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PARTY VOICE

**SPECIAL
DISCUSSION
ISSUE**

Dear Reader:

With this issue we resume publication in our old format. Actually, we resumed publication with the special supplement carrying Norman Schrank's report to the State Committee.

Now we follow with some portions of the State Committee discussion. The portions we print are those that the speaker turned in after having corrected the transcript of his remarks.

In addition, we are publishing all those articles that came in, practically as they came in. Cutting and editing was done only to save space.

We hope that the material here will stimulate all of our readers, clubs, committees, or commissions to write in this discussion.

What should be the form and character of the American Marxist party? Do the chances for a relatively peaceful transition warrant basing our program on that outlook? What should our program be? What should be the relations between the Party, the trade unions, and the people's organizations and movements? Is the Negro question a national question?

We regret some shortcomings in the discussion as we present it. First, there is very little as to the direction and outlook for the future. It strikes us that it is still the feature of sectarian discussion to be turned inward, rather than outward at the great American scene. There are many problems that cry out for programmatic answers, many needs that can be used as starting points for the working out of our prospect to the future of our land, its working people, Negro people, intellectuals and middle class of the cities.

Since we have been reading Gil Green's book, we wish we would make it available to all readers of *PV* as a major contribution to our discussion. It is hereby heartily recommended.

We briefly give our own definitions of left sectarianism, right opportunism, and other terms of our own special language.

Leftism is the tendency to run ahead of the working class and the working people. It may be that such a running ahead is based on an appraisal of the mood of the workers that overrates their advanced thinking, or militancy. Such an appraisal may lead to a program or policies that leave the workers and Negro people far behind, or go off in a different direction, thereby isolating the leftist vanguard.

Sectarianism is that way of acting, or thinking, that is characteristic of a sect, isolated from most people. It is thinking that is turned inward to the problems, habits, doctrines and dogmas of the sect, rather than outward to the working class and working people. Their policies, interests, way of life and work, their conviction that they alone have by divine revelation been given the *truth*, are sectarian features. They separate the members of the sect from the rest of the population. In America, the Socialist Labor Party, the old De Leon group, that gives out the same leaflets year after year without any regard for the needs and problems of the working class at the time, has clas-

sically been the example of political sectarianism.

Right opportunism is that tendency to avoid struggles by tailing along behind the working people, rather than giving leadership or being in the forefront of their battles.

We give these definitions merely to serve as a rule of thumb and crude dictionary for those of our readers who may not be acquainted with them. For those who don't like them, please send in your own. And if you can illustrate your definition with examples from the American scene, so much the better. We'll run it, either illustrated or not.

We urge deep thinking, respect for the ideas of others, and self-critical and detailed examination of your own work. That way our party can overcome its difficult situation, and make contributions much greater than the contributions which we have already made toward a better life for our fellow working men.

The Editors.

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PARTY VOICE

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Party Democracy and Dissent

(From Discussion at State Committee meeting)

By B. S.

THAT section of Comrade Dennis' report which deals with collective leadership, democracy, criticism and self-criticism, is, in my opinion, an important opening to an area of our thought which needs much further development. Perhaps it was Comrade Dennis' intention to provide the opportunity for such development and for a more fundamental probing into the essential features of democracy. I hold that where we have failed in inner democracy cannot be simply laid to the attacks of the past years or to the fact that our Party's mass ties have seriously diminished. Nor can we simply exhort our people to be more democratic in their ideas and their ways. We must trace any failures in democracy to the important left ideological concepts that we have lived by for the last 20-30 years.

The determinant for us, in the U.S., as to the scope of our inner democracy must be based on a clear outlook as to what we want to be on the American scene.

For myself, I prefer to be a part of an important trend in the labor and mass movement rather than a purist sect. Is it sufficient to say that all we have to do is to show and develop skill in our approaches to the mass movement that we will become such a trend? This does not conform to an analysis of the worst features of our undemocratic practices which ultimately had to lead to one broken mass tie after another, to the resolution of internal differences, by vilification, slander and expulsion, to the ideological purification processes which were literally brainwashing, and to the cardinal crime of all, the extreme stultification of our Party membership and a certain level of our cadre.

Perhaps Comrade Dennis, by virtue of the limitations placed on him in the last five years, does not see the extent of stultification and the present extreme reaction to it. It is my opinion that we cannot simply say that we will improve the situation by a more balanced development of democratic centralism with a greater emphasis on democracy. We must know what democratic centralism is—Does it apply to the American scene today? Just as we are examining the effect of a certain kind of application to the Soviet scene, it can't be denied that one of the worst, if not the most important reason for the Soviet criticism taking the form that it did, was the wide awakening that the Central Committee faced, when it examined the extreme stultification and lack of enthusiastic support for the aims and objectives of the Soviet party for the building of Communism.

Monolithic Unity?

What has been the main ideological weapon that has militated against the practice of democracy in our Party? Each "prosecutor" at an expulsion knew full well that there were a series of standard charges that had to be put into each case in order to make it stick: anti-leadership, undisciplined, anti-working class, and for the poor soul who would dare to attempt to argue his or her case, the cardinal crime of breaking the unity of the Party and in reality wanting it to degenerate into a debating society. It is the concept of monolithic unity which we must examine.

In the name of monolithic unity we have learned to stand by while important dissent was expelled from

our ranks. Most members today understand and agree that Comrade Foster conducted himself adroitly in his opposition to Browder. But they would honestly like to see a situation in our Party in which important dissent could be expressed without our falling apart at the seams. Isn't it true that we borrowed literally from the CPSU on this question of monolithic unity? There will certainly be some who say that they believe in monolithic unity and that there is no difference between that and the concept of majority rule. I note that Comrade Dennis eliminates any reference to monolithic unity and sees as the process of achieving unity and discipline, the establishment of the right to dissent from the majority, abiding by majority rule and warns against our turning into a debating society.

I think we have to add to this, precisely because of stultification, precisely because we don't have a cadre which is trained in the most democratic methods, because scientific thinking and measurement can only take place in an atmosphere in which ideas flow and reflect wide mass experience, we must stress the value and importance of dissent and difference. As long as we have a section organizer or a club organizer, or anyone who, when unable to convince a member, a sympathizer of the correctness of a line, can take recourse to the need for monolithic unity, then you must run the risk that the Party's ears are closed to the masses. As long as our Party committees consider it an important principle to submerge differences in unanimous reports so that neither the membership nor the masses can know what we are debating, then we must run the risk that the line of

our Party is the property of the few.

