

# Letters from Readers



## Disagrees With Foster About Mistakes

**BROOKLYN, N. Y.**  
 Dear Editor:  
 When Comrade Foster speaks of "imaginary" mistakes, I rise to object. It impugns the integrity of those who speak their piece. It puts a damper on criticism.  
 "Progress comes only through the loss of illusions," said Karl Marx. This is indeed an eternal verity. We are examining the past for the sake of the future.  
 Some comrades feel that we may criticize ourselves out of existence. There is nothing to fear on that score. Criticism, even of the sort intended to destroy, cannot do so.  
 The fresh wind of free and fearless criticism now taking place among us offers the promise that we will keep our rendezvous with history—to become recognized and accepted by the workers and the majority of the population as the ablest defenders of all their interests every day on the long march towards socialism, and their elected representatives at its inauguration. Only socialism is inevitable—not how it will come about or who will be in the vanguard at its inception.

AS A party of socialism, we are responsible not only for the state of our organization, but for the policies we advance and the statements we make. In this respect, I believe it is not helpful when Comrade Foster cites the high living standards as a factor in our isolation. This has an overtone of "the worse things are the better"—an idea abhorrent to the working class, the mere suggestion of which can only isolate us further. A party can be suppressed and lose members. It does not become isolated if it knows how to maintain its ties with labor at all times in every situation.  
 As for our membership losses, all the perfume in Arabia cannot wash away the harsh reality that we lost 80 percent of the high point of our membership over the years. Some of it was due to attacks on our party. But so many other reasons have been advanced—all of which are valid—that we are at least in no position to state with categorical finality, as Foster does, that these losses were due mainly to the repression. Learning from our brother parties is always in order, from their mistakes as well as from their triumphs. They can teach us a great deal on how to forge coalitions and make alliances and keep from getting isolated. In most respects, however, we must do our own soul-searching.  
 To say that we have lost a lot of ground is not being negative. This is the stern reality. It is also not written in the stars that we will regain it. There is much to be done. The point is we must certainly keep trying. This requires many changes, both inside our party and in our public relations.  
 There are differences of opinion among us. On one thing we are all agreed—we are painfully isolated from the great struggles now taking place. We are not all agreed, however, that the times call for new policies, new concepts, new methods. We look to

# The American Road to Socialism

A special Section Devoted to Discussion of the Past and Perspectives of the Communist Party and the American Left. Edited by Discussion Committee, Communist Party

## No Shortcut to Mass Unity

By GARY STEELWORKER  
 I  
 Dennis, in "The Communists Take A New Look" says "... most of the erroneous analysis and tactical mistakes of our party since 1945 have been chiefly of a left sectarian character." No one can disagree that many left errors were made. But this is not the only source of error, and others must be looked for. An excellent beginning is made in Berman's "On Method in Political Economy." Here we see lack of understanding of Marxism or even of the simplest principles of scientific research as a cause for error. This writer also remembers that in '52 and '54, several Communist steelworkers pointed out that the mills, at least, did not show signs of imminent depression, but no attention was paid. No doubt many accept the party's economic analysis, but a failure to check this analysis against the realities of life in the shops helps to contribute to error.



mass movement. To some degree this isolation was inevitable. For decades we had been unable to convince the workers of the need for socialism. There existed an unprecedented drive against the socialist countries, a drive which pointed to us as agents of a foreign power. Moreover, by the time the party fully raised the slogan of membership in the mass organizations, rather than concentrating on building new left centers, the terror was already on. It was already impossible to publicly identify oneself as a Communist, because it would mean firing from the mill and expulsion from the union. For years past we had failed to root ourselves among the industrial workers, and finally had to pay the piper.  
 But will we gain the influence and respect we desire by some sort of going along with the better policies of the trade union leadership and the leadership of other mass organizations? In the mills we know that this will only lose us the respect and base we already have. Those in the locals who know us as Communists expect us to remain the most principled fighters against the company, and, when necessary, against incorrect union policy. They expect us to be the most active, most advanced, most honest-thinking trade unionists, even

Dennis and others, while mentioning that there were some right errors, fail to examine this closely enough. Yet it seems as if for every left error made in theory and estimates, there was a right error made in the practical application of party program. In Lake County, Ind., for example, the estimate of the fascist danger led to the practical abandoning of the party branches by the district leadership; constant advice was given to tone down the necessary struggle in the United Steelworkers locals against some harmful policies of the union leadership, etc.  
 Furthermore, the period from '48 to '56 cannot be treated as one, for the swing was from the admittedly left mistakes of '48 till the present. Now the trend runs the other way, into the danger of abandoning any independent Communist position, of urging workers in the shops to go along with their union leadership, whether that leadership is right or wrong.

sents the estimate that the USW and its McDonald leadership is carrying out a "class struggle policy." Anyone who sees the myriad of grievances or the union's intervention on the company's side every time there is a "wildcat" strike should know better.  
 Another example is the pleas that "I have wasted so many years of my life." Such conclusions can only come from those who have helped no one to develop, been involved in no movements of numbers of non-Communists, had little or nothing to do with working people. Just such people look to almost any means to associate themselves with the masses. They are not satisfied with the dif-

scult answers of working hard in the organizations of the people, but rather seek short cuts and easy answers which overnight transform the Communists into "respectable" people. But easy paths to a position of influence for the party do not exist. No matter how we change our program, the workers will not be influenced nationally by the party until they see the need for a basic change. It is the task of the party to help them see this need.

