Such a party cannot develop a program suitable for the working class and above all it cannot participate integrally in the struggles of the proletariat. Such a party will inevitably develop political and organizational ennui. Its political program will become diluted to suit the whims and fancies of tired radicals, cynics, "democrats" and those who tend to seek the confines of bourgeois democracy as a refuge from struggle and the fight for socialism.

The Party cannot afford to and must not tolerate in its ranks, following the convention, those who refuse to accept in action the factory and trade union orientation of the Party. The Party must demand that every member agree to qualify as a good soldier of the revolution. The Party must demand that every member actually place himself at the disposal of the Party. This must include willingness to accept assignment from the Party for whatever city, factory or union that the Party designates.

The Party cannot afford and must not tolerate in its ranks, following the convention, any who succumb to pure and simple trade unionism, exaggerated trade union activism in any of its variegated forms.

The Party must not tolerate those in its ranks who repeatedly ignore the warnings of the Party about opportunist collaboration with the trade union bureaucracy. The Party must resist every tendency on the part of its trade union members toward impermissible striving after becoming a part of the officialdom of the unions.

The Party must demand and expect strict attention to the practical steps necessary to recruitment out of the unions. For the WP now "proletarianization of the Party" must mean the recruitment of genuine proletarians to the Party. Those already in the Party who have not accepted proletarianization for themselves have no place in the organization.

The Party directives on recruitment from the factories and unions must apply particularly to comrades in positions of leadership and influence in the unions.

The Party must be prepared to face the sternest enforcement of the provisions of this resolution. The convention should tell the National Committee that the preparations for carrying through these provisions must begin with the National Committee itself. They should in turn pervade the whole Party.

The Party must stand on its feet and face its tasks. The situation is ripe for the Party to recruit, to develop its influence and to participate in the class struggle as never before. If the proletariat can make such advances as it has, if it can retain its vigor and militancy, as it has, without the existence of a mass revolutionary party, how much more would that proletariat accomplish with the increased aid and guidance of the Marxian revolutionaries?

The stage is already set in the United States for our Party to take its place in the struggle for the formation of the revolutionary party of the proletariat. That party must come from the mines, the mills, the fields and the factories if it is to accept its assigned task as the party of the socialist revolution.

This resolution must end therefore where it began: **BACK TO THE FACTORY - BACK TO THE UNION.**

David Coclidge
(For submission to the National Committee
Plenum)

FROM SHACHTMAN TO LEONARD THROUGH LUND

By Ria Stone

Comrades Joe Leonard and Chet Marco are the latest links in a chain held together by a common bond, namely, the implicit or explicit rejection of Trotsky's declaration: "Scientific Socialism is the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process; namely, the instinctive and elemental drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on communist beginnings."

Comrade Shachtman begins the tendency with scepticism regarding the proletariat. According to him, we cannot build the mass revolutionary party (i.e., the proletariat is not ready in significant numbers to accept revolutionary propaganda) until an independent labor party has been formed. Shachtman does not reject revolutionary socialist propaganda. But in the main, his conception is that it should be directed toward the radicalized and politicalized elements, i.e., the SWP. He therefore interprets revolutionary socialist propaganda to be, not Trotskyism, but rather the new and distinctive contributions of the WP. It is for this reason and not for any lack of forces or incidental reasons that the party does not Americanize Bolshevism.

Once Comrade Shachtman's scepticism regarding the proletariat had become the dominant conception in the party, and the party did not grow appreciably, the next stage, Comrade Lund, was inevitable. Like Shachtman, Lund cannot see the proletariat as ready, in the absence of an independent labor party, to join a revolutionary party. Therefore, to solve the party crisis, he seeks to substitute for the day-to-day tasks and outlook of a revolutionary party the tasks and outlook of the organized proletariat, i.e., the labor movement. This is the essential significance of his "small mass party" concept.

Lund regards revolutionary socialist propaganda, i.e., Trotskyism, as a hangover from our sectarian propaganda circle days. As for Shachtman's distinctive contributions, Lund shows an indifference to them which is astonishing only if viewed in abstraction from his depoliticalized conception of the proletariat and hence of the party. It is fundamentally for this reason, and not from concern with democratic centralism or love of the Johnson minority, that Lund rejects Shachtman's cadre conceptions.

As the crisis of the party continues, the inner logic of Shachtman's scepticism regarding the proletariat asserts itself in an extreme form. Comrades Leonard and Marco may appear to be only two individuals. In reality they are the expression of the next inevitable stage in the development, the proposal to abandon the proletariat and seek a political arena among "all classes of the population." From Shachtman to Lund to Leonard and Marco, the circle is now complete. Scepticism regarding the proletariat (Shachtman), to substitution of the labor movement for the revolutionary party (Lund) to abandonment of the proletariat (Leonard

and Marco). It is a warning to the party leadership and the party membership.