So long as we place major emphasis on the danger of our becoming a debating society and the danger of the influx of bourgeois ideas, then we must run the risk that somewhere honest and correct opinion will be characterized as an effort to do that.

Attitude Toward Democracy

For many years now we've cultivated a contempt for bourgeois democracy, unable to separate those aspects of bourgeois democracy which the people struggled for and won from the practices of the bourgeoisie, the distortions and the efforts to go back historically on it. We fail to consider that rules we very often advance for the labor and mass movement are rules which we somehow think do not apply to us. We are supposed to be the possessors of a science which eliminates the need for trends in finding the path toward socialism. Yet life has shown that where you have a hard-fisted, iron-bound line, you can't seriously have a market place of ideas. This under the theory and the fear that bourgeois ideas will infiltrate into our ranks. Aside from the danger of classifying dissenting ideas prematurely and incorrectly as bourgeois ideas, we reflect a great lack of faith in the masses both within and outside our Party to reject ideas that are harmful to labor, the Negro people and farmers.

I want to cite as an illustration a number of such ideas:

1. The characterization of the slogan "Free by 63"
2. The struggle for a guaranteed annual wage
3. Labor's interest in Point 4 of the foreign aid program
4. The legal struggle of the NAACP and allies on the school issue

New Organizational Forms

Lenin's development of Party of new type and the rules of democratic centralism was based on conditions that applied in an estimate of a period of civil war and revolution.

Let me restate. The rules of demo-



cratic centralism were developed by Lenin in an era of wars and revolution, when the possibilities of peaceful transition were not on the order of the day. The rules had then war-military character. The Russian people had created and perfected the means of struggle against an autocracy and were demanding Bread, Land and Peace. They not only had no long experience in bourgeois democracy but were advancing the one democratic feature they wanted—the end of the autocracy and the control of their destiny. In such a situation monolithic unity was vital. However, even there it was dependent on the overwhelming voluntary support of the Russian people. Lenin never forgot that. On the American scene monolithic unity which I contend is far different from majority rule is alien. The people first are testing many, many ideas and are not buying a single line. They are even suspicious of ultimate or "ulterior" objectives. Those who have had contact

with us are also repelled by our inability to stand dissent and differences. As soon as difference arises we get panicky and must expunge it.

Democratic centralism on the American scene must be based on the type of political organization we will be. The "party of the new type," in my opinion, will not be suited to the American scene. We will have to provide guarantees for democracy which can compete with any organization in America. We will be impelled to establish rules which will protect dissent and prevent by design simplified expulsion methods. We need not delude ourselves about the degree of unity in our Party today. We must adjust to the idea that a minority, not understanding or agreeing with a line, may very well choose not to apply it too well. By proving in life and struggle that a line or a leadership is largely correct, then we will win *voluntary* unity and the fullest acceptance of the rule of the majority.

ON THE NEGRO QUESTION

(From discussion at State Committee meeting)

By HELEN TURNER

THE level of the struggle of the Negro liberation movement of an oppressed people is *NOT contingent on the level of the American labor movement* within the oppressor imperialist nation; as different from the struggle for Socialism within the imperialist nation which *IS contingent on the level of the working class*. It seems to me that one of the most serious weaknesses in the past period has been confusion on these two questions. In effect, whether consciously or unconsciously, the concept that the level of the liberation movement could not proceed ahead of the level of the class in relation to liberation became the main concept. The logic of this would be, for example, saying to the Negroes of Montgomery—not to conduct the bus boycott now, because the white workers of Montgomery are not ready for it. It is my opinion that this incorrect concept was carried over in to the Party in relation to the struggle against white chauvinism.

The correct principle that white comrades must lead the struggle against white chauvinism was applied dogmatically, that is, that the Negro comrades could not be in the leadership of this, since this was, and is the responsibility of the white comrades. The effect of this is to say to the Negro comrades that they cannot attain a higher level of understanding on this question.

What was missing here was a correct estimate of the existing state of affairs, as with all other questions it is important, to have a correct estimate of the level of understanding of our Party membership; this is the starting point when conducting an ideological struggle for clarity. The fact is that our white comrades in the main did not and still have not attained the level of understanding which is a pre-requisite in order for them to meet their main responsibility, that is to lead the struggle

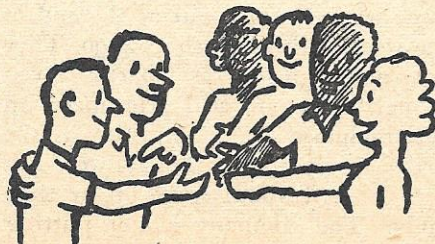
against white chauvinism. Rather than seeing the role of the Negro comrades as that of helping the white comrades speed up the process of attaining a higher level, many Negro comrades instead met with a wall of resistance.

Certain excesses and distortions developed as the struggle continued to which many Negro comrades contributed. During the past three years this wrong concept (that Negroes can't proceed ahead of the class, etc.), was in my opinion one of the main ideological weaknesses that resulted in, to quote from Dennis: "serious tailing, lagging behind, marked by right opportunist passivity in the struggle for Negro rights" with which I fully agree.

The inner-party struggle is necessary to guarantee clarity on ideology with which to arm the comrades to develop mass struggles and to be able to resist the ideological influences of the bourgeoisie; without the inner-party struggle there is no guarantee of the quality of the mass struggle.

Fight Against White Chauvinism

In the union with which I was connected, the struggle against white chauvinism was a correct one. White chauvinism did and still exists; it is not a fantasy. In this union there existed a peculiar situation. There was expressed white chauvinism, great national chauvinism, petty bourgeois nationalism and encrusted bureaucracy. Petty bourgeois nationalism was expressed by the leaders in the union who saw their major responsibility to



the State of Israel. Any attempt to place before them that their main responsibility as members and leaders of the class is in the first place the American labor movement and to the oppressed Negro people within this country—was met with hardened resistance. This does not mean that support should not have been given to the people of Israel.