IT is asked: "Why the isolation of the party?" It is said that while individual Communists may be well accepted in their union or community, the party as a whole is isolated from the



## END BUROCRACY BUT NOT PARTY!

FIRST, LET'S keep our heads and try to realize the full meaning of proposals to (1) disband the CPUSA and (2) throw out all its top leaders and start fresh.  
 After ten years of trying, the McCarthyites have failed to disband the party. Should we do it for them? Our leaders have contributed their share to the relaxation in witchhunting, such as it is. They went to prison, came out again and without exception, went right back to their posts in the revolutionary struggle. What legalized terrorism could not do—separate them from the party—we should do ourselves? No. No one in his right mind would make such a suggestion.

of the members on any main issue, a general election is called and the British voters have a chance to send to Parliament people of different parties who will elect a different Prime Minister than Eden.  
 This is a check on whether the Prime Minister is carrying out the wishes of the voters. It is this check which is missing in democratic centralism. With democratic centralism, once a leader gets into the top echelons, there is no way of removing him from below, no matter what he does.

This has led to the growth of bureaucracy wherever it has been tried: in the CPUSSR, in the CPUSA, in the American trade unions.  
 THEREFORE—I think it is true to say at the present time that the bourgeois nations have more formal democracy than does our party; not to go into the question of real democracy at this point. Our publications are always pointing out how the will of the people is thwarted in the politics of bourgeois governments. Here I only want to discuss how we, the Communists, can get more real inner-party democracy.

I believe it is essential to make all leaders responsible to the membership for their election. A leader who depends on

if they are not yet ready to go along with us.  
 Much that is said of influence for the party, especially with the trade union leadership, forgets that the basic prerequisite for a united front is the possession of support. If the French party says that they would like to form a united front, they are speaking of their millions of supporters, with the millions of some other grouping. Similarly, if the American Communists would form united fronts, they must have the support of many workers. Then united fronts will be (and in some steel shops are being) formed. Without such support, why should anyone unite with us? That it is incumbent upon the Communists to be flexible as to forms, that there must be willingness to compromise, that we must not attack those people who have made slight errors as stoolpigeons, etc., is true, and is generally the case. But without the power of mass support all that is meaningless.

## Statement of The Committee

Some weeks ago, this committee announced the opening of a public discussion on the report of Comrades Eugene Dennis, and Claude Lightfoot and Max Weiss to the National Committee of the CPUSA and urged the fullest participation of all Party members and organizations.  
 We trust that this discussion will mark a new stage; in that it will help further deepen our understanding of the past, both in its positive and negative feature, as well as increasingly bring forth much more thinking with regard to future perspectives.  
 We urge upon everyone full participation in this discussion.  
**DISCUSSION COMMITTEE  
 COMMUNIST PARTY**

Then, what to do about bureaucracy, which has slowed down and hampered our work and alienated people who should be on our side?  
 What is democratic centralism? It was originally modeled somewhat on the European system of election. Anthony Eden, for instance, is not elected by direct vote of the British voters. Only the voters living in his district vote for Eden and send him to Parliament. Then the members of Parliament elect him Prime Minister.  
 But should Eden's recommendations to Parliament not receive the support of a majority

WHAT of a future program then? Re-reading the report of the '48 party convention, in particular Henry Winston's report, one can find many errors. But above all, the report made an effort to direct the major attention of the party to the working class. Winston outlines four tasks which in my opinion have never been accomplished. They are: working out a correct policy for each industry, development of the united front from below, drawing constant lessons from the experiences of the workers, building the party.

# Letters from Readers

(Continued from Page 6)

our leadership to offer solutions for the best way to move forward.

I am enclosing \$5 which I can't afford. But I would rather wear an outworn garment than



outworn policies. It's worth a million to be able to Speak Your Piece.

REALIST.

## Says Farm Problem Neglected by C.P.

Editor, The Worker:

Carl Ross and Martin Mackie deserve credit for reminding us in their recent article (The Worker, Aug 26) that there is a farm problem. Since they urge discussion and opinions "from other sections of the country," perhaps a little more space can be given to this problem, which the authors say, "Our party has seriously neglected . . . for a number of years."

Why has our party neglected it? The authors do not venture an opinion on this and make no attempt to relate their discussion of the farm problem to the present crisis on the left. Instead, they plunge right into proposals for a farm program, and while their proposals are not without merit and would no doubt help the small and middle farmers, they ignore the party's past history and its present crisis—merely exhorting us to do better in the future.

After a long, 20-year history of neglecting the farm problem, a deeper probe is needed—par- (Continued on Page 11)

# The American Road to Socialism

A PERSONAL HISTORY

## Thoughts on How Not to Conduct a Discussion

By J. K. (Chicago)

THIS IS a "case history," as contrasted with the general reference to inner-Party democracy. The reader, however, will not fail in seeing the deep-going bearing of this case on the general problem. Just before his imprisonment, Gil Green considered it important enough to mention this case as an example of how Party discussions should not be conducted. I am writing this, also, in answer to the question posed by Homer Chase in his article of Aug. 12 about the "suppression of Jim Keller's criticism" in 1948. This will save me the necessity of individual answers to people whose interest in the matter has either been aroused or revived by Homer Chase. Here, then, are the facts.

The case had its origin in the remarks I made at a discussion meeting on the 1948 pre-convention resolution. Reaction to my remarks was generally favorable, and the Educational Director for Illinois asked me to put my talk into writing. I complied with his request and gave him the article (entitled "The Nature of Our Mistakes"), which he printed in the Illinois "Party Forum."

