

# The Discussion on Party Tasks

## A Year of Party Progress

Being a Record of Difficulties Overcome, of Party Achievements, and the Part Played Therein by the C. E. C. and by the Minority.

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER, JAMES P. CANNON and A. BITTELMAN.

The minority in their articles have challenged the leadership of the C. E. C. majority. The minority charged us with lack of initiative and aggressiveness. The farmer-labor opportunists of the minority are attempting to make a case against the C. E. C. majority for its alleged failure to foresee events and precipitate developments in the class struggle. This compels us to make a reply which will show the membership the real achievements of the party under the leadership of the present C. E. C.

In making our reply, we will be guided by the following considerations. First, truthfulness to facts and reality. Second, proper regard for the history of our party and for the objective conditions that were confronting our work during the past year. And, third, Leninist objectivity and mercilessness in the estimation of past performances, in admitting our own mistakes and in drawing lessons therefore for our future work.

### Dangerous Inflation.

This article deals with the term of office of the present central executive committee, i. e., the period between January and December of 1924. It was a year full of difficulties for our party and its leadership. To mention only a few of these difficulties: The collapse of the third party alliance, the big sweep to LaFollette, the breakdown of the arrangements perfected by the St. Paul convention the change in our election policy, the bitter war of the reactionaries against our membership and sympathizers in trade unions, and, last but not least, the remnants of the internal factional struggle with an organized caucus of the minority functioning thruout the country and with the main executive office of the party, the office of executive secretary in the hands of the minority opposition.

It was a difficult year for our party. The split of July 3, placed us in a state of isolation which threatened for a while to cut off most of our connections in the labor movement. Then came the LaFollette sweep which shattered badly the basis of our farmer-labor operations. On top of this, we had to change our major policy, the third party alliance, and adjust ourselves quickly to the changed situation.

In addition to all these very serious obstacles to progress in our work, we had to be constantly on guard and at war against a peculiar state of mind of our organization which, for lack of a better name, we shall call the spirit of inflation. By this we mean disregard for objective facts and reality, dangerous self-conceit as to the strength and abilities of our party, the worship of empty phrases, and a grave lack of realism, practicability and Leninist objectivity. This inflationist spirit is the spirit of the minority.

Our party was dangerously inflated with this spirit of emptiness and fictitiousness. Conscious of this danger for quite a long time, we knew that no greater service could be rendered to our party than to deflate the party from the non-realistic, non-critical and non-Communist notions cultivated by the minority, to bring the party back to earth, making it a real, effective instrument in the class struggle. To this vital task the central executive committee devoted itself in all earnestness, and today, we claim, our party is much more realistic, much more practical and, consequently, much more effective in its work than it has ever been before. The period of wild maneuvers based exclusively upon a policy of bluff, the practice of initiating campaigns and movements having no other result than an increased production of par-

ty circulars, the theory of measuring the effectiveness of Communist policy by the amount of publicity space and by the size of headlines appearing in the capitalist press, which was so typical of the former C. E. C., the days of such leadership, we hope, are gone forever.

### The Workers Party in the Elections.

As a legacy of the day of "grand maneuvers," the present central executive majority, immediately upon assuming office, found itself inextricably involved in the pursuit of an immediate political objective, which was totally beyond the power of our party to achieve under the prevailing circumstances. We mean the objective of creating a united farmer-labor party in the presidential elections and thereby defeat the LaFollette influence upon the so-called class farmer-labor movement.

The present C. E. C. did everything that was possible to achieve that objective. In doing so we were continually hampered by the minority in the C. E. C. which was bent upon putting into effect the August thesis, that is, the creation of a farmer-labor party, on the basis of the united front from above instead of a real united front from the bottom with the broad farmer-labor movement, upon the basis of an immediate program of partial demands. Beginning with the first meeting of the present C. E. C. in January and up until May, our principle political efforts were directed towards one end, a national farmer-labor ticket and party as against the third party LaFollette ticket. In this effort we were defeated thru no fault of our own.