In the trade unions as elsewhere, we must begin to distinguish between a struggle of ideological differences and when comrades resort to *unprincipled struggles*. We should never forget that some of these trade union forces used their authority in the union to victimize those who disagreed with them. Some comrades spoke of white comrades who had been victimized during the past period. I think we should also bear in mind that many Negro comrades were also victimized during this period, nor should we forget that many Negro comrades have not been vindicated, nor have the questions around which they struggled been resolved.

I do not mean to say there were no errors made in this struggle; errors of both the left and right. However, in my opinion, the main errors were right opportunist.

Self-Determination

On the question of self-determination, I am still of the opinion that the Negro people constitute a nation in the Black Belt, therefore I am in strong disagreement that "we reverse, or shelve" the principle of the right to self-determination. However, I do feel that some errors were made:

1. The dogmatic raising of the right of self-determination as a slogan in the past period, when it was not accepted by the Negro people.
2. The inflexible interpretation of the right to self-determination

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LEFT ERRORS in TRADE UNION and NEGRO WORK

By I. C.

I AGREE that our main errors have been of a Left character. They resulted virtually in our isolation from the labor movement. I have sat through a series of meetings for about a year and find that there is a departmentalized approach—we are not fighting enough on the peace question, on the Negro question, etc. There is a basic reason for this and that is that we are isolated from sections of the working class capable of reacting to our line.

Dennis' report and to a certain extent Schrank's report are both excellent in that they open up questions for discussion. They don't deal enough with fundamental problems of how to overcome the errors that resulted in our isolation. These reports, I think, would have captured the imagination of the Party even more if they had dug deeper. We can't cover everything, but I want to know why we were kicked out of the NMU, what error did we make that could have been avoided, why this happened in transport, etc. The report should have been saturated with concrete examples of these Left sectarian errors.

I think Left sectarianism flows from our method of tackling labor reformism. Foster called for a position of getting rid of the labor reformists. However, the workers are not thinking in terms of how to get rid of their leaders.

We did not play a role in the CIO-AFL merger. We were not in a position to play any sort of role in it. We don't know really what the workers are thinking. We call for things that can't be realized in the struggle for peace and for Negro rights, and on other issues. We have to lower our sights, from Comrade Dennis on down.

For instance, moods and problems change. Last year in steel there were sharp struggles that are not taking place today. Today with double time some workers come out at the end of the week with as much as \$190. They are not fighting as sharply even though there are still grievances. In Westinghouse the main issue in the strike was speed-up. Today, we don't hear a word about speed-up or time study. The company is not putting

the screws on the workers the way it did before. In auto there are lay-offs and the question of unemployment is the sharpest.

In relation to our own Party there are tremendous changes in mood. We say that red-baiting is taking a set-back. There is a tremendous movement against red-baiting and against knocking workers off the job because they may be Communists. But it has not yet reached a point where the workers will stand up and face their leadership to defend Communists. There is nothing like the hysteria that existed before even during the headlines of a Smith Act case. We have to know these moods in determining our policy. Dealing with these problems is the road back to the labor movement. The State Labor Secretary has made important labor contributions in opening up these problems. He discussed the nature of these grievances and of the moods of the workers in the good report he made over a year ago. But unfortunately the state labor secretary can't find time to see what was happening upstate during all the big strike struggles of the recent past. It has been a long time since he has heard from steel workers, electrical workers and others.

We are departing from the concept of digging all our forces into the labor movement. Dennis should be a direct member of one of the labor commissions of the Party. He should meet with the workers when it is feasible. His thinking and his analysis and training can contribute to how we can build the mass movement in the basic trade unions.

Errors in the Struggle Against White Chauvinism

Our campaign against white chauvinism within the Party was a Left sectarian error. It was a disastrous catastrophe. It did considerable damage to the struggle for Negro rights. It substituted punishment for education and clarity on how to surmount difficult problems. Our isolation from the labor movement inevitably had an effect in relation to the struggle for Negro rights. The best contribution

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Developments in the Labor and Negro Movements

(From discussion at State Committee meeting)

By AL T.

DENNIS' report did not deal decisively with the question of the main error in the field of Negro work. We cannot correct our weaknesses in this field if we do not establish clearly what the main problem is. I think our failure to do this has led to an incorrect placing of the question. Sure there is a lag in the struggle for Negro rights. If there were not this lag there would be no problem. When the white workers in America fully understand their historic responsibility in the fight for Negro freedom, together with the Negro people they will settle the problem. However, the thing that is important for us to see is whether the lag is increasing or is being overcome. And I think that the latter is true. One of the most remarkable features in the present day situation is the manner in which the labor movement has entered this struggle.

A more important development was registered at the Textile Workers Convention yesterday where segregation in the South was decisively rejected. In the period of "Operation Dixie" precisely the opposite tack was taken by this union. I want to refer to an experience closer to home—in Local 6 last week. Two members of Hotel (a Negro couple), had their home stoned. Within 5-6 hours after this the Business Agent and Staff were assigned to the home, stood guard, and white workers came—Wagner's office intervened—organizations gathered to take up defense of the family. Such a thing was unthinkable in the city two years ago or one year ago.

Focusing attention on the weaknesses however can only have the effect of weakening the confidence of progressives on what can really be done among the white people and if taken into the Negro movement can only have the effect of increasing suspicion and weakening the alliance

that is essential to the further progress of the Negro people. To see the real state of affairs is to imbue the movement with the greatest confidence, and here I would just like to indicate something new developing. That is the entry of masses of Catholic people and their organizations into this struggle, which can in a state like New York have the most important consequences.

What has been the problem? As it has been everywhere else, we had a Left-sectarian estimate of the organizations of the Negro people, of their leadership, and an indifference to the struggles they have been developing. While we were very often sitting around throwing spitballs at the Randolphins, the Whites, Bunches, etc., they were leading real struggles and strengthening their leadership. Even as we began to change our estimates of the social democratic forces in the labor movement in '53 and '54, even if only for tactical reasons (a full understanding of many of these forces has yet to come), this was not true in our relations to the Negro leaders. I remember being particularly struck by the way these forces were dealt with in the Bradley report, with the main fire directed at the integrationists.