Soon after the article's publication, Gil Green was summoned into New York where he was strongly impressed with the National Committee's displeasure over the content and publication of my article. Upon Gil's return to Chicago, all copies of the "Party Forum" were gathered up and withheld from circulation.

Gil informed me that the National Committee was greatly disturbed by the article and asked me to re-write it. He then mentioned two points of the criticism; (1) that the article was too negative and failed to mention the achievements of the Party; (2) that in my reference to the 1945 resolution I quoted out of context.

After hearing the specific criticism, I was surprised that the article aroused such a storm. However, I readily accepted the criticism and submitted a second article. Before sending it in, I submitted the second draft to the members of the Illinois Board. At this stage the Board was cautious and would not

make an official decision. But each member individually felt that the second draft complied with the criticism of the National Committee. As requested, I enumerated the positive achievements and also quoted the entire section of the 1945 Resolution originally cited.

THE MATTER rested till July when Gene Dennis came to Chicago. Comrade Dennis arranged to talk to me. He opened by saying that he did not intend to discuss the line of my article. He went on to say that the second draft was just as unsatisfactory as the first, that all members of the National Committee were against it and that I should withdraw the article from publication. He recognized my right to have the article printed, but that if I insisted on so doing, it would be answered, not with a friendly polemic, but all out repudiation.

Gene's words were harsh and blunt. At the same time I felt he was trying to give me friendly advice "for old times' sake" and to save me from serious political consequences. Despite this undercurrent of friendship, the approach as a whole had the very opposite of the desire effect.

It failed to provide me with any valid reason for scrapping the article. It overlooked the fact that old-time fighters are hardly likely to be persuaded by threats, and collided with my whole concept of resolving differences of opinion. I refused to withdraw the article and insisted on my right to have it printed. About midnight Gil Green phoned and said that Dennis agreed to have the article printed. But the article was not printed.

The episode was climaxed several weeks later at the national convention. There a scene took place which, to my knowledge, has had no parallel in the history of the Party. At the very end of the convention, in his summary, Comrade Foster made a lengthy denunciation of the unprinted article and its author. Of the hundreds of delegates present, less than a score had seen the article or knew of its existence. Not a single line of the article was quoted to confirm any point of the attack. I was arbitrarily denied admission to the convention, by whom or why,

I was not told. Throughout the whole episode there were no charges, no hearings, no opportunity of solution through established Party procedure.

MEANWHILE in Illinois my standing was transformed overnight. Political discussion gave way before unfounded insinuations of anti-Party motivation on my part. After 27 years of membership, I suddenly felt the ground shaking under my feet and facing possible expulsion. Seeing no way of continuing and still adhering to a principled position, I gave up my full-time



responsibilities and went back to shop.

The National Committee obviously was not interested in the corrections it originally suggested to my article. It demanded a change in the basic line. It regarded criticism of the National Committee policies as an attack upon the Party itself. The irony of the situation is that my article was weak medicine compared to most of the articles being printed in the present discussion.

The main point of my 1948 article was that the leadership had not correctly estimated the postwar period, and particularly the realignment of class forces. The full details of the article as

well as some comments on current questions, I intend to present in a separate article.

Here I am not discussing the merits of the unprinted article. Let us even assume it was all wrong. The question remains whether its suppression, as well as the acts of political reprisal and violations of Party procedure were justified. Gil Green, as I said at the outset, thinks they were not, and felt strongly enough to embody his criticism in a letter. I do not know how the National Committee now feels about this matter. If it still feels justified in its action there is but one way to prove the point and that is by printing the suppressed article. On my part, I am willing to stand such a test.

THIS INCIDENT I have described does not confirm the view of Comrade Dennis which sees inner-Party democracy narrowed mainly, if not entirely, "as the attacks on our Party mounted." But this case, and it is not the only one, proves that the attacks on the Party do not provide the entire answer, though they certainly aggravated the situation.

Moreover, in a situation where an ounce of correction is worth a ton of declarations, it is strange that the leadership has not taken steps to recognize, let alone correct a single instance of inner-Party violations. The National Committee should demonstrate specifically and concretely that recognition of inner-Party abuses goes deeper than words and general declarations.

It may be argued that this whole question is relatively minor for us when compared with the revelations of the Khrushchev report. This argument, in my judgment, provides poor grounds for complacency on our part. In (Continued on Page 11)

## Left Writers on American Themes

By WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

AT THE PRESENT time, among certain comrades in our Party, it has become the fashion to condemn as left-sectarian all the Party's policies of the cold war period, good, bad, and indifferent. The fact is, of course, that although the Party made certain mistakes during these hard years (and what Party would not have done so under the heavy government pressure?) the general line of the Party, especially regarding the fight against the war-fascist danger was in the main correct.

One of the favorite charges of those who see left mistakes wherever they look is that during the past decade the Party virtually cast aside all consideration of our national traditions. Especially the newly-fledged pro-Browderites in the Party make this accusation, which usually is accepted offhand as true. Yet it is a misreading of Party life of the period.

On the contrary, it is safe to say that never in its history has our Party and the left forces as a whole taken a stronger and more correct interest in the traditions of the working class, the Negro people, and the American people in general than during the past several years notwithstanding the extreme difficulties and persecutions under which these forces had to work.