Why? Our answer is because LaFolletteism was stronger among the masses than Communism, because petty bourgeois illusions (which mean LaFolletteism) were and still are dominating the minds of the farmer-labor movement. When the old C. E. C., in its opportunistic rush for leadership, decided that we must set up a farmer-labor party as against a third party, it set for our party an impossible task. The present C. E. C. majority did not realize the impossibility of this task until the June 17 convention. The situation became quite clear after the July 4 conference of the C. P. P. A. Then grasping the situation with initiative, we cut loose from the fiction of a farmer-labor ticket and entered the elections as the Workers Party.

This represented a profound change in tactics. The party should realize that it required courage, quick Communist thinking and much determination to make the decision and to carry it out successfully. The decision of July 8, which placed the Workers Party in the elections under its own name and with its own program and candidates, thereby extricating our party from the intolerable position of compromise and opportunism involved in supporting a fictitious farmer-labor ticket. This decision we consider one of the major accomplishments of the present C. E. C.. It was carried thru in the face of bitter opposition Comrade Lovestone, minority leader, whose policy would have sacrificed the interests of the Workers Party for the fake farmer-labor party.

Were we right or wrong in putting the Workers Party in the elections under its own name? Did we or did we not manifest initiative, firmness, and correct Communist understanding when we changed our policy on July 8? The party has already given the answer. Everyone in our ranks, except the incorrigible farmer-laborites, are convinced that our party made an excellent showing in the election campaign and greatly increased its prestige among the toiling masses.

### Popularizing our Program on Unemployment.

It was thru the second national conference of the T. U. E. L. and upon the initiative of our industrial department that our party made known for the first time its program and tactics for the organization of the unemployed. Sometime later the old C. E. C. (now the minority), in line with its lack of sense for reality and understanding of concrete situations, proposed to immediately begin the actual organization of councils of unemployed, thereby thru premature organizational steps, endangering the success of what is bound to become a great movement.

Luckily for our party and for its unemployment program these premature organizational steps were not taken. The present C. E. C., after adopting a complete policy on unemployment at its March meeting, proceeded to popularize the issue, our unemployment program and proposed methods of organization. By instruction of the C. E. C. majority the question of unemployment was made one of the major issues in every campaign carried on by our party on the economic and political field. In spite of all provocations of the minority, the C. E. C. refused to begin prematurely the actual organization of councils of unemployed which because the situation was not ripe, would have resulted in complete failure, thereby wasting the efforts of the W. P. and discrediting a powerful organizational slogan for future use.

Our struggle against unemployment is still in its propaganda stage. During the election campaign alone the party distributed a quarter of a million of leaflets on unemployment and sold 20,000 copies of a pamphlet written by Comrade Browder. We are effectively propagating our demands for the unemployed and slogan of organization thereby preparing the ground for organization work which we propose to start the moment conditions become ripe for it.

### Teaching our Party Methods of Organization.

The present C. E. C. has devoted a great deal of its attention to problems of organization, which were neglected by the former C. E. C. We realize that policies, programs and resolutions alone, even when correct, do not themselves build a party. When we assumed office we found that the party was totally out of balance as regards the various phases of its activities, and that systematic recruiting of new members was a matter not appreciated by the minority. The conception that the old C. E. C. had of organization was mainly that of writing articles once in a while in the press.

We set to work to infiltrate into our party a few of the basic principles of Communist organization. At the March meeting of the C. E. C. we adopted a statement on party activities by Comrade Foster. It was an attempt to give our party a clear picture of a balanced program of party work, which proved very successful in educating our party to a better understanding of the principles of Communist organization.

This was followed up with the program of action finally adopted by the C. E. C. at its full meeting in July. The party is well-acquainted with the contents of this program. It was outlined and submitted to the C. E. C. by the majority, the minority contributed nothing to its make-up, and was thereupon brought to our membership in a number of joint membership meetings in every large center. This program of action, with all that it stood for, was a real achievement of our party under the leadership of the present C. E. C.

The comrades will recall the nature of the program. It included our election policy and the means of organizing the campaign in every one of its phases, political, organizational, and financial. It provided for a systematic campaign to build the Workers Party thru campaigns for new members. It outlined a program for the building and strengthening of the

DAILY WORKER. It covered in a most thorough manner our immediate tasks on the industrial field, and also the question of shop nuclei. It laid particular stress on the unemployment situation and our program for it. It contained a special section on educational work.