How did these comrades come to this conclusion?

First of all, they took a careful and very acute look at the nature and results of the party's work during the past five years. They do not pull their punches. They say "the party substitutes the unions for the working class and the working class for the masses." (p. 14). They say the WP has been converted into a "sort of inter-union fraction executive committee." (p. 15). They say "our party unionists tend to function too much on the basis of superior activity and not enough on the basis of our superior socialist ideas." (p.16) They say that "we overemphasize the negative side of the class struggle." (p.21, credit to Johnson). They say the party members have been infected with a confusion of the "distinction between trade union politics and Marxist politics." (p.22)

Every word is correct. This is in essence the criticism which the Johnson minority has been making for the last eighteen months.

Leonard and Marco go on to attack the majority resolution on party-building mercilessly. It "builds a wall between propaganda and agitation." (p.15) It uses lack of forces as an "excuse." (p.18) It measures the party's influence by arithmetic. (p.19) It thinks of the growth of the party in terms of the SWP rather than in terms of the needs of the masses. (p.19) And, finally, these comrades compare the party's \$15,000 fund and new organizers with Cannon's "Give me the \$10,000 and 20 organizer and I'll build the party." (p.25) Let us hope nobody shouts capitulation to Cannonism!

Note that these comrades have felt impelled to bring out these unmoderated criticisms even after the fierce and heated attacks on the Johnson minority for saying the same things more moderately. They make precisely the same criticisms and they are not alone. These criticisms were running rife through the party until the pre-convention discussion. It was dissatisfaction with the party's activity in the unions and with Shachtman's "lack of forces" answer which contributed to the growth of Lund's influence in the party. And it is only the vigor of the attacks on the Johnson minority which stifled the criticism temporarily.

What is the conclusion of Leonard and Marco? They do not go to the basis of the problem as has the Johnson minority. They do not repudiate the root of these activities, namely, the scepticism toward the revolutionary instincts of the proletariat. Instead, they not only accept but draw organizational conclusions from this scepticism and propose that the party must find its arena for political propaganda outside of the working class in production. *(see next page for footnote)

This conclusion is the most dangerous which has emerged as yet in the party discussion. And it is dangerous not only because, if followed, it would lead to the further stagnation of the party by driving it back to its former deproletarianized petty-bourgeois existence. It is dangerous mainly because once you embark upon a program based upon scepticism toward the proletariat, the results of your activity will inevitably drive not only Leonard and Marco but other comrades towards this conclusion sooner or later.

By its continual stress on the backwardness of the workers, the leadership has led many members to believe that the trade union leadership is far ahead of the workers, e.g., that "open the books" was due, not to the pressure of the masses but to Reuther's socialist background. If the leaders of the majority do not believe this, they have not in their resolutions and in their discussion attacked these petty-bourgeois conceptions mercilessly. Instead they have concentrated their fire on the Johnson minority for its vigorous attacks on this conception.

The result is that Comrades Leonard and Marco can believe that the leaders of the organized workers are not out of harmony with the ranks. "The union leadership is not what we would wish but it is not nearly so far out of line with the demands of the workers." (as during the war)(p.1)

By stressing that the leadership of the masses by the workingclass is "only a historical truth," the majority has led these comrades to believe that "we are not at such a stage of development" where we can prepare for the masses to be "in motion under the leadership of the proletariat." (p.17)

From attacks upon the Johnson minority for propagating "the truths of Communism and the methods of social revolution" in relation to the concrete struggles of today, the party has arrived at the stage where comrades can toy with the basic tenet of Marxism, namely, that the working class is driven by the very process of capitalist production to revolutionary actions against bourgeois society. (pp.22-23)

Comrades Leonard and Marco are less cautious than Comrades Shachtman and Lund. They put down in writing that "our" perspective has retrogressed since 1938. "To day (i.e. everybody except the Johnson minority) have a very different evaluation of the stage and tempo of the politicalization of the masses." (p.15) Different from what? Different from that of 1938 when we adopted the transitional program. So from the leadership's "adaptation" of the transitional program to the concrete issues of the day, we have arrived at the point where Comrades Leonard and Marco can reject Trotsky's evaluation of the pre-revolutionary period in 1938, an evaluation which was the very basis of the Theses of the

*Comrades Leonard and Marco are the victims, conscious or unconscious, of the majority's conscious misunderstanding of the minority's position on the Negro question. As far as is possible in a brief note, we can state the minority position thus: we should support, ^{and encourage} the independent struggles of the Negro masses, not only for their own sake, but because they will act as a bacillus in hastening the developing movement of the American workers toward (cont'd. next page)

By insisting that 1946 is not 1938 and implying thereby that the working class has retrogressed since 1938, the party leadership has brought the party to the stage where Comrades Leonard and Marco can attempt to apply the organizational conclusions of Lenin in 1902 Russia to the United States in 1946. This is retrogression indeed!

