

# New Perspectives Cited by Communists for This May Day

(Issued by the National Administrative Committee of the Communist Party, U. S. A.)

**MAY DAY 1957** holds the promise for the working people of the United States and the world of the time when all men live in freedom and peace, and will share as brothers the ample bounties of the earth.

So it was when this international working class holiday was born in our country just 75 years ago. And so it is at the much higher level of historical development today, when the people of the world—despite great obstacles—are moving with ever-increasing tempo toward those freedom and security goals which are cherished by all mankind.

Our own country has the makings of a most beautiful land—with productive resources unmatched in all history; with many forward-looking peoples bound together in one national community; with a powerful tradition of democratic struggles—from the Mayflower to Haymarket Square to Montgomery, Alabama; and with a strong united labor movement as the bulwark of our achievements and the guarantor of further progress.

As the working people of America come increasingly to fulfill their proper role as the backbone and main democratic force of our nation, it can help tremendously to advance the world struggle for peace, security and democracy.

Herein lies the challenge of May Day 1957 for the American working class, and especially the organized labor movement—to assure the forward movement of our country during this period when critical and urgent problems are posed along with unprecedented opportunities for social progress.

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I.

**WHEN** the young labor movement of our country set May 1, 1886, as the date for nationwide demonstrations for the eight-hour day, it was fighting for an increased share in the rapidly expanding industrial capitalism of that era. Workers demanded relief from the prevailing 12 hours of daily toil. They wanted leisure time to spend with families and in recreation. That first May Day was a testing time for powerful struggles which—several decades and many trade union martyrs later—succeeded in establishing the eight-hour day as the norm for American workers, with untold benefits to our entire nation.

This May Day, in an era of vastly greater industrial expansion, the workers of our country confront a different problem—how to secure their jobs in the face of ever-growing automation. And they project, as the necessary solution, a period of struggle for a new historic goal—the shorter work week.

The American economy is now at its highest production level and has continued to expand during the past 15 years. Yet, there has been a continuing absolute decline in the number of productive workers throughout the past decade, and official reports admit of three million unemployed. Such are the fruits of uncontrolled automation. Here is the big new problem which the development of American capitalism now poses for the working class and nation.

Most of the major trade unions in the country—United Auto Workers, International Association of Machinists, United Steel Workers, the several electrical unions, the Oil and Chemical Workers, and many others directly threatened by automation—have already gone on record for the shorter work week. And with good reason. It is a de-



mand that expressed the urgent needs of the working class and the country as a whole.

The recent national convention of the United Auto Workers set "the shorter work week and increased take-home pay" as its major demand in contract negotiations beginning early next year. It is fitting that our country's biggest and most progressive union is the one to pioneer in this new testing time for the working class, opening up today's advanced front of struggle. The fight will be hard and bitter; for there is no demand which employers resist more strongly than a shorter work week. But it is now a winning demand, historically necessary, and the struggle for its attainment, like that begun 71 years ago, will surely succeed in establishing a new norm for American industry.

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II  
**MAY DAY 1957** is also marked by a new upsurge of struggle for clean and democratic trade unionism. It comes as a growing rank-and-file movement, affecting many of the larger unions; and it carries the promise of an increasingly healthy growth for American labor.

The enemies of organized labor now seek to exploit such corruption as that revealed in the case of Dave Beck to sully the name of labor as a whole. Their aim is clear—to prepare the way for new anti-labor legislation which will weaken the trade union movement just when it is about to launch new struggles for advanced and necessary goals on the economic and political fronts.

But these employer groups and their political spokesmen cannot and really do not want to—end corruption in labor's ranks. Indeed, they are the main instigators of such corruption, and profit most from its existence.

Racketeering, bureaucracy and other undemocratic practices which mark some of the unions can be cleaned up only from within; and the recent wave of rank-and-file struggles affords heartening assurance that it will.

There is every reason for confidence that the outcome of the current "racketeering" issue in the labor movement will be a re-birth of clean and democratic trade unionism. Its further development will enable the American labor movement to mobilize its resources with ever greater power—and with increasing mass support—for the urgent economic and political struggles of the period ahead.

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III  
**THE** most immediate major task which May Day 1957 poses for the American labor movement is the fight for civil rights, hand-in-hand with the embattled Negro people.

To protect the voting rights of the Negro people in the South, to curb the wave of terror and violence now being directed against them, to enforce the desegregation

ruling of the United States Supreme Court, and especially to carry through a major organizing drive in the South—these steps are absolutely essential if the labor movement is to defend its own interests in state legislatures and in Congress, to swell substantially the ranks of organized workers, and to consolidate the Labor-Negro Alliance as the necessary corner-stone for the progress of our country as a whole.

Dixiecrat enemies of labor and the Negro people have stalled the civil rights bill in Congress, and threaten to filibuster it to death. The trade union movement should act with speed and power to assure the adoption of this much needed legislation.

Leaders of the Negro people have announced a mass Pilgrimage of Prayer to the nation's capital on May 17, and are calling upon all freedom-loving Americans to join in dramatizing their demands for protection of their civil rights, their homes and their very lives. The trade union movement should take immediate steps to guarantee the success of this historic demonstration.

**The fight for the civil rights of the Negro people is now the No. 1 democratic task confronting our entire nation; and it is a task of special urgency for the American trade union movement.**

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IV  
**THE** supreme task of labor and all other sections of the American people on May Day 1957 is, of course, the continuing fight for peace.

The shorter work week, a larger and more democratic trade union movement, civil rights for the Negro people—these and all other such advances can mean very little in a world where the H-bomb reigns supreme, threatening at any moment to destroy civilization.

The progressive future of all mankind rests on the consolidation of peace; and this requires the final and complete banishment of nuclear weapons from the earth. Working people and all others must applaud UAW president Walter Reuther's recent declaration that "the only adequate defense against the H-bomb is peace." On May Day 1957 the American workers should proclaim their unbreakable solidarity with the workers and colonial peoples of the world in the struggle for peace and a world-free of exploitation and imperialism.

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V  
**THUS,** May Day 1957 comes at a time when grave problems confront our working class and nation—but also at a time of great opportunity. It is entirely possible in our day to harness the vast productive resources of our land fully to the pursuits of peace, for the material and spiritual enrichment of all our people.

Our country, increasingly influenced by its united working class—in ever firmer alliance with the Negro people, the farmers and urban middle strata—can surely cope with the problems of today. Tomorrow, when the majority of our countrymen come to see the necessary path to the ultimate achievement of their democratic goals, they will surely proceed, in their own way, to the socialist reorganization of our society—and the full realization of the promise of America through their struggles within the developing constitutional processes.

For the shorter work week!  
For clean and democratic trade unionism!

For civil rights for the Negro people!

For a ban on the H-bomb and the strengthening of peace!

Long live May Day and the solidarity of the working class!

And this goes for Republicans no less than Democrats. Indeed, since the bill in both Houses is sponsored by President Eisenhower, it would seem that the White House has contributed far too much to the present danger to his bill by Eisenhower's self-imposed gag on the subject.