It was a program not only of what to do but also of how to do it. It called for the most thorough departmentalization, from the bottom up, of every unit of the party in accord with the various specialized activities contained in the program. It also provided for an effective system of check-up and control to secure the systematic carrying out of the program of action. This program is progressively being put into operation. Insofar as our party is functioning and moving forward, it is doing so under the direction of and in line with the program of action of the C. E. C.

### Establishing a Real Industrial Department.

Another major accomplishment of the party during the past year was the establishment and perfection by the present C. E. C. of a real industrial department. This department is a vital organ of our party. Thru its policies, connections and machinery, our party is reaching out into the depths of the American labor movement and is establishing contact with the most elementary struggles of the organized workers. It is a real department, with subdivisions being established in every unit of the party, functioning under the direct supervision of a national committee and a national director, which in their turn are supervised and directed by the central executive committee. For the first time the D. E. C.'s and other party units are taking serious hold of the industrial work as regular work of our party.

The department is carrying on its work in accord with a definite program, the program of the Trade Union Educational League, which is the industrial program of our party. This new program of the T. U. E. L. was submitted some six months ago by Comrade Foster to the R. I. L. U. and was accepted unanimously with a few additions by Comrades Lozovsky, Johnson and Dunne. On the basis of this industrial program of the party which in many respects is a model program for the development of militant left wings in reactionary trade unions, the militants in the American unions are carrying on their work.

During the past year our comrades and sympathizers in the unions had to withstand and resist the most terrific onslaughts of the bureaucracy. In nearly every industry the left wing was compelled to carry on a bitter struggle for life, and in these struggles the industrial department of the party played a leading part. In the recent elections in the miners' union and in the carpenters' union the left wing was exceptionally well organized and carried on an intensive propaganda for the policies of the T. U. E. L. The Communist strength within these unions is constantly growing. The result of these efforts shows that the left wing in such industries as mining, garments, building, transportation, metal and food is at present more definitely crystallized, more conscious of its aims and is better organized now than ever before for continuing the struggle to revolutionize the trade unions.

In preparation for the El Paso convention of the A. F. of L. the industrial department submitted to the C. E. C. a thorough and well considered program. It dealt with every important issue in the labor movement, such as a general labor congress to consist of representatives of trade unions, workers' political parties, shop committees, the unemployed, etc., for the purpose of consolidating the ranks of labor politically and industrially and to launch a militant attack on the capitalist system; the recognition of Soviet Russia, abolition of racial discrimination against the Negroes; nationalization of the mines and railroads; amalgamation of the trade unions; organization of and re-

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lief for the unemployed; demand that all the forces in the Pan-American Federation of Labor be mobilized for a struggle against American imperialism; condemnation of imperialist schemes against China; demand that the R. I. L. U. plan for international unity be endorsed and the solidarity of labor be achieved; protest against criminal syndicalism laws, against the deportation of Oates, Mahler, Moran, and Nigra; the organization of the youth; release of Mooney, Billings, Ford, Suhr, Rangel, Kline, Sacco, Vanzetti, and other political prisoners; condemnation of the Ku Klux Klan and American Legion.

This program was designed to serve as a basis of action in the trade unions to rally the masses to the left wing. Special mention should be made of the resolution "For a labor congress," which contains a practical program of partial demands, all of which respond to immediate burning needs of the masses, and which provides for united front action by the organized labor movement in alliance with the Workers Party. It is highly significant that all the minority contributed to making up a program for the A. F. of L. convention was a motion to add the opportunist slogan "For a 'class' farmer-labor party." They violently objected to fighting in the convention for the Workers Party.

In connection with this we must mention the convention of the Pan-American Federation of Labor held in Mexico City, Mexico. The party had its representative, Comrade Johnston in the field with a definite program of policy and organization designed to achieve two aims. One, to promote and unify the left wing movement in the trade unions of North, Central and South America under the leadership of the R. I. L. U. Two, to co-ordinate the activities of the Communist Parties of the United States and Mexico for common struggle against American imperialism in Latin-America. The only improvement the minority could suggest to our Pan-American program was to insert some additional commas, semicolons and incidentally an additional word.