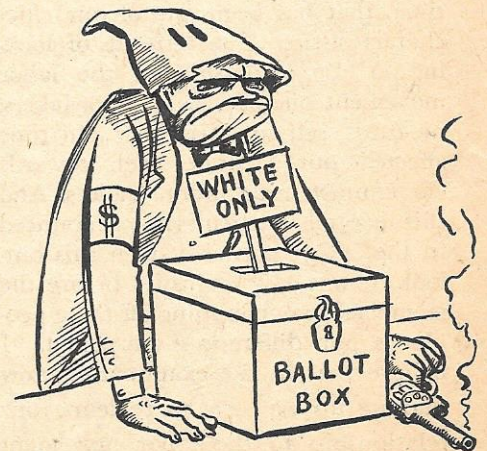
Labor Movement

I want to spend a few moments on some of our errors in the labor movement. Firstly, I would like to register my opinion on the C.I.O. break. While I agree with the way Dennis put the question, I do feel it would have been possible for us to remain within given a realistic policy of concession and struggle. The fact is that the Left was able to remain alive in other unions.

It should be noted that while the report correctly places the overstating of the fascist danger, as one of

our major errors, the break with many forces in the labor movement came from an opposite reason. I know that in some cases our differences arose over the estimate of the general situation. These forces were making the point that reaction was gathering strength and that we would have to follow a policy of retreat and maneuver. I am not now concerned with the merits of the argument although history has proved them right, but about why none of the views of these people who were quite capable leaders were treated with the respect they deserved. It was not just that we were fighting right opportunism in this period, but I believe the question has deeper and longer roots in our movement. We have viewed trade union leaders in our Party as right opportunists for a long time, and even when many of these forces could be brought into leadership, it was never as first class leaders, but always as people who were tacked on to the main leadership. This attitude flows from a general approach to trade

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LEFT ERRORS

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we made was while we were in the organizing drive in the 30's. Then we had the ability to move masses to fight for the rights of the Negro people. When we lost our positions in the labor movement we naturally lost our ability to move these masses in the struggle.

We also made theoretical errors in connection with self-determination. But then we went through a whole period of inner Party struggles on white chauvinism. It was inner Party mayhem, not Marxism. When I was compared to a lyncher, a riding-boss, nobody can tell me that that was Communist criticism. The end result was that the Party organization where I was secretary was left a shambles. In Louisiana and Texas

the Party was almost wrecked. In Georgia there was no Party left. Didn't this sharply weaken our ability to fight for Negro rights?

The Bronx Party was paralyzed for over three years with a series of removals of the County leadership on charges of white chauvinism. Nobody can say that the discussion had any real positive effect. We have now in my area directed the fight as a mass struggle for the rights of the Negro workers. We did that in the shops on the grievances of the Negro workers and we built up some confidence while we found out how to reach workers on the struggle for Negro workers. We went into people's organizations and a united movement developed with possibilities for victory.

This does not mean that we did not need inner Party struggles. We know that it is a complex problem.

But our struggle against white chauvinism as it was carried out was a substitute for clarity and was in fact diversionary. A more fundamental correction has to be made following up on Foster's article. We have to state openly that the struggle was wrongly conducted, state the reasons, and in my estimation, publicly apologize to comrades like Begun and others. When we just single out the fact that he made an error and just about drive him out of the Party, throw him on the ash-heap, that's what I mean by mayhem. We have to do that to make a fundamental correction alongside of the theoretical correction on the question of struggle for Negro liberation.

The national convention should come out with a clarion call to turn the face of the Party to the working class. This is a fundamental question facing us today.

LABOR AND NEGRO MOVEMENTS

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union leaders that has plagued our movement from its birth. Even as the party was born of the two currents, the S.P. grouping and the labor grouping, the latter while entering with great traditions of militancy and deep ties with the workers, also had strong Wobbly tendencies and approaches. This helped to set us up as an opposition grouping in the labor movement, the TUEL, etc., and with the exception of a short period of time, that has been one of our chief characteristics. The attitude of looking at the leadership of the labor movement one-sidedly as labor-fakers, pie-cards, sell-out artists, etc., in time affected our attitude even towards Communist trade union leaders. And this became particularly pronounced in the '48-'51 period. Given this outlook, it was easy to justify before the membership our lopping off these people as our differences sharpened. I believe that in the examination now shaping up we have to re-define our relationship to the labor movement

in the most fundamental way.

Just a word on the outlook for the Party.

We have to basically re-examine our relationship to the labor movement in a fundamental way. In the fight to rebuild the left movement, prime attention is to be given to recementing relations with these forces. We look to the McManus', Huberman's, Sweezy's, etc. While these are honest people, I don't think these people are going to bring very much to the Marxist movement. Their ties with the labor movement are small. Their attitude has been even more leftist. The only thing they can say for themselves is that they were not blind followers of the Soviet Union. We have to begin to make public all of what we are discussing. Certain apologies are long overdue. There are ways and means of indicating what we have to do in relation to these forces. We will thus clear up in a greater way the attitude of our forces in these unions.

ON NEGRO QUESTION

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to mean only a separate and independent nation. This was just as wrong as projecting the idea of a Black Republic. In order to correct these errors, we do not have to do away with the principle.

The level today is the struggle for integration; however, to draw the conclusion that this will be the level for all times is incorrect.

I agree that left-sectarian errors were the main source of our isolation. I disagree however, with those who take this to mean that no right opportunist errors were made in general, and specifically by individuals especially in relation to trade union questions. This position is underestimation or a lack of understanding that the *main ideological weakness of the American trade union movement is Right opportunism.*

Both the reports and the discussion are just a beginning; we must continue to probe and examine all these new questions so that we will collectively get the answers that will help us build a stronger and more effective party.

SECTARIANISM AND DOCTRINAIRISM

(From the discussion at the State Committee Meeting)

By RALPH

I FEEL like many here that the analysis of Left sectarian errors in the work of our Party does not go far enough and that it is not enough to confine this to the last ten-year period. We have to dig deeper than that. It is my opinion that these errors go back to the very formation of our Party. At the time of the Russian Revolution we mechanically transplanted the correct struggle of the Bolsheviks against the Mensheviks at that time incorrectly to our American political scene, and from that time on continued to center our main fire against Social Democracy instead of the main enemy, monopoly capital. Even in the period of 1935 to 1939 we cannot say that we were free of sectarianism or doctrinairism. It is true that the fight for a people's front and the mass struggles that took place in that period exerted tremendous pressure against sectarian and doctrinaire practices, and to that extent sectarianism and doctrinairism were not as acute influences as they have been in the last ten-year period. Yet, who can deny that our Party would have won much greater mass influence in that period if it were not hindered even then by sectarian and doctrinaire practices.