THROUGH these hard years there have been a great many fine historical articles appearing in our press and that of the left generally, bringing out various

aspects of working class and general American history. There were also a number of very good pamphlets of the same character published during this time. These include Aptheker's Laureates of Imperialism, Elizabeth Lawson's The Reign of Witches, Lincoln's Third Party and the People's Almanac. Then there were the pamphlets on Samuel Adams and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In this space it is possible to list only some of the more important of these historical studies.

As far as books, there were a number of them with a strong historical bent produced in the past several hard years. These include Our Hidden Heritage, by John Howard Lawson, the well-known books, Robert Minor by Joseph North, The Enemy Forgotten by Gil Green, I Speak My Piece by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Labor's Untold Story by Boyer and Morais, Gene Debs by Morais and Cahn, and The Education of John Reed by John Stuart, all of which books heavily stress American labor and democratic traditions. M. U. Schappes also wrote his basic Documentary History of the Jews in the U. S.

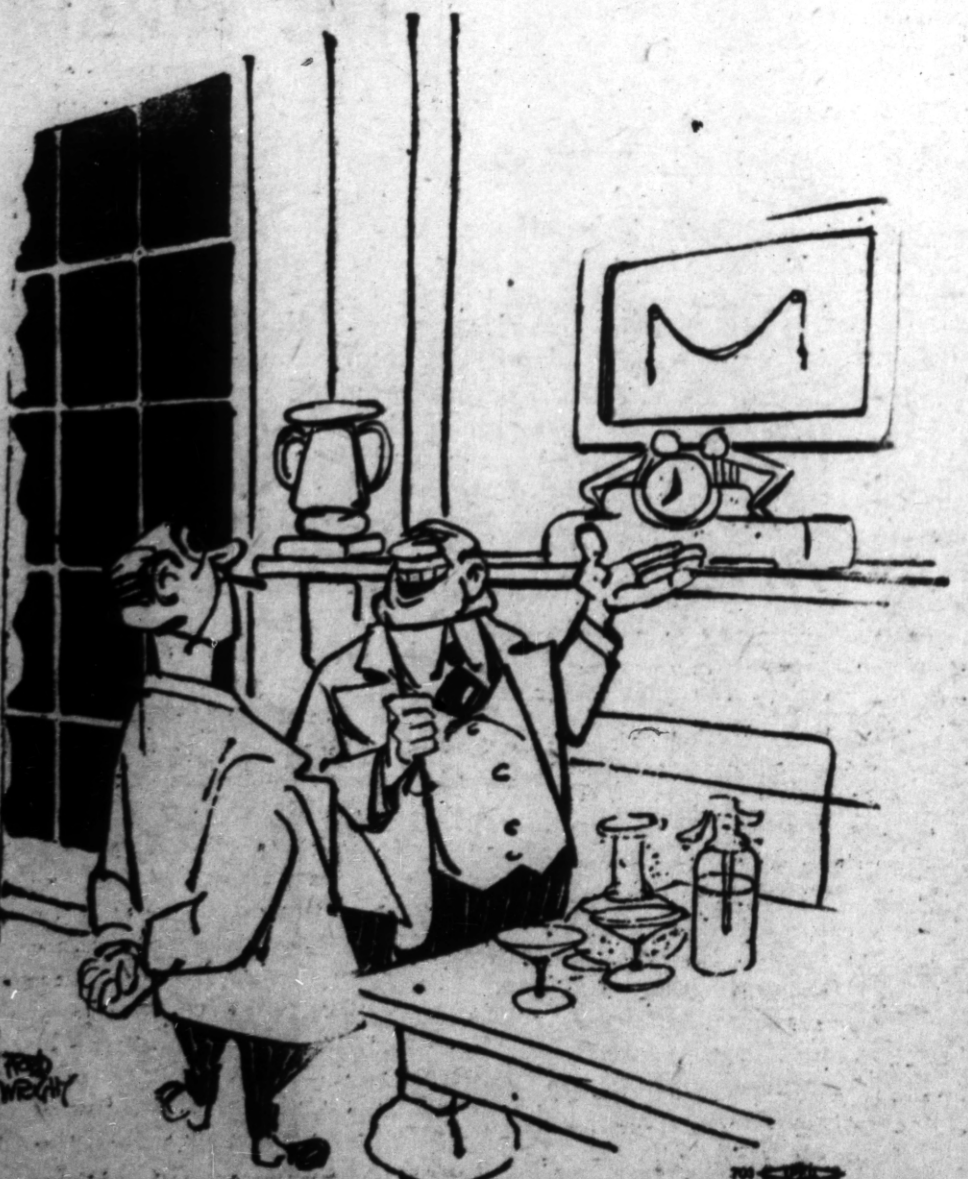
A notable achievement on this general score also was the production by Philip Foner of two volumes of his monumental history of the American trade union movement, as well as his four volumes of Frederick Douglass' writings and speeches. Of very great importance is the fact that Herbert Aptheker, in line with the sharp historical trend of the Party during the cold war years, got well started on a badly-

needed two-volume Marxist-Leninist general history of the U. S. It is now about half-finished. When done, it will certainly represent one of the top efforts ever made by the Party in the field of history. Aptheker also produced his splendid Documentary History of the Negro People.

IN ADDITION to all these excellent historical writings and various others that I have not mentioned, I, also, during the past eight years, produced five full-scale histories (550 to 650 pages each)—on the Americas, the Communist Party, the Negro People, the Three Internationals and the World Trade Union Movement.