It must be stated in passing that the minority exhibited a woeful lack of consistency and imagination when they failed to propose a Pan-American farmer-labor party as an amendment to our program. But that may come yet. It is also noteworthy that altho the C. E. C. adopted a Pan-American program, upon the report of Comrade Lovestone sometime in May, the executive secretary could find no better use for it than to put it in his files. Now, however, the C. E. C. has taken the matter into its hands and is determined to see that its program is carried into effect.

### Educational Activities.

This was a field sadly neglected by the former C. E. C., who could see nothing but the farmer-labor party campaign. We realized the burning need for systematic Bolshevik education in the party and at the first opportunity established a special educational department with a responsible national director, Comrade Cannon and a committee under the supervision of the C. E. C.

Already the party is realizing the beneficial results of the activities of the educational department. There have been established party schools and classes in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston, also a large network of elementary study classes in the A. B. C. of Communism, thru-out the country. There are also in operation circuit study classes in the districts of Ohio, Illinois and Pennsylvania. Provisions have been made by the educational department for the publication of a library of Communism to contain theoretical books on the fundamentals of Leninism.

We realize that this is only a beginning, but a beginning in the right

direction and with proper regard for the immediate needs of the party. The present C. E. C. intends to remain true to its conception of a balanced program of party activities in which Bolshevik education occupies an important place.

### Thesis and Work on Shop Nuclei

It was the present C. E. C. that made the first earnest attempt to place the shop nuclei proposition as an immediate organizational task of the party. Thanks to our efforts, a practical way has been found to the application of the principle of shop nuclei to the specific conditions of our own party. This practical program is embodied in a special thesis recently adopted by the C. E. C. This shop nuclei thesis on the most complicated and difficult organizational question confronting our party was worked out by the majority.

Months ago we set out to begin to educate our party membership to the necessity of starting the reorganization on the shop nuclei basis. Soon afterwards the first organizational steps were actually taken by our Chicago district. At present the situation is ripe enough for similar steps in a number of other districts where there is enough concentration of our members in industry to permit such action.

### Strengthening the Communist Morale and Understanding of our Membership

Another major achievement of our party during the past year was the general strengthening of the morale and Communist understanding of our membership. This was no easy task to accomplish in the face of an organized minority caucus functioning thru-out the country in flagrant violation of Comintern decisions, ever since the 1923 party convention and until this very hour.

The C. E. C. majority have been working on the theory of discipline advocated by Lenin and practiced by the C. I. This theory is, that the basis of Communist discipline is confidence of the membership in the leading men and committees of the party and that this confidence can be won only in one way, namely, by the ability of the party to develop and apply correct political strategy and tactics. To win the confidence of the membership in our ability to give the party correct Communist leadership—this was the great ambition of the present C. E. C. It was for this reason that representatives of the C. E. C. frequently addressed joint membership meetings to familiarize the party with the plans and objectives of the C. E. C. And in every such instance the C. E. C. received the almost unanimous approval of the rank and file of the party.

We attempted on numerous occasions to liquidate the organized illegal opposition of the minority. It was Comrade Foster who immediately upon his return from Russia made a motion in the C. E. C. providing for a special committee, consisting of an equal number of representatives of the C. E. C. and of the minority, to remove the factional basis of our disagreements and to liquidate the organized opposition of the minority. We met the minority more than half way. We conceded them a number of important organization appointments as an indication of our willingness to work with them on the basis of mutual confidence, we submitted our program of action, a major achievement of our party, not directly to the C. E. C., but first to the minority group in order that they might identify themselves with it and thus share in the credit of initiating the program. We regret to say that the minority, altho always willing to accept our concessions, never for a moment relinquished its caucus-organization and systematic opposition. This fact, together with the additional fact that the executive secretary of the party belonged to the minority opposition, made it very difficult for the C. E. C. to put into effect more fully all its policies and decisions. The latest attempt to pacify the op-

position was initiated by Comrade Cannon on the eve of the party discussion, with the idea of removing if possible the purely factional sting from differences of opinion on policy. We proposed informal discussions with the minority of the immediate political tasks of the party in order to ascertain whether or not a common basis of policy could be found, but the minority was more intent upon discussing the make-up of the next C. E. C. and similar questions of party control than problems of policy. This made it impossible for us to proceed, because we held to the Bolshevik principle that the basis of unity in a Communist Party is agreement on policy and not the arbitrary division of organizational control. The minority, however, thought otherwise, consequently our latest attempt to liquidate the organized minority opposition came to naught. A further reason is now clear: the minority is one of the right wing tendencies in the party.