Comrade Shachtman can stop short at scepticism regarding the proletariat. But thereby he only throws the problem into the membership. Lund and his supporters and Leonard and Marco have been driven by the concrete results of this scepticism to draw organizational conclusions. From doubts regarding the revolutionary instincts of the proletariat (Shachtman) to a confusion of Marxist politics and trade union politics (Lund) to abandonment of the proletariat for work among "all classes of the population". It is a sequence over which both the leadership and the membership (Leonard and Marco) should carefully ponder.

the leadership in the revolutionary reconstruction of society. Hence the minority's position on the Negro question is in no way based upon a conception of the backwardness of the American proletariat.

THE WORKERS PARTY, THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM AND
THE SOVIET SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

By Larry O'Connor

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Dear Comrades:

Just before I left San Francisco I, along with several others, signed an amendment to the N.C. resolution on the American question which had been prepared by Comrade Scopa after branch discussions on the majority and minority positions.

At the time I signed this document, I informed the comrades that I intended to write a letter setting forth more clearly the reasons why, in my opinion, an amendment along the lines worked out by Scopa is necessary at this time. Unfortunately, circumstances compel me to write this letter in the absence of all materials, including the amendment itself and the Founding Conference of the Fourth International on which it is based.

The question which is raised by this amendment, which has been raised, in his own peculiar manner, by Comrade Johnson, and which is much in the minds of many of the older comrades, is of the role, significance and present application of the transitional program in our party.

The transitional program was adopted by the Fourth International in 1938. In America the program was hailed by many of the comrades who felt that it was high time that the party made a turn from its previous history as a propaganda group which had been built primarily as an ideological opponent of Stalinism and reformism. We felt that the transitional program at last gave us a lever by which we could start moving the advanced layers of the American working class towards the revolutionary solution of the problems of our society -- both propagandistically, agitationaly and above all, through the experience gained in action.

It soon became evident, however, that it was one thing for Comrade Trotsky to give us such a lever, and another one for us to learn how to use it. In the main the transitional program became something put in a box on the editorial page of the Socialist Appeal (and later of Labor Action), while the rest of the paper (which is the best mirror of the thinking and action of the party) devoted itself either to the old kind of propaganda, or to radical, militant trade union agitation.

This contention can perhaps be best demonstrated by taking one very important plank of the transitional program as an illustration: Workers Control of Industry.

From 1938 to 1946 "workers control" remained an abstraction. As there were no concrete opportunities in America to bring "workers control" from our general propaganda into direct agitation, it gradually tended to be ignored. On the rare occasions on which it was mentioned at all, it was either tacked on to some trade union article (thus being mentioned, but never described even educational-

ly) or it was given an interpretation which made it synonymous with expropriation of the capitalists -- thus robbing it of its transitional character. It is not entirely devoid of significance that as late as 1945 a leading member of the NC stated in an agitational-propagandistic speech that "workers control" meant that the workers would decide what to produce, where to get the raw materials, etc. I knew no better myself till I re-read the Founding Conference in the summer of 1945.

It was necessary for Walter Reuther to shape the GM program before the revolutionary movement in America could really make intelligible to itself and to any number of workers the "workers control" plank of its own platform as a real transitional slogan.

We cannot be satisfied with the observation that life is more variegated than theory, and that the working class always finds, in the class struggle, new and variegated ways of saying what the revolutionists have developed theoretically and abstractly. For the whole motivation of the transitional program is to concretize the revolutionary struggle for the working class-- that is, to take hold of the daily struggles of the workers and give them a revolutionary direction and meaning. It is to our credit that we took hold of the GM program and developed its direction and meaning as best we could. But if our membership had been trained since 1938 in the practical-revolutionary meaning and spirit of the transitional program, it should have been possible for every influential trade union fraction to develop a program for its own union which could have played the same role as the program of Walter Reuther.

It was not easy for our party to take the transitional program off the editorial box in the paper and put it into the living consciousness of the whole party. It is not easy for a party trained on the history of the fight of the Left Opposition in Russia, the history of the Third International, the fight against the Popular Front, to reorient itself towards the under-politicalized American working class as a whole - or even its most advanced section. And the war which started in 1940 and which posed new and altogether different problems from those which confronted us in 1938 made the problem all the more difficult. For then, instead of a rising popular fascist movement; instead of unemployment on a large scale; instead of starvation and evictions of workers from their dwellings we had: the government itself attacking the fascists; labor shortage, high wages and job freezing; shortage of consumption goods and rationing, and the universal search for a roof over the head at any price.

Before we had had time to really assimilate into our blood stream the program of 1938, the war forced us to make a radical change in the planks of the transitional program as well as in the manner, both literary and organizational, by which we put it forward. We were preoccupied in the unions not with workers' control and workers' defense guards, but with the defensive fight to maintain the right to strike. During the war years it was no longer a question of bringing the workers on the road to revolution, but of keeping alive the very ideas of class independence, of class struggle.