Under the fierce attacks from the government, the distribution problem in general was a baffling one; nevertheless some 45,000 of these large historical works, not to mention others, were sold. These books, I may add, have been widely translated in the USSR, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, as well as in People's China, India, Japan and other lands.

In view of the intense interest shown by our members in writing and reading labor historical works over the past several years, it is entirely misleading to assert that the Party, during the cold war, has ignored the traditions of the working class, of the Negro people, and of the American people. The plain fact is that never has the Party and the Left generally paid so much attention to American history as during the past decade, despite all the extreme difficulties of the period.



AND THIS IS THE ORIGINAL SHOESTRING I STARTED ON...

# The American Road to Socialism

## Gov't. Ownership of Industry Seen as Unrealistic Proposal

By BERNARD

I  
NEW YORK.

HAVING adopted a program, it is not necessary that we stand mute on all other issues. On the contrary, by taking a correct position on other important issues we win the generalized support of those affected by that issue. Conversely, taking a wrong position on such issues can isolate us. One example of a wrong position on a non-program matter is our attitude toward the expansion of consumer credit. This is a highly successful device for expanding the home market and was a major factor in the 1954-55 boom in business and profits. And like any other increase in the per capita distribution of goods, it tended to raise the standard of living. Furthermore, the risks of the device fell mainly on the capitalists, who, in order to reap their profits, have to accept the promises to pay of the workers. Nevertheless the D.W. usually refers to the increase in consumer credit in a deprecating manner. Does the D.W. think that a worker objects to being able to buy things on time payments? What is the reaction of the worker when his favorite paper says that he should not have been given the credit that he asked for?

A much more important failure to see the workers point of view was in connection with the Marshall Plan. We did not see that, besides its cold war function, the plan was a reaction to a definite economic situation in Europe and in the former colonies precluded the export of capital in sufficient volume to replace the former war exports. In this situation the capitalists, remembering the experience with lend-lease, devised a maneuver not foreseen by either Marx or Lenin, namely, the replacement of the export of capital by the peacetime export of gifts. The Marshall Plan was thus the vehicle for maintaining U.S. production.

IT IS true that U. S. capitalism is based primarily on the home market and that Marshall Plan exports were insignificant in comparison with total production. But the significance of capital exports, or in this case of gifts, for the economy, is not determined by the ratio of such exports to the total production but by the ratio to uninvested surplus value. And that ratio, in this case, had considerable significance.

The workers correctly saw that the Marshall Plan was an important factor in keeping them at work. And from their point of view, when our party opposed the Marshall Plan in toto it was not only opposing the cold war; it was also opposing the salvation of the country's economy. That is why our position isolated us from the main stream of American life. It was not because our position was too far in advance of the workers; it was because we were opposing a necessary development of the U. S. economy.

What, then, should have been our position on the Marshall Plan? It should have been that the ostensible basic idea of the plan was good (whoever doesn't believe this should read the plan), but that the export of military aid was not helpful and was not necessary part of the plan; that military aid was being emphasized by the armaments manufacturers for their own benefit, and that the aid should have been solely economic, consisting of the export, as gifts, of machinery, consumer goods and agricultural products.

Had we taken that position on the Marshall Plan our status in the trade unions would have been entirely different. It is even possible that our incorrect position on the third party movement would not have been sufficient to isolate us, just as our errors in the 30s were over-balanced by our correct position on economic demands. Certainly the fact that our position on the Marshall Plan threatened the jobs of the workers was one of the bases for the vehemence with which we were attacked. The more this subject is discussed, the clearer it will become that our program must always be in tune with the direction in which the economy of the country is moving.

OF COURSE, if the above analysis of our position on the Marshall Plan is correct, then Dennis' characterization of that position (Page 19 of his report) as one of our "significant contributions" is in error, and his position (Page 29) that our error in connection with the Marshall Plan was in "not taking into account the level of understanding of the workers" is also wrong. It was our own level of understanding that was deficient; the workers were more nearly correct than we were.

It seems to me that our national leaders are proposing an unrealistic program of government ownership. In his report to the National Committee Dennis

THIS or THIS



THIS or THIS



THIS or THIS



THIS or THIS



THIS or THIS



says that the economic situation: "Urgently calls for a rounded-out popular economic program of action designed to safeguard the pressing economic interests of the great masses of workers, farmers, Negro people, and small business—regardless of when the economic crisis develops. And the program should include concrete proposals for curbing the monopolies and for providing for the public ownership of a num-

ber of industries, such as in the atomic energy field and public utilities."

The importance which Dennis attaches to this idea is shown by his repeated reference to it. He refers to "the new anti-monopoly political alignment that is now in process of development" and to "the pressing need of nationalizing certain industries." He says that we should study the question of a "rounded out anti-monopoly program" and that "the central objective in the '56 election is to help create some of the conditions for the emergence of an anti-monopoly coalition."

THIS position is not confined to Dennis. A D.W. editorial on June 14 mentioned in passing that "we need federal control of the entire atomic power development (private monopolies are now racing for domination in the field)." And Max Weiss in the D.W. of June 22 says that "labor is moving toward political independence under conditions in which its main task is the development of an anti-monopoly coalition, not an anti-capitalist party." He looks forward to a coalition powerful enough to "break the grip of big business elements in the Democratic Party on the basis of a clearcut anti-monopoly program."

Fred Fine in the Worker of July 1 asks: "What are the chief characteristics of the slowly emerging anti-monopoly coalition?" And in the Worker of July 22 Albert Blumberg also has this vision of a slow emerging anti-monopoly coalition.