But the party as a whole, if not the minority, responded splendidly to every effort of the C. E. C. to improve the morale and understanding of the organization. The membership particularly appreciated the readiness of the C. E. C. to admit mistakes and to correct them quickly. Something that the minority never dares to do, even in the case of their pet third party alliance which was rejected by the Communist International. Till this very day the minority cannot muster the courage to say whether the Comintern was right or wrong.

In our ideological struggle against the remnants of the Two-and-a-Half International we have been making steady progress, despite the numerous tactless provocations of the minority which went as far as supplying misinformation to the C. E. C. We adhered strictly to the tactics of the C. I., applied to Serrati, Smeral, and many others, which was to defeat these Two-and-a-Half International tendencies ideologically, to prove them wrong and politically bankrupt in the eyes of the membership, to win all the proletarian elements of the party to the point of view of the C. I., and to compel the carrying out of the policies of the C. I. when necessary even by means of disciplinary measures. Together with the C. I. we realized that the Bolshevization of our party is not a one-act affair, to be accomplished overnight by means of senseless persecutions, but a process of education and merciless ideological struggle against menshevism, opportunism, and centrism. This was the policy of the C. E. C. majority carried out daily in every phase of its activities. We fought to the best of our abilities every deviation from the C. I. policies, such as, the remnants of the ideology of the Two-and-a-Half International, the right wing farmer-laborist tendency, as well as those temporary deviations of which we ourselves have been guilty. We strained all our efforts to draw into party leadership, to bring to the fore all the proletarian elements of the party, the active workers from the shops. And in contradistinction from the pseudo-intellectuals of the minority we believe that our movement is essentially a proletarian movement and that its ideology and psychology must be permeated with that of the class conscious revolutionary proletariat.

As a result of these efforts our party is now ideologically more homogeneous than ever before in its history. The attendance at branch meetings is now better, the internal life of our branches is richer and more intensive. The dues payments have never been so high as they are at present. Our party is continually growing in numbers. We are getting better organized and more closely knit together. All this makes us feel confident that our party is now on the right road to become an important factor in the everyday struggles of the American workers.

### The DAILY WORKER.

A major achievement of the C. E. C. has been the management and operation of The DAILY WORKER. In-

stead of founding only our daily paper with the fund raised last year as was planned by the former C. E. C., we have purchased a building to house The DAILY WORKER and the national office of the party as well, and have established a modern and complete printing plant to take care of all the party's printing. The management of the mechanical department of this plant as well as the office end has been economical and efficient in the extreme, to the end that the deficit of The DAILY WORKER for 1924, is much lower than we had dared to hope (only \$20,000).

But it was not this phase of the work which brought the party its greatest gains. Nor have the education and propaganda values of The DAILY WORKER been its chief advantages. It has been in the field of organization that The DAILY WORKER has brought us the greatest benefits. For due to the planful organizational methods used in The DAILY WORKER, the organizing of the army of agents, we have developed a rich field for making new mass contacts. Instead a haphazard attempt at building circulation, an organized army of subscription agents is being developed who are not simply sub-hustlers, but actually rapidly developing, capable organizers for the party. The formalizing of this organization into The DAILY WORKER Builders is another step in advance which is already yielding further results.

### Centralizing the Party Press.

The decentralized state of our party press which the C. E. C. inherited from its preceding administration was an outrage and a nuisance. The Weekly Worker was printed in one place and edited and managed in another. The Liberator, Labor Herald, and Soviet Russia Pictorial all had separate editorial staffs and administrations. The Party Literature Department had another. As long ago as last January the C. E. C. decided to eliminate this waste and inefficiency.