In addition, for the first time the party came close to the working class. No longer was the level of the consciousness of the workers something our leaders, sitting in the party headquarters in New York and surrounded by revolutionists, had to deduce from reading the trade union press and regarding the general participation of the workers in politics. Now every comrade in the trade unions was confronted concretely with the backwardness of the American workers in the flesh. And as we tried to influence these workers, both we on the job and through us our national leadership were influenced to some degree by this backwardness.

Our devotion to the revolution is no guarantee against the terrific attractive force of our surroundings in the working class. The whole party is deeply conscious of the smallness of its size and influence and determined to break out of its isolation. The closer the party comes to the working class in the factories, the greater is the tendency for us all to "apply the line" in such a way as to increase our ability to wield immediate influence in the labor movement and to recruit immediately. In the absence of revolutionary moods and even of political class consciousness among the workers, this expresses itself in a tendency to "water down" the revolutionary content of our propaganda and agitation. Against this danger of opportunism, which lies not in ourselves but in the objective and subjective position of the American working class, we must be ever on our guard.

Johnson represents a violent reaction to this danger. In reacting against it, he not only exaggerates out of all proportion the extent to which the party has in fact become affected by the tendency to opportunism, but exaggerates even more fantastically the revolutionary consciousness of the American working class. Yet, in their own sectarian way, the Minority has done the party the service of forcing many of us to think seriously and responsibly about the transitional program as it must be applied in the new circumstances arising out of the end of the war. It is here that the NC resolution on the United States needs correction. We search it in vain for a bold turn for the post-war period in the direction of the transitional program of 1938. In paragraphs 30 and 31 (p. 10) the only ones which deal in any degree with the transitional program, we seek in vain mention of the rank and file, extra-parliamentary organizational forms which are such a vital part of a program designed for a period of growing crisis - or even for one of "great preparations for the future." And the danger involved in these omissions becomes even more alarming when we read Howe's apparently official defense of the majority position in which (on this particular matter) he confines himself to blasting Johnson on "self mobilization" and factory committees, but himself has not a word to say about extra-parliamentary rank and file organizations or their role. Does the majority agree with Comrade Howe's implication that the official trade unions are sufficient organizational forms for the transitional program - even at this stage?

We chuckle when Johnson says the country may be covered by Soviets in two years. Let us not laugh too loudly. It is true that any member of the party who is carrying our ideas to real

flesh and blood workers cannot fail to respond with a wan smile to the Minority's insistence that the consciousness of the American workers today presages societies in two years. But if we take seriously the Majority's prognostication of a terrific depression within two years or so, we cannot and certainly should not rule out the possibility, nay, the probability if not of soviets, then at least of the rapid spread of a strike wave which will put the last one in the shade; of the deep and broad development of extra-parliamentary organizations of struggle as well as of the rise of a militant labor party-- in short, of a dramatic rise of class-consciousness and class-combativity.

Our way of meeting this probability can only be by means of the transitional program. And the most important aspect of the transitional program for our purposes must be its emphasis on the development of "grass roots" organizations of direct action by the working class and the masses at large.

The transitional program was intended by Trotsky to link the backwardness of the workers today to the soviets of tomorrow. This means that the party membership must itself be fully educated to the meaning of soviets, to the meaning of dual power and to the fundamental program of our party as the party of the workers revolution through soviets.

But at this point also arises the danger of the sectarian advocacy to the working class at this time of the Soviet Socialist Revolution as the answer to their problems, of the soviets as the goal of their struggles; of the rank and file organizations which we advocate and foster as the primary instruments of their struggle as soviets in embryo.

It is necessary that our membership be educated from top to bottom to the soviet revolution as the only method of the working class conquest of power and administration of the workers' state. But it is equally important that our leaders and members understand that the working class will not come to us for leadership either now or in a revolutionary situation just because they will remember that we have always advocated soviets and the Socialist Soviet Revolution. Never in history has the working class, even in a revolutionary period, remembered and placed itself under the leadership of a party just because it had always advocated revolution.

It is not the memory of the working class on which we must rely - but on their experience in the class struggle and particularly on their experience with our party in the class struggle. From now on they must know of the Workers Party not so much as the advocate of soviets, but as the advocate of the real solution to their problems as they see them. We must be the advocates and active champions of all forms of extra-parliamentary struggles and of the formation and development of organs of struggle which directly involve the masses in the fight. Shop committees, committees of workers and their wives to control rent and prices and housing, popular demonstrations and marches on local, state and national governmental institutions demanding immediate solution of pressing problems - these and many others are the organizational forms which we must

foster, propagandize and publicize in our press. We are for the labor party not in general, but as the parliamentary expression of the direct and extra-parliamentary struggle of the masses for the direct solution of their problems. As the crisis develops the consciousness of the working class as a whole, and even more, as it develops its desperation and determination to fight, we must stand out as the one party which doesn't give a hang for tradition and legality, which neither fears the labor bureaucracy nor seeks its favor, but which incites the workers to move to the direct solution of their problems and which enthusiastically hails and advertises in its press and through its militants in the unions any steps taken in that direction.