Monopoly is a natural stage in the development of capitalism based on the expansion of the economy and of its technical base. Could little banks handle the business of the U. S. or are big banks necessary? In the production of aluminum a project for big or for little business? Who but the monopolies could organize the necessary new sources of iron ore now that the Mesabi range is being exhausted? To roll back the economy to the pre-monopoly stage is as hopeless as reversing time and I cannot believe that this is what Dennis, Weiss, Fein and Blumberg have in mind.

NEVERTHELESS, it is clear that what is being proposed is not simply a fight for higher wages, or a higher minimum wage, or better old age pensions, or a 30-hour week. Such proposals can be made in clear and understandable language and would not be referred to as an "anti-monopoly" position. No; what is being proposed is that the party make its main program for government ownership of industry. The D.W. of July 10 says editorially:

"This issue, we feel, will press itself naturally to the fore in the coming months and years as we get deeper into the jet air age



and develop atomic planes. Public ownership and operation of air flight for the benefit of the nation and not for private profit of a handful of money-hungry individuals is, we believe, what the atomic age calls for."

Now there are in reality some slowly emerging coalitions—as, for example, the developing coalition between the NAACP and the unions or the coalition developing between the ADA, the unions, and the liberals. These coalitions will undoubtedly come into conflict with the monopolies in one field or another. But what is developing is a coalition for civil rights, for a peaceful foreign policy, and for economic progress. It is not, and will not in the foreseeable future, develop into a coalition against the institution of monopoly or into support for government ownership of industry. The constant harping by our national leaders on the alleged "anti-monopoly" character of the developing coalition only shows that the days of self-delusion are not over.

ASIDE from the fact that there is no "slowly emerging anti-monopoly coalition" which favors government ownership, there are sound theoretical reasons why the C.P. must not make such a campaign. Our program must be aimed at improving the conditions of the people by establishing peace, liberty, and a higher standard of living. In this connection, when there are economic projects which would raise the standard of living (like TVA, the proposed MVA, the federal housing program and the federal road program), but which the capitalists do not find profitable to develop themselves, then we should demand that the government develop them.

Furthermore, when an already established utility or industry is bankrupt and can no longer be operated by the capitalists, but is nevertheless necessary for the welfare of the people, as, for example, the New York subway system, then we favor the government operating that utility. But in any specific instance, as long as there are capitalists willing to establish an industry or utility and the intervention of the government is not necessary in order to raise the standard of living in that respect (and air transport is a good example), why should we advocate public ownership?

HAS the government lost the power of taxation that it must resort to ownership and operation in order to get revenue? Or, for that purpose, is it easier to pass laws taking over an industry than to pass a new income tax law? It cannot be for the purpose of providing cheaper or better service because the government can regulate the prices and services of private monopolies without taking them over.

Do government workers get better pay than other workers? Have they the right to strike? Are the services of the National Labor Relations Board available to government workers? Does political affiliation never enter into appointment to a government job?

If we actually won the demand for government ownership, would not the workers then have to say: "You have misled us. You diverted us from a fight for better conditions into a fight for government ownership. Now we have it, but we have gained nothing." Then we would start a new discussion on "what got us into this mess?"

## ROAD TO MASS UNITY

(Continued from Page 6)

This is still the right approach. It is not present in the Dennis report. If anything, the working class and the need to root the party among the industrial workers is almost ignored. That a real industrial concentration policy has not been followed is self-evident to all in the steel industry.

But a policy of industrial concentration can be successful, not quickly, not overnight, but surely. If the party leadership concentrates on the decisive industries in each area, if concentration is brought down to a shop-by-shop basis, if the relationship between shop and community branches is made clear and attention is paid to the working class community branches, if party education is

directed to the working class, if there is patience and willingness to learn from the workers, if the criterion for success is "Is the party giving leadership to the workers?", then industrial concentration can be a success.

In another sphere, the party must stop thinking of itself as a giant, influencing events by its mere statements. To say, as does Dennis, that the '54 program had "an impact . . . among the masses in facilitating . . . the rebuffs the McCarthyites received in the 1954 elections" is to kid ourselves. The statement may have had some impact on the left, but it certainly had none on the steelworkers in Lake County. But if the party wishes to have an impact on the masses, then we must work out small tasks in the small areas

where we have forces. We must begin to think of the '56 elections as a means for building united fronts not on the "congressional and state levels," but rather in precincts, counties, etc. where we have real people and real influence. This must be the basic means by which we build political alliances.

IN the realm of theory, the party must put an end to the unrealistic estimates which come from wishful thinking, unsound scholarship and ignoring the concrete experiences of the working class, adding up to poor Marxism. Here, too, concentration is needed in those areas which will most benefit the workers in the industries. This requires in the first place a program of education throughout

the party directed at the workers. A review, for example, of the past years will show that there is no recent, easily understood, well written, short piece of material which can be given to workers interested in the CP. There has been little or no material on the industries singled out for concentration some years back. Noticeable exceptions were the Swift articles on the UAW and the Blumberg article on steel. The "hows" of education, the search for new techniques, simplicity, etc. is a matter of major importance, deserving of at least a special commission, including some workers, for study.

What can be done to help prevent future theoretical errors? The first task is to provide (Continued on Page 11)

# The American Road to Socialism

## NO QUICK ROAD TO MASS UNITY

(Continued from Page 10)

the basis for a thorough-going study of Marxism-Leninism, especially among workers and in working class communities. Each party member cannot be a full-fledged theoretician and at the same time be active in union and other work, take care of his family, etc. By becoming adept in the method of Marxism, however, we can evaluate that which others may say and relate it to our experiences. All Communists cannot make "original contributions" to theory, but all can and must evaluate the program and policy of the party.