On the struggle for Negro rights I agree with the criticism of the Left sectarian errors that characterized this struggle, particularly the struggle against white chauvinism within our Party in the 1949-51 period. This criticism, however, must be accompanied with a reaffirmation of the need for raising the level of the struggle against white chauvinism and for Negro rights, with greater attention than in the past to both the content and method of struggle.

Expulsions in Past Period

The differences of opinion expressed at this meeting is a healthy sign of the maturing of our Party. However, there is still a tendency to speak of bureaucracy as if the worst features of this were ended with the Browder

period. This is not so. It is my opinion also that bureaucratic practices became even more acute after the expulsion of Browder. For example, it doesn't sit well with many of our people when we self-critically condemn violations of Party democracy that took place in our Party but take no steps to correct this. Our members are demanding not only rectification of errors in the future but also rectification of past injustices. Otherwise we contribute to the growth of cynicism in our ranks.

It would have been a much greater service to our Party if this basic re-evaluation had taken place prior to the 20th Congress, just as it is true that distortions in the struggle against Browderism would have been reduced if we had gone ahead on our own instead of permitting the Duclos article to stimulate it. We have for too long developed the habit of over-reliance on the experiences and opinions of other Parties and their leaders. This over-reliance only tends to undermine confidence in our own Party leadership. It contributes to furthering dogmatism and doctrinairism. This over-reliance fostered and was a reflection of lack of confidence in the American people and their traditions of struggle and experience. It also reflects a lack of confidence of Party leadership in itself. This played an important role in determining the line of our Party.

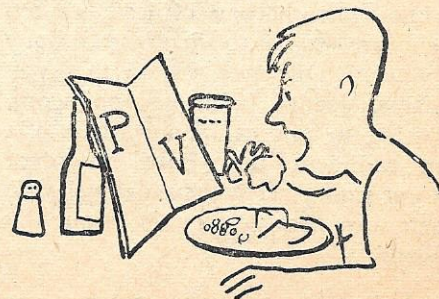
Find Answers in U. S.

Most of us know too little of the history of our own country, our people's tradition of struggle, our cultural history as well. We must look first of all for answers by studying our own history and traditions of struggle and combine this with concrete study of daily living experiences of the American workers and their allies. This does not mean ignoring the experiences of other Parties, of ignoring international relationships. Just the opposite. Only by basing ourselves on the specifics

of life in our country as the starting point can our policy be placed in true and proper perspective with respect to international relations and international solidarity.

This over-reliance on the experiences of other Parties was not, however, the chief factor in influencing sectarian and doctrinaire practices in our Party. On the contrary, our sectarianism and doctrinairism was the chief factor in contributing to this over-reliance. Dogmatism and doctrinairism is not Marxism. It is the opposite of dialectical materialism. It is a form of idealism because reality is not the starting point, but a preconceived idea is. It is more dangerous than open idealism because it operates under the guise of defending Marxism. This must be said because there is a growing and dangerous tendency among some of our members as a result of the errors disclosed to equate dogmatism with theory.

We have always had a strong tendency to underestimate the importance of theory and such tendencies in my opinion are flowering now more dangerously than ever before. Both Norman's and Gene's report were weak in not taking note of this situation. In order that our members should have a proper understanding of how these errors took place, we must go more deeply into the causes and reasons for these errors. This will help to raise the level of understanding of the importance of Marxist theory when properly understood and properly used.



Bureaucratic Centralism

COMRADES:

Answering your appeal for letters, here goes!

Do you know that due to the hysteria and over-emphasis on security, we never cleared away the effects of Browderism, that is, bureaucratic centralism. We maintained his whole machine-like set up. Comrades in positions of responsibility still hang on to their sycophants, yes men, lick spittles, etc. It makes for certain leaders, at different levels, a smoother running setup; thus they build a Chinese wall around the leaders, shielding them from many of the unpleasant analysis that we of the rank and file have to contend with day in and day out.

We are not going to encourage our Party rank and file to speak what they have had in mind in regards to criticism, our errors and shortcomings, if you send into our club meetings these sycophants who are still stifling any and all beefs, even though they do it more tactfully than heretofore.

As soon as we really learn to act democratic towards each other, that much more will we be tolerated. People will lend us an ear only if we start hearing what they have to say. If we do more listening and less talking, the chances of getting an insight into others' problems becomes greater.

Last, but not least, our press has set the pace. Here is an example and inspiration to follow. If it were not for letters and discussions in the *Daily Worker* and *Sunday Worker*, there would have been much confusion, disillusion and disruption and we could have been totally isolated.

So far, none of our Comrades that I know have become cynical; but too many are wary as to what is to be done about it. Our eyes are on the sycophants, loaded with pseudo-theory, waiting to put us in our place. We are confident they have no place in our ranks unless they really change their ways because they drain our life blood.

As for the USSR and other lands with Marxist leadership, some are cleaning house. The people in these countries have what it takes to do the job. Let's tend to our home land. We are confident it has to be done; come hell or high water it will be done.

On to unity of the workers, labor,

the Negro people and all enlightened people for peace, civil rights and liberties. We must learn much from our Negro brothers in this land of ours. They have lots to teach us and are showing us the way. We are slow and short in coming to their aid, even here in the North. Still they are doing a heroic job with so little help from us.

Fraternal comradely greetings,
DEDICATED.

Ideological Remolding

(From the discussion at the State Committee Meeting)

By AL E

I would like to compliment the State Board and reporter for an excellent report. I associate myself with the criticisms of the Dennis report.

I am of the firm opinion that the problems we face in the attempt to build an effective Marxist movement are not due to left sectarianism alone. There are three additional factors: 1. Dogmatism and doctrinairism. At this particular stage they strengthen left sectarianism; but at another stage they may strengthen right opportunism and all other kinds of deviations. They have infected our movement from the very beginning; 2. Bureaucracy both in the Party and in our work among the masses; 3. Rigidity and lack of flexibility in application of our line; a lack of human approach to our comrades and to our friends. We deal with everything in terms of extremes.