We also have the problem of using all opportunities to educate the most advanced sections of the working class to the necessity of revolution, which means in practice to generalize their experiences for them at every step and thus raise the consciousness of the advanced elements to a revolutionary socialist level. This is the task of our education and propaganda which should and must be organically linked to our agitation along the lines of the transitional program. In practice this linking of agitation in the spirit of the transitional program of 1938 with our propaganda and education for the Soviet Socialist Revolution cannot be achieved by the reading of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. It can only be achieved through the establishment of the proper balance between agitation and propaganda in our press, classes and public meetings. In this we cannot rely on the works of the dead geniuses of the working class revolution, but only on our own brains and common sense as revolutionists in America in 1946 - in short, on that "feel for politics" without which no party can ever lead a successful revolution.

Comradely greetings,

Larry O'Connor

May 8, 1946

To the Membership and the Workers Party Convention

Statement by the Johnson Minority on the Origin, Character and Perspectives of the Johnson Faction

I. The Present Crisis in the Party

Today the crisis in the Party is graver than it has ever been. The rapid development of political positions in our pre-convention discussion, the emergence of conceptions inherent in the position of the Majority but hitherto undisclosed, make it imperative for the Minority to make a Bolshevik appraisal of the political content and direction of the two factions. The Majority faction at this late stage is unable to state clearly where it stands on all fundamental questions before the party. The result is that today, after three months discussion, the party is more confused than it was at the start. The elections have decisively demonstrated that the Majority is a heterogeneous conglomeration, divided on major questions: the theory of historical retrogression; Stalinism, the CP-SP-CGT; the question of the cadre, according to Shachtman necessary for the salvation of the party; the Negro question, the Labor Party.

In the Queens branch, N.Y., for the Majority International Resolution unamended, there were three votes; for the Garrett Amendment there were 9, and there were 3 abstentions. In one Brooklyn branch, for the Majority International Resolution unamended, there were 5 votes; for the Garrett amendment, there were 9, and there were 5 abstentions. In the Harlem branch, there were 6 for the Majority International Resolution unamended, and there were 7 for the Garrett Amendment. In Philadelphia, there were 6 votes for the Garrett Amendment.

On the Question of the Cadre, there were, in Queens, 2 votes for the Majority Resolution unamended and 7 for Erber's Amendment. In the same Brooklyn branch, there were 7 for the Majority Resolution unamended, 4 for the Erber amendment, and no less than 10 abstentions. In Philadelphia, only one (1) person voted for the Majority Resolution unamended, and 5 for Erber's amendment.

On the "Small Mass Party" amendment, there were in Queens, 2 for the Majority Resolution unamended, 2 for Erber's Amendment and 6 abstentions. In Brooklyn, 12 for the Majority Resolution unamended, 2 for the Erber amendment and 7 abstentions.

On the Negro question, in Queens, there were 4 Majorityites for the Johnson Resolution. In the Brooklyn branch, there were 3 Majorityites for the Johnson Resolution and 5 abstentions. In the Harlem branch, there were 3 Majorityites for the Johnson resolution.

A more complete tabulation will only show the uncertainty and confusion in the Majority which have emerged from the pre-convention discussion.

The leadership of the Majority is held together only by political hostility to the Johnson Minority, in reality, their hostility to anti-retrogressionism. A characteristic weakness of the Majority is its incapacity to make any political analysis of the groupings in the party except in terms of personalities (Judd), miraculous growth of a

clique into a faction and a faction into a tendency (Shachtman), etc. The duty of explaining to the party politically what is actually taking place therefore devolves solely upon the Minority.

1. Its historical character

The crisis is a political crisis in every sense of the term and is of historic and immediate significance for the Workers Party, for the Fourth International and the fate of society as a whole.

It has become the fashion in certain circles of our movement to sneer at the so-called pretensions of the Fourth International to world leadership. The Workers Party Minority wishes here to reaffirm the unshakable theoretical foundations of Bolshevism:

i) That Scientific Socialism is the culmination of human thought, the ideal reflection of the conflict which today is tearing society apart, "its ideal reflection in the minds first of the class which is directly suffering under it - the working class." (Engels)

ii) That Marxism today is a doctrine which is held solely by those groups and parties which adhere to the principles and program of the Fourth International.

iii) That the hundreds of millions of workers and peasants and ruined middle classes the world over are being driven to act in a manner which daily creates opportunities for the influence and growth of the Fourth International.

iv) That unless the Fourth International can organizationally express the inevitable revolutionary development among the masses, humanity of our generation is doomed.