★

IN sum then, it is not true, as some say, that because the party has not had the kind of success it wishes for it should be dissolved or so changed as to make it something other than a Communist Party. The function of the party is to be the most advanced fighter for the needs of the people, in the first place the workers and the Negro people, in their places of work and communities, in the political arena. The party must continue to educate all those who are ready for education in the principles of scientific socialism. In this way we will prepare the base for the groundswell of socialist thinking among the workers which will occur when the objective conditions are utilized by a militant, prepared Communist Party.

II

The report by Dennis speaks of doing "our utmost to help create the prerequisites" for a new mass party of socialism. Others speak of joining forces with Trotskyites (Dennis warns of the unreconstructed ones??!!) Norman Thomas socialists, "Monthly Review" and "National Guardian" forces. But who exactly are these people? In the mill I have yet to hear of a member of the SP, or a Trotskyite grouping, or even of a worker who takes his lead from such forces. Dennis speaks of the "revitalization . . . of socialist-orientation and pro-Marxist currents. . . ." But has this socialist re-orientation taken place among the workers? Among very few workers is there any meaningful socialist influence or consciousness. This fact, if forgotten, will lead us to seek all kinds of short cuts and easy solutions. But we may make a thousand alliances with Huberman, see Dennis and Thomas share the platform twice daily and still there will be no mass party of socialism.

The reasons for this were given very well in an article by Foster entitled "Marxism and the American Working Class." Foster makes clear the reason for the lack of socialist consciousness among the American workers. A rank and file USW leader says: "After all, the steel workers haven't had a wrinkle in their bellies for 17 years." To speak, then, of a mass party of socialism, composed of the groups that now exist, is to kid ourselves, to seek short cuts for the hard and painstaking work of winning the working class to socialism. To speak of a mass party of socialism before the American workers are ready for it is only to repeat the errors of 1948.

Some writers have characterized this approach as "left sectarian" and "dogmatic." They fail to see the danger inherent in a premature call for a mass party of socialism. They fail to see that if the CP weakens itself and its program by an indiscriminate joining of socialist forces, it will not be removing an obstacle to unity, but will fail to lay the basis for a mass party when the workers are ready for it. To become one with those who see

no hope in the present trade unions, who see no hope in electoral work, who are impatient for the workers to come to the desired state of mind, would weaken our day to day activity in the shops. It would endanger the existence of a revolutionary party which can win the workers when they are prepared to embark upon the socialist path.

★

DOES THIS MEAN that it would be incorrect to draw together those currents of socialist thought which basically agree? Not so long as the revolutionary, working class content of the CP



is not further destroyed. Not so long as we don't fool ourselves into thinking that this will constitute a mass party of socialism. The tasks of the Communists continue to be to convince the workers that we are best equipped to learn from the workers and to help solve their problems. We must continue to help dispell those illusions which keep the workers tied to the capitalist system, be they "Truman" illusions, "prosperity" delusions or what have you. Lenin said long ago that propaganda alone is not enough, that the workers must learn from their experiences. The workers will move ahead, then, as rapidly or slowly as objective conditions permit, aided by correct CP policy. This process will not be easy, nor will it be accelerated by the launching of a new socialist middle-class party, self-deluded as to its mass character.

III

The question of bureaucracy involves much more than merely the right of the membership to have its voice heard. The basic matter is the ability of the party to arrive at proper decisions and policies. The past reveals that many errors arose as a result of the isolation of party leadership from the masses, especially from the industrial workers. This isolation was no doubt in part due to objective conditions, making it impossible for the leadership to speak to any number of non-party workers. But this was not true of the rank and file party membership. Yet the leadership failed to consult those who were in the shops and working class communities. Objective difficulties existed in this area too. But had the leadership been truly aware of the fact that party policy cannot be made without the rank and file, there could not have been a situation which found this area practically out of touch with district leadership for three years.

There exists a great deal of basis in American life for bureaucracy, in the trade unions, etc. This must not be so in the party. Yet efforts to disagree with leadership have often been slapped down ruthlessly, with the stock phrases of "opposing the line," "factionalism," etc. If opposition is developed to an individual leader, who is not reflect-

ing the needs of the membership, the boom is really lowered. Disagreements among the leadership are never aired so that the membership can have no voice in making the decisions, never knowing what the conflict is really about. Nor are these errors limited to the full timers. Some younger Communists, trying to learn from the full timers, are often infected with the same disease.

★

THE ERROR at the heart of this lies in the elevation of full-timers to near demi-gods. Only those who can follow the pattern, spout the phrase are considered leaders. Ignored is the fact that those who work in the shops and communities must provide the basis for ANY thinking in regard to the American scene. The assumption is made that the reading of newspapers and the Little Lenin Library in itself is sufficient to solve all problems, forgetting that the basis of any science is the existence of things in the world itself. Certainly the leadership of the party recognizes these truths, but the recognition does not go very deeply, for it is rarely put into practice.

The only safeguard that proper methods will be used lies in the right of the membership to judge whether the leadership is using them. If it becomes clear that an individual leader is not doing so, then the membership must be in a position to send such a person back into the ranks for further learning. The membership must be told who takes what position on leading bodies for the same purpose, so that we may judge accordingly.