Therefore, I wish to propose that we take a page from the Chinese Party and undertake an ideological remolding campaign in our Party from top to bottom, which will last two or three years, if not more and tackle basic ideological problems of dogmatism, doctrinairism, lack of flexibility and left sectarianism.

I propose that there be a complete revision of our ideological work. The ideological training of our membership should come closer to home, ideologically.

I also want to propose a new constitution and rules for our Party, that

a new commission be set up, to be made public, and to whom everyone could send in their suggestions.

I propose that the National Committee issue a statement about the many wrongly expelled comrades over the last ten years. The Party must take an official stand on these questions. The Party must take another look into the Browder period.

There should be an official apology on the Tito question. Our Party called him a traitor, a fascist and many other things. We should publicly take back these statements.

In the Dennis and Schrank reports there is hardly a word about the people's mainstream mass organizations. We should name most of them and take a position on them. The City of New York faces a crisis on certain issues, e.g. the school issue. The PTA has taken a stand on these issues. If we are a party of the people, our party in the city of New York must proceed to make known its stand on the school crisis, on the PTA and on other organizations in the city. We should work out a program for the City of New York on how to break down the segregation that exists in the school system, on the teacher shortage and on many other issues that have to do with the schools. There are other issues which are key and vital mass issues. Our Party should take a position and have a program on all these issues.

Some Union Experiences

(From the discussion at the State Committee Meeting)

By H.

The report was hard-hitting. We have had the Electoral Resolution and Draft Program circulating for several years but can we say that there has been a *decisive* break made with sectarian policies and forms of activity? I think not, though we have made some advances in the last two years. I therefore welcome the frank, bold and critical character of this report. No one can read into this report that "right opportunism" was the basic source of our errors in the last decade.

But, there are some who have read into the 20th Congress proceedings, that the need of the hour is for all-out struggle against bureaucracy in our Party and in the labor movement. I do not want to minimize the job of overcoming bureaucracy. However, I believe bureaucracy grew in our Party primarily as a result of our left-sectarian policies. Bureaucracy flows from policy and it then enforces that policy. When policies are unrealistic in terms of actual conditions, our big guns of bureaucracy have to be fired to silence those comrades, usually closest to the people, who report back that our policies are not moving masses. It would be tragic for the future of our Party, if the grass-roots discussion that is now unfolding does not lead to a really fundamental correction of policies, of which bureaucracy is a part, and not the whole.

Our experiences in the distributive and white-collar unions tend to confirm some points in Comrade Schrank's report. Looking back now few can deny the severe problems faced, especially by progressive-led unions in the struggle to exist in the difficult period of cold-war, anti-labor offensives by employers and McCarthyite witch-hunters. We underestimated these problems. We were too quick to term as "opportunism" each maneuver or retreat undertaken (for example) by some union leaders. While these leaders made errors, is it not

true that their main direction was to prevent the union they led from being isolated and dismembered in the hysterical anti-Communist atmosphere?

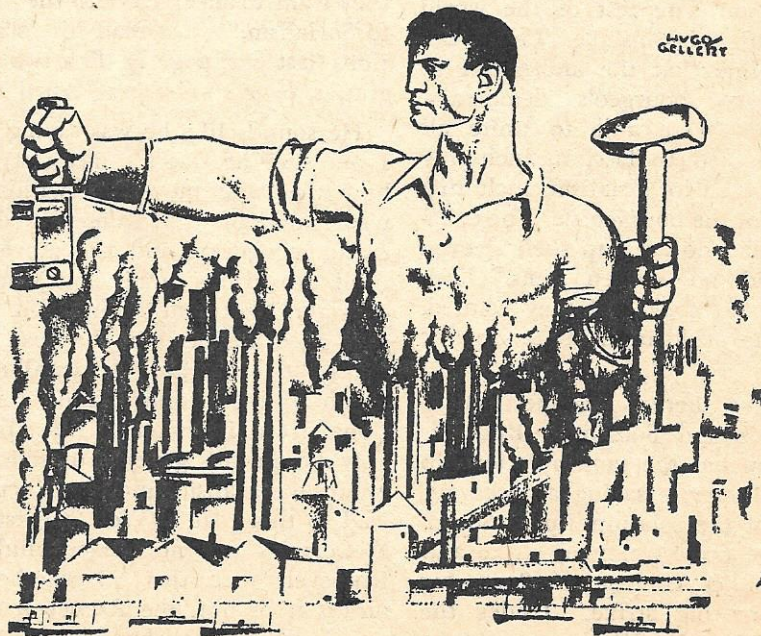
Failing to recognize that isolation from mainstream labor was the main danger facing these progressive-led unions, we rushed in with our "renegade" labels and P.A. article. We too often directed our main fire at the "opportunism" of union leadership rather than at big employers and pro-fascist elements. In the process, we paid dearly for these errors. Now thanks to some corrections made, there are an increasing number of progressives emerging as shop and local leaders in several distributive and white-collar unions. Incidentally, these unions include some forty thousand organized workers in this industry in New York. The task of extending mass ties has only begun.

Economic Demands

One of the complex problems requiring more attention is that of economic policy in the trade unions. In recent years our people have re-estab-

lished themselves as among the most tireless workers on behalf of economic gains and settling shop grievances. This is after a period of being almost solely pre-occupied with advanced political issues. For the sake of being in the vanguard, we must be careful not to be too far ahead of the main body of workers on economic issues as we have been on political issues. We have to master specific conditions in each industry. The demands we support or propose have to be in line with what the majority is ready to fight for in a given shop and at a given time.

We can be proud of our Party's work in union-building and economic struggles. And it's in this work that we sink our deepest roots amongst our fellow-unionists. At the same time we should guard against raising unrealistic economic demands. "What would we do if we were in leadership of the union?" is a question to keep in mind. In most instances, we have to base ourselves on the proposition of moving the majority of workers, together with leadership if possible, for achieving economic gains.



The Road to Socialism

By C. H.

I was shocked by a reading of the "Road to Socialism" by Wm. Z. Foster. May I make a few comments? (I will leave a detailed analysis to better Marxists than me).

I won't take particular quotes because it may be deemed out of context or merely a bad formulation. It's the whole thing!