The American proletariat is today the most powerful and most strategically placed in the world. The Workers Party is an adherent of the principles of the Fourth International in the United States. This makes the crisis of the Workers Party a crisis of historic importance.

2. Its Immediate Character

But the crisis is a crisis also of immediate urgency. It is the expression of the problem which today faces the working class as a whole and for that reason is expressed most clearly in the ranks of the vanguard. It is evidence of the non-Bolshevik political approach of the Majority leadership that it nowhere teaches the membership that the development and continuation of factions in a Bolshevik Party is to be explained, understood and controlled only by recognizing them as the reflection of different choices which face the proletariat itself. The present sharpness of the party crisis has its roots in the Russian question and the history of that question in the Fourth International. But that is merely a reflection of the choice faced by the proletariat today in regard (a) to the social revolution in general and (b) not only to Russia but to Stalinism outside of Russia.

II. The Three Tendencies in the Fourth International

Trotsky in 1940 left the Fourth International with a strategic orientation which can be divided into two sections:

i) The Leninist conception of our epoch as the epoch of imperialist war or social revolution, and the political and organizational conclusions of Bolshevism adapted to our day.

ii) His position on the Russian question.

Today the Fourth International as a whole continues to hold these positions although the signs are many that it cannot continue to hold the Russian position much longer. The Workers Party is the first important organization which broke with the official position and its development is therefore of enormous importance for the International as a whole.

Six years of the Workers Party have shown a clearly marked political division which can be summed up as follows:

a) The Majority, in empirical fashion, seeks to revise the strategic conceptions of world revolution in the light of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the defeat of the proletariat elsewhere which it considers a confirmation of the Russian experience.

b) The Minority, on the other hand, has revised the Russian position of Trotsky and brought it into harmony with the philosophic and economic basis of Marxism and the Leninist-Trotskyist conceptions of world revolution.

No slanders of the Majority or attempts to identify the Minority with "Cannonism" can prevent the Minority from being recognized as what it is - a distinct third tendency among those parties adhering to the principles of the Fourth International.

If today, the Fourth International continues to be in appearance impervious to the blows given to the Russian position of Trotsky by world events, it is due, among other reasons, to the vacillations and theoretical poverty of the Workers Party Majority on the Russian question and the steady deviations from the Marxist line which have characterized it during the past period. These deviations all have their roots in the new conception of the proletariat openly developed since the death of Trotsky. This conception is most clearly and consistently expressed in the IKD's theory of historical retrogression. Inevitably there are serious differences between the retrogressionists of all shades. But the Majority position on all serious questions, e.g. the character of the objectively revolutionary situation, the labor bureaucracy as the bourgeois agent for suppressing the instinctively revolutionary tendency of the masses and not as the expression of their backwardness; the role of the party, the attitude to Stalinist Parties, etc. - all show the affinity of the Majority political positions to the IKD theory of retrogression. The failure of the Majority to express itself on this theory for nearly two years (except to boost its importance) is only another proof of their organic relationship.

III. The Position of the Workers Party

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Today, driven by its basic conceptions and empirically, in the course of meeting the arguments of the Johnson Minority, the Majority has stumbled from position to position, until its reporter on the International Question declares that the main line of division between the Majority and the Minority springs from the fact that the Majority takes into consideration a so-called "third alternative" for contemporary society, "bureaucratic collectivism," while the Minority does not do so.

The Minority here affirms that any Marxist party which governs its practical politics by the theoretical perspective of bureaucratic collectivism as a "third alternative" to capitalism or socialism

a) repudiates Marxism which is based from top to bottom on the duality of bourgeoisie and proletariat as contenders for mastery in modern society.

b) leads inevitably to tampering with the fundamentals of Bolshevik strategy. The result at the very best can be only the strengthening of bourgeois-democratic illusions in the party and in the masses.

The Party, especially the newer members, must understand that the groupings in the party today are the direct result of tendencies which appeared in the party at its convention in October 1941.

In the Convention of 1941, Carter and Shachtman both agreed that Russia was a new kind of society, bureaucratic collectivism. Shachtman held that nationalized property in Russia was progressive as compared to capitalism, and only willful distorters or those ignorant of the party history can attempt to deny this. On the basis of their common position, defeatism in Russia under all circumstances, the Carterites made overtures to the Johnsonites which the Johnson Minority then refused. It refused on the grounds:

i) that the idea of bureaucratic collectivism was a break with Marxism and was bound to lead to serious theoretical and practical consequences.

ii) The Johnson Minority also opposed the conception of Carter that Hitlerite Germany was a new social order.

iii) The Johnson Minority also objected to the anti-Bolshevik ideas of the Carterites on the organizational principles of the Party.