The first step was the amalgamation of the three monthly magazines into The Workers' Monthly. Thus the party has one monthly official organ instead of three and instead of three editors and two assistants, there is only one editor. The DAILY WORKER has taken charge of the management of The Workers' Monthly and with the addition of one office girl to its staff, it does the work formerly done by the three business administrations which employed from four to five persons. The resultant saving to our party in wages alone amounts to over \$12,000 a year.

But the monetary saving is not the only nor by any means the greatest achievement. The centralizing of the production of our monthly with The DAILY WORKER makes it possible to produce both a better daily and a better monthly. The centralizing of the distribution makes it easier to increase the circulation of both The DAILY WORKER and The Workers' Monthly.

The C. E. C. has now decided to centralize in a similar manner the party's Literature Department, so that beginning the first of the year, The DAILY WORKER will be charged with the administration and distribution of this important arm of our party. This will not only make new savings for the party, but also because of centralizing of the selling machinery the party will for the first time begin really to permeate the working class with Communist books and pamphlets.

### Shortcomings to be Overcome.

We should not close our eyes to a number of shortcomings in our activities. Some of our language sections are not as yet sufficiently close to the party organization. Communist work among women employed in industry, among the Negro masses, and among the agricultural workers and poor farmers has hardly begun. This much, however, must be placed on record, that the present C. E. C. majority succeeded in relieving the party from several very harmful notions of the minority regarding the policies and forms of organization to be ap-

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plied by our party in its work among women, the Negroes, and the agricultural proletariat, at the same time formulating correct policies for our future work. The party is now fully equipped to proceed successfully in these comparatively new fields of activity.

## United Front Activities.

One of the signs that our party is finally beginning to get the proper perspective in the estimation of events and in formulating its policies is the recent decision of the C. E. C. to establish a permanent commission on the united front. The duty of this commission, which is a subcommittee of the C. E. C. is to continually survey the field of class struggle and to formulate for the C. E. C. policies and plans of organization for united front campaigns on the basis of immediate burning issues in the life of the toiling masses.

At present we are beginning to develop such united front campaigns against child labor, and for the release of Sacco and Vanzetti. The subcommittee is preparing the outlines of policy and organization for a campaign against the so-called criminal syndicalism laws and for the release of class war prisoners. It is our intention, in accord with the decisions of the Fifth Congress of the C. I., to seize upon every burning issue in the life of the masses, for united front action against the capitalists and against their agents in the labor move-

ment. This plan to systematize the united front campaign was entirely the work of the C. E. C. majority.

## The Party Discussion.

We want the party to remember that it was the present C. E. C. that created the opportunity for our membership to discuss thoroly and express itself on our immediate tasks. The whole plan for conducting the party discussion was presented by the C. E. C. majority. We took the greatest care to so organize the discussion as to secure the maximum freedom of expression for the minority and to crystallize opinion for all views and tendencies in the party. Last year, on the contrary, when we were in the minority, we were denied by the Pepper group even the right to defend our policies in the various district conventions.

To us the party is the party membership. The success of the party depends upon the consciousness, initiative, and activity of every party member. The present C. E. C. fully realizes that the strength of a Communist Party rests mainly on the Bolshevik quality of its rank and file and leadership and upon the bonds of mutual confidence that exist between the two. We are therefore, determined to do all in our power to deepen the Bolshevik quality of our party as a whole, and to strengthen the existing bonds of mutual confidence between the party membership and the party leadership.

The minority have challenged the leadership of the C. E. C. majority. In reply we say, let the record speak. We do not propose to follow in the footsteps of the minority and to bluff the party into the belief that under our leadership the party has already conquered the world. Instead, we will ask the party membership to examine our actual achievements. The party will then see that it has been making continual progress despite all difficulties, that we have extended our influence and strengthened our organization, and that now we are making an effort to rid the party completely of the old spirit of inflation and farmer-laboristic opportunistism. We are on the right road to building the Workers Party into a mass Communist Party.

## SPECIAL NOTICE!

### On Back Numbers of the DAILY WORKER

The heavy cost of handling back numbers for which there has been a steady demand necessitates the following prices:

**5 CENTS PER COPY**

on all issues within 30 days of  
current issue.

**10 CENTS PER COPY**

for all issues over 30 days old.

No orders for back numbers filled  
unless paid for in advance.