It purports to show how the "People's Front" is a vehicle on the road to Socialism. It does this fully and deliberately by analyzing the history and development of people's front, people's front governments and National fronts. He shows how they will develop a leftward orientation toward Socialism. Dimitrov will probably turn over in his grave to find himself amply quoted in a proposition diametrically opposed to what he said, and what he meant. Marx would probably regret his letters to Kugelmann, and Lenin, poor soul, finds himself analysing situations that have not even yet developed now, at the time of the hydrogen bomb.

The main mistake made by the German Communist Party in its united front tactic was precisely that they operated under the *un-Marxian* concept that the alternative to fascism is Socialism. The rest of the world learned by this mistake. They realized in time that the alternative to fascism was bourgeois democracy. Thus, they were able to unite all forces opposed to fascism, including those opposed to Socialism, including elements of the bourgeoisie. The Communists had no aces up their sleeves. They had no hidden aims. They wanted what they said they wanted, to save the world from the scourge of fascism.

Of course, there is a connection between this and Socialism. But this connection has the same relationship to what Foster is saying as does our concept of the relationship of Socialism to the trade union or strike and the Wobblies concept of "one big union, one big strike." Under the Wobbly idea the Worker would be

committed to Socialism before he joined the union or went on strike or else (in a vulgarization of this), it would be sneaked over on him.

Why am I so mad about this? For two basic reasons (others may come to me later). 1. While I would not deny Foster the right to express himself, he is, as he shows in his article, developing this thesis into his formula, for the "Road to Socialism" (in spite of the fact that he decries blue prints). He says this is a further development of his previous trial balloons of this thesis in 1951. He indicates that he thinks this is the policy of the Party for the development of the People's Front in the next period. Thus he is making it tough for me on two counts. First it will make it much tougher, without sharp criticism of the articles, to convince the comrades working with me, trying to build a people's movement within the major parties strong enough to one day emerge as a "people's party," that Foster's is not the Party position. Secondly, it lends itself to being distorted by the anti-third party forces in unions, who could confuse the issue by saying: "See this is why these guys want us to develop a third party, they want to sneak us onto the "Road to Socialism," (just read his formulations, last par. page 15, first two paragraphs, page 16—1st part, April P.A.).

He sounds like he was saying (but I am sure he doesn't mean it) that both the labor movement within the framework of the Roosevelt democratic movement and the movement itself at various times had what he calls the "leftward orientation." He goes on to define it in the next paragraph "the necessary leftward orientation of the people's front (or national front in colonies) must inevitably be in the general direction of eventual Socialism, and it can actually lead to this goal." (Well, Hearst and McCormick can no longer bludgeon Roosevelt with this, so whether he means it or not, the Roosevelt coalition is safe. But he burdens our every

future attempt at coalition with this millstone.)

2. This brings me to my second point. He is not alone content to burden us with this "back door" type Socialism, he attaches this to a whole slue of people's front movements throughout the world, specifically country by country. When on Page 11, (2nd installment—May), he mentioned Luis Carlos Prestes "Program for Peace" I remember having seen it in the Apr. 55 P.A. Well here I am going to quote but please don't satisfy yourself with the quotation. Get the "Program" itself. We must learn from it! Over and over again Luis Carlos Prestes says that this new Draft Program (1954) differs from the old August Program (1952) in that it corrects the bad sectarian error of demanding the nationalization of the banks and all the big monopolistic enterprises. More than that—It specifically lists all the things for which it does *not* raise question of confiscation; this includes capital and enterprises belonging to American monopolies.

Comrade Foster implies that the Communists have a hidden goal of Socialism in this program (they don't mention it) when they specifically say "In view of the fact that under present conditions in the country with the struggle of the people for Brazil's national liberation, a large part of the country's capitalists could show their support of the people or at least take a position of benevolent neutrality, the proposed Program does *not* raise the question of nationalizing the banks and the country's big firms, etc. etc." (Apr. '55 P.A. pg 57) (and over and over again through the Program).

Two questions remain:

1. Does our Party have a traditional policy and concept toward the "people's front"? Does it need revision?

2. Should we project the "Road to Socialism? If so what are our guide posts. And does what we have said on this question for the last twenty years need revision?

I'd like to take a crack at these two propositions, continuing to base myself on Comrade Foster's "Road to Socialism" in my next letter.

LONG STANDING PROBLEMS

By IRV BECKER*

I

THE 20th Congress of the Soviet Party is acting as a catalyst on a number of processes which have been under way in the American Party.

The existence of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Party have always been tied up, inextricably so, with the defense of socialism.

Consequently, developments *within* the Soviet Union, and in the last ten years in particular, within the other countries of the world where Communist parties have become partners and leaders in the governments, have expanded the scope of this problem.

The problem is, just what does the defense of socialism involve? For a long time after the establishment of the Soviet Union, in the conditions of capitalist encirclement, proper emphasis was laid by the world Communist movement on the prevention of intervention and military attacks on the Soviet Union.

Yet even in that period the question arose of whether defense had to be synonymous with apologism, with the relinquishment of independent approaches and judgments on developments within the Soviet Union and Soviet party and within other parties.

With the end of capitalist encirclement, these questions became sharper.

So also did the question of, What model were a good many of the parties in the world, including the American party, emulating? What had become of the Bolshevik practices of collective leadership, criticism and self-criticism, party democracy and mass involvement in discussion and formulation of party policy as a constant feature of party life? This had been amongst the most powerful inducements to the joining of the Communist Party on the part of many who had found Marx' and Engels' and

Lenin's analyses of capitalist production, imperialism and the state to be correct, and who had realized that only the Communist Party could be the instrument for leading a nation to socialism, and not the Socialist Party, or the Trotskyites; and who had also rejected the erroneous notion that their duty would be fulfilled were they to be content to play a Fabian role of trying to influence trade union leadership through propaganda alone.

These questions have been present in the minds of thoughtful party members for many years.

But they have not been the subject of open party discussion. On the contrary, discussion of them has been avoided. In many instances, it has been stifled and suppressed and the posing of some of these questions has been answered with the smug charge that they show the influence of "enemy ideology." The one concession that has been made to this constant concern is the acknowledgment that bureaucracy is strong. But no real effort has been made to uproot and end these bureaucratic practices and the cadres they develop. That inevitably involves a whole new training and approach to the party membership. This is just what has been absent above all.