For these reasons, the Johnson Minority in Harlem, although it had made its main fight on the Russian question, by arrangement with Shachtman elected its delegate on the organizational question in order to give Shachtman the majority and to exclude from the leadership of the party the Carterite tendency. In open convention, Johnson stated, on behalf of the Minority, that it considered Carter a definitive tendency which it was impossible to correct, and therefore it concentrated its fire on Shachtman who (with Allen) constituted the most valuable elements of the old Bolsheviks in the Party. Only before the Convention, Johnson stated that Shachtman had to be preserved from the dangers which would follow from extending the theory

of bureaucratic collectivism from the analysis of isolated backward Russia to the world as a whole. To sum up, the Minority:

- a) declared uncompromising opposition to the theoretical ideas of Carter-Garret and Shachtman which it characterized as having the same theoretical foundation.
- b) sought to place a barrier to Shachtman following Carter-Garrett.
- c) threw its weight with Shachtman against Carter-Garrett in the struggle for control of the party.

The Party should know that in 1941 the Carterites had the possibility of taking over the leadership of the party from Shachtman.

Five years have passed and it has now become clear that step by step Shachtman has retreated before Carterism which now threatens to overwhelm the party. The conception of the proletariat inherent in Carter's position appeared in the 1944 resolution on the so-called National Question. Still worse, at the Workers Conference in 1945, it received fullfledged expression in Shachtman's new conception of the American proletariat as ready at present only for the formation of an Independent Labor Party. This tendency has reached its final culmination in the resolutions of the Majority, all of which represent a long step backward from the 1944 Resolutions.

It is these political conceptions and the organizational forms which they take that has thrown the party into its present state of theoretical disorganization and inevitable lack of organizational perspectives.

IV. Stalinism

The sharpest expression of the confusion on the International Question has appeared in the attitude to Stalinism and in the attitude to the Fourth International.

Stalinism is to the Fourth International what the Second International was to the Third International, its main rival for the leadership of the masses in the struggle for the proletarian revolution. Today the Workers Party Minority holds the position of the Fourth International on this question. For the Minority as for Trotsky, the attitude to the Stalinist parties is based fundamentally, not on the analysis of the Russian state but on the strategic conception of the proletarian revolution in Europe.

The Majority caucus is at present split irreconcilably on this fundamental question for the proletarian revolution. That it is split is a legitimate situation in politics. The confusion is caused by Shachtman who, as Carter has shown (Internal Convention Bulletin #8) actually led the party to the Carter-Garrett conclusion and now bewilders the party by his vacillations and contradictions. Thus the discussion which should have clarified the party has thrown it into worse confusion than ever.

Should the party adopt the Garrett position on the nature of the Stalinist parties and the relation to them of the Fourth International, it will have gone a long way towards reading itself out of the Fourth International and renouncing its possibility of participating

in the resurgence of Bolshevism in our time. To use the words of a member of the SWP Minority, on this question "the party can break its neck."

In relation to the Fourth International, the Majority does not publish its documents, allows the IKD to slander it in our press without reply, and contrary to all the traditions of our movement, combines diplomatic support with violent abuse of the possibility of development of the Fourth International. Thus the members cannot educate itself in the true traditions of Bolshevism and is thrown into perpetual doubt and demoralization as to the possibility of success of the social revolution in Europe and Asia.

The political positions and organizational practices of our movement are all denounced by the Majority under the guise of "Cannonism", whereby it seeks to use the justified reaction against the monolithic practices of Cannon to discredit the fundamental political position of Trotsky and the Fourth International.

The party contains a large proportion of new members to whom the vacillations of the Majority and its deviations from Marxism have been taught as the fundamentals of our movement. These comrades have received no serious training in the principles and organizational traditions of Bolshevism. Political conflicts have been represented to them as the result of dissatisfied personalities. Their ignorance of the history of the Fourth International is profound. They have been shown terrible examples of lack of responsibility for political positions. It is the political consequences of this which the Minority wishes to draw attention to. Precisely because Carter has a political line, his positions have gained steadily in the party. It is now clear that the Carterite political tendency in the party is the one most hostile to the principles and traditions of the Fourth International. Shachtman has proved himself incapable of arresting the tide and in his struggles against the Johnson Minority merely strengthens the Carterite trend.

V. The Minority

After Shachtman's whole-hearted acceptance of the retrogression-document (except for the Russian question), and the conception of the American proletariat and the perspectives for party building which he made clear at the Active Workers Conference, the Minority in the Workers Party became aware that it was necessary to call a halt.

In the Resolutions to the Convention it drew a sharp clear line between it and the Majority because it recognized that the vacillation and drifting of Shachtman could result only in the further confusion and demoralization of the membership. The Workers Party Minority recognized that in posing the questions so sharply and organizing itself as a faction, it was bound to alienate vacillators and that substantial new element in our party which has little acquaintance with the history, the principles, the traditions and the organizational procedures of Bolshevism. We did this deliberately and with full cognizance of all its implications. The logic of the political struggle has already shown how justified we were, and the Bolshevik correctness of our stand will be still further demonstrated in the not very distant future.