It has been said that the method of democratic centralism is responsible for bureaucracy, is alien to American life. But genuine democratic centralism has never existed in my years in the party. The membership has rarely had the final say in policy debates; never, in my experience, has it been in a position to remove full-time leadership. Criticism and self-criticism, which is the content of democratic centralism, has never been fully practiced. Neither now, nor in the period immediately following Browderism, has there been much self-critical study by the leadership of its own errors. A little wrist slapping in the Dennis report, a parenthetical note by Blumberg are hardly enough. Only if party leadership gives the example in this area can the rest of us follow suit. Therefore, recognizing the need for a disciplined as well as a democratic party, let us thoroughly examine whether we have ever practiced genuine democratic centralism before we discard this method.

★

THE METHOD of selecting leadership and the source of leadership is certainly due for an overhaul. Time and again leadership chosen from outside the ranks of the workers, sent into an area just long enough to get a smattering of what's going on, and then sent elsewhere. Instead of leaders coming from the areas which they are to serve, or at least having a perspective of years of work in the area, people are expected to solve the prob-



lems and know the needs of the party membership in a month's time.

The function of leadership is to know the thinking and experiences of the party membership and the mass movement to such an extent that the leadership can generalize the experiences of many into a district or national policy and program. Leadership must help us to look objectively at situations in which people are sometimes so intimately involved that they lose their objectivity. Leadership is responsible in part for the development of individual Communists by providing help when needed, by aiding the process of criticism and self-criticism, in the study of Marxism, by pooling the experiences of people in any given area. These things can only be done by a leadership in long-range, intimate contact with the membership of the party.

One might sum up the bureaucracy business by saying that in essence there have existed two parties, one of the leadership and of the rank and file in the shops and communities. Unless this situation is prevented from ever recurring, unless the workers in the shops and the people in the communities are directly involved in party leadership so that only one party exists, there can be no end to bureaucracy and, consequently, no correct party policy.

## End Burocracy

(Continued from Page 6)

the membership for his reelection cannot ever be isolated from the membership.

How can this be done?

First, of course, the leaders will have to speak out publicly on issues confronting the party, so the members will know where they stand.

Secondly, the membership must have a direct or indirect way of promoting those leaders they agree with, and demoting those with whom they disagree.

(a) A general election could be called according to the system in vogue in bourgeois nations of Europe and in Canada.

(b) Regular general elections could be held according to the American bourgeois system, in which every officer from the top down is voted for directly by the membership.

(c) There could be a system of recall, though I think this is the least valuable suggestion as it would apply only after some officer was thoroughly distasteful to the majority of the membership.

★

I FULLY realize the difficulties in the way of any general election within the CPUSA. Under present conditions it is not possible for large bodies of Communists to get together and vote. However, once it is decided to be a good thing to do, our ingenuity will surely discover some method of carrying on an election. For instance, a month could be set aside as Nomination Month, followed by another as Election Month, during which candidates could be nominated and voted on in the meetings of each club. The club executive would be responsible for sending the nominations and the correct tally of votes to headquarters.

Though there would be difficulties and the possibilities of misuse in this and any other system that might be suggested, none of these difficulties would be anywhere near as bad as continuing under democratic centralism and allowing the leadership to remain isolated from and not responsible to the membership.

It is my belief that the mem-

## Letters from Readers

(Continued from Page 7)

ticularly so, from leaders like Ross and Mackie, who are in key areas of the farm belt and who should have some worthwhile comments on why we have never risen to this question. It is true that in the early 30's some headway was made, but as Browderism became rampant, this was rolled back. Later Pettis Perry tackled the problem and began to see that national direction was given to this work. Unfortunately, this was halted when Pettis Perry was put in jail.

At a time when we are discussing the whole question of what kind of party we should have, it would seem that an article on the farm problem would have to deal not only with the farmers but also with us. Otherwise, no matter how well-intended, it may seem nothing more than a diversionary device. In a previous crisis in our history, Lovestone used it exactly for that purpose, and it did not benefit the farmers or our party.

On the specific points of the farm program, as proposed, it would seem that the failure to mention the Negro or white sharecroppers in the South and the agricultural workers generally are glaring omissions—also, that drought, duststorms and flood might be noted, even though the Democrats omit them in their plank. Personally, I disagree with the flat statement made by the authors that "statistics again prove that farm 'surpluses' reflect not over-production, but under-consumption. . . ." Sure, Leon Keyserling says it's "under-consumption," but I think that Karl Marx and his students would say it's "over-production." What do our national leaders say?—V. L. P.



## PERSONAL

(Continued from Page 7)

fact, the need of guarantees to safeguard against distortion of inner-Party democracy is pretty generally recognized. The seeds of distortion are capable of unlimited growth, unless properly recognized and checked. With this in mind, I should like to draw some conclusions from my own experience.

1) No individual should be pre-judged and no final conclusions be allowed without providing the opportunity for the person involved to be present and to participate in the proceedings.

2) Charges should be officially and specifically made known to the person involved and a fair trial or hearing assured.

3) No individual, regardless of rank, should be permitted to over-reach his authority, to bypass established rules and procedure or otherwise substitute his person in place of regular Party bodies.

4) No one in authority and no official body should be permitted to ignore appeals or grievances directed to them. Such must be acknowledged and accorded proper procedure.

Members would re-elect the great majority of our present leaders under such a system and that it would facilitate the development of new, dynamic leadership from the ranks.

R.M.  
New York