In these written remarks I want to discuss the above problems as an inextricable whole.

I think that within the framework of consistent defense of the Soviet Union and of socialism it was possible at all times to speak up independently on a number of matters. I think that no government should be immune from public pressure and that this applies not less so but more so to a government led by Marxists and that it is a wrong attitude that such a government and that Marxist parties elsewhere, especially such as are in power, are self-contained entities, immune from the evaluations of other

Marxists, and occupying the positions of exclusive and unquestioned authority as to the judgments and values that they project. Such an attitude on the part of Marxists elsewhere, in my opinion, could not weaken the defense of socialism, but could only enhance its democratic nature. The other approach enhanced its bureaucratic aspects.

Let us take just one of the most shocking events of the last eight years, the anti-Semitism which exhibited itself as government policy in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. It is falsehood to contend that in this country, Marxists did not know that, as far as eight years ago, and coinciding with the campaign against "cosmopolitanism," the Soviet Jewish communities had been given severe cultural blows—an end to several of their publications and to the activity of prominent Jewish figures—or that in the Slansky trial, the Czech prosecutor had invoked anti-Semitism. Marxists in this country had the obligation to demand explanations as far back as then; innocent lives might well have been saved, and racism might not have been able to make more headway than it did. The opposite happened, and today there are more wedges between Marxists and the bulk of the Jewish masses. Today more Jews have lost faith in the ability of socialism to end racism and more of them have been strengthened in the conviction that if there is hope of Jewish survival it lies along the path of bourgeois nationalism.

I am of the opinion that as part of the orientation of Marxists from now on, there must be the determination that, while socialist governments are not to be equated with capitalist governments, the pressure of public opinion needs to be applied to socialist governments as well, and in fact on the assumption that they will the more easily correct their errors. When an independent socialist

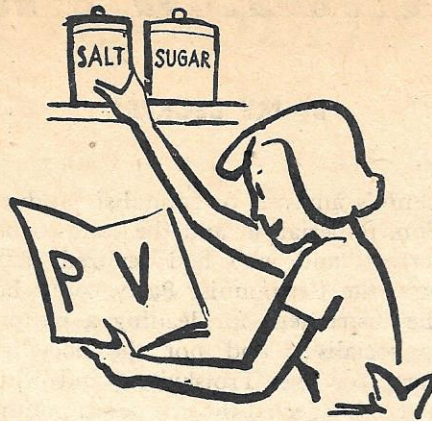
* The author is a veteran of the Lincoln Brigade and World War II, a worker and former full-time official in the Party.

like Einstein did this, protesting against the treatment of certain Soviet scientists, he was attacked as an imperialist stooge. That just increased our smugness and isolation from honest intellectuals. Today, some of our leaders, while correctly pointing out the injustices that are produced every day under capitalism in prodigious quantities, use this to maintain silence on this question of application of the pressure of public opinion, both within and without their countries, on socialist governments. Such silence is, in my opinion, a continued policy of apologetics.

The reevaluation which was projected openly at the 20th Congress comes in the midst of a great ferment in our own party over why we are where we are today, why we are as weak as we are, and the kind of leadership that our party has received over the years and is receiving today. This ferment, actually going on since the eradication of Browderism, picked up additional force about three years ago, when there were projected openly radical changes of policy, in the Draft Program, the Program, the Swift articles, etc. All this conjunction of developments make possible an important alteration, but the maximum alteration is possible only if it is done from the bottom up as well as from the top down. It certainly can not and will not be accomplished if it is conceived of as coming only from the top down.

Growth of Bureaucracy

The present state of affairs cannot be accounted for merely by reference to Browderism which, important and harmful as it was, is nevertheless ten years behind us. If we want to confine ourselves to bureaucratic organization alone, then bureaucracy reached its apogee in the last few years, many years after the theories of Browder had been junked. Nor can the failure of the party to make more headway than it has in the last ten years be answered merely by references to the objective situation, hostile as this was. That would deny that different policies and different methods of work would have resulted in our being in a stronger position than we are today.



I think the main obstacles, the red threads throughout the history of the Communist Party, in all periods, both good and bad, are the subjective factors—1) weakness of strategic outlook, based on the shallowness of the Marxist understanding of our leadership; and 2) the persistence of bureaucracy and the methods of work it imposes. The latter reinforces the former. It has, as its most apparent aspect, not so much the isolation of our membership from the masses, as the isolation of our leadership from our membership and its mass experiences. Bureaucracy expresses itself in contempt for the experiences and thinking of our membership and the imposition upon them of policies and tactics quite often contrary to their own experiences. It is as a consequence of such wrong leadership that the quality and character of our membership become transformed, and our membership in turn become isolated from the masses, resulting in a situation where the whole party, both membership and leadership, are basically isolated from the great mass movements in which the overwhelming bulk of the American people are today engaged.

Our party began its existence more than 35 years ago with a mass base and in conditions of a mass socialist consciousness in our country. It had the support of millions of workers. Further, it played a most important role in strike struggles in days when they were bitter indeed. Then it played a most important role in the struggles of the unemployed, the building of the trade unions, and the Ne-

gro liberation movement. It grew, both in numbers and influence. It also participated in the anti-fascist struggle, with varying successes at varying periods; and since the end of World War II we have been fighting for a policy of peaceful co-existence and for the Bill of Rights.

It cannot be argued that we suffer from a lack of *experiences*, both good and bad. Yet our influence and membership are less than they ever were. And, after more than 35 years of playing some kind of role, sometimes a modest one, and sometimes a major one, in mass struggles, we continue to complain of isolation from the masses.

The period of the Communist Political Association crowned a number of bad processes which had been going on for many years. The ruling class afterwards took full advantage of the weak situation of our reconstituted party and opened up a full scale offensive against us, ideological and organizational. But despite the weakened base from which we had to fight back, there was still elbow room for us to have fought back more effectively than we did, had we really had as a component part of our fight-back a drastic reorientation in our methods of work, a genuine discarding of persistent bureaucratic trash, in the way of both methods and cadres.

Subjective Weaknesses

I think it is a fundamental error and an evasion of the consideration of the subjective factors—the methods of work and policies of the party—to place the emphases for the weaknesses of the party and the decline of socialist perspective in the ranks of the working class on the objective situation of