The Workers Party Minority asks the membership not to be misled by the slanders and unpolitical attacks and characterizations of the more unscrupulous elements of the Majority. The future progress of the Minority is the barometer by which the international movement will judge the development of the Workers Party. In particular, on the international question, with the Workers Party Minority, the complete victory of the Garrettitites, i.e. the Carterite tendency in the party, is inevitable. Shachtman has sought for support in the Minority of the SWP. But the absence of clear political conceptions on their part and their hostility to the theses of the IKD should not blind the party to their fundamentally retrogressionist political conclusions. To all those elements in the party who are doubtful of the correctness of the Garrett Minority, we appeal for support. For five years we have been the only firm, consistent, clear-sighted barrier in the Workers Party against the capitulations of Shachtman to Carter, which we warned against as far back as 1941.

VI. Perspectives

It would be absolutely false for the party not to recognize that these tendencies which express themselves so sharply on the international field are reflected equally sharply not only on the American question but on the question of party-building.

The theoretical disintegration inherent in the whole Carterite tendency, Shachtman seeks to check by the institution of his conception of the cadre. This, however, is directed not against the Carterite political tendency which is fast carrying all before it, but is directed exclusively against the Johnson Minority. It is for this reason that the Garrett Minority by and large supports the cadre because it recognizes that the Johnson Minority is its irreconcilable theoretical enemy. Thus, the "programmatic solidarity", enunciated by Shachtman with his characteristic vacillation and confusion, a qualification for membership of the cadre, is in reality the germ of the Cannonite monolithic concept of the party.

The most characteristic organizational expression of the new theoretical trends in the party is Erber. Lacking the fundamental basis of the Marxist conception of the proletariat, Erber, in his conception of the small mass party, expresses in party-building the logical expression of Carterism. The confusion in the Majority here takes a logical course. Shachtman expresses the scepticism about the organic revolutionary urge of the proletariat. Erber's ideas are in essence the attempt to overcome the retrogressionist scepticism by violent agitation on the lowest possible level. This special tendency is reinforced by the general conservative atmosphere characteristic of the United States which conceals the violent social and political upheavals prepared by the economic crisis.

The complete bankruptcy of the organizational perspectives of the Majority is demonstrated by the fact that Erber, the most energetic and the most concerned with party-building, can at best see no more progress for the party than the recruitment of two hundred militants during the next year. This is his perspective for 1946-47 with an eight page Labor Action, doubling of organizers and return of most of the major forces from abroad. This perspective has no relation whatever to the new stage of development demonstrated by the American proletariat during the past year. It is a perspective of pessimism, and defeat and characterizes the whole perspective of the Majority

which is in complete harmony with their conceptions of the American proletariat.

Erber occupies a key position in the party. No one has attacked the party leadership more fiercely than he on a variety of questions. But fundamentally empirical, Erber follows the tendency of all empiricists and votes with the Majority. However, it is by no means certain that this will continue. Gates, heretofore a strong supporter of Shachtman, has broken with him on the CP-SP-CGT slogan. Erber hesitated and then finally decided to support Shachtman on this important political question. It is by no means certain that Erber will continue to support Shachtman. Had he failed to vote with Shachtman on this issue, it is certain that the Garrett position would have carried. If the present organizational stagnation of the party continues, and Erber's perspective shows the limitations of the Majority's perspective, then the party is certain to face a serious crisis in the not too distant future. Under these conditions should Erber throw his influence towards the Garrett Minority, then, both on the international question and on the whole problem of party building, Shachtman will be a prisoner of those whom he has heretofore led.

The Workers Party Minority realizes that the Convention is for the purpose of arriving at a decision. However confused the party may be, yet the decisions of the Convention must remain the decisions of the party. The Workers Party Minority declares that it will lean backwards in order to give the Majority an opportunity to carry out its line. It will continue as heretofore to be among the most energetic and devoted party members. If any member of the Minority should conduct himself in a disruptive manner, the Minority caucus hereby declares that it looks to the most responsible members of the Minority in that particular branch not only to rebuke, reprimand or censure that particular comrade but to take the initiative in doing so. But at the same time it declares before the party that, confident of the rightness of its position and legitimacy of its stand, it will under no circumstances tolerate being treated as second-class citizens or submit to any kind of discrimination, undue pressure or slanders upon its members. We stand for the unity of the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party in the United States under the banner of the Fourth International. Only those who encouraged the Socialist Workers Party Minority to embark upon its splitting misadventure can seriously suspect the Workers Party Minority of following such a miserable and non-Bolshevik example.

May 24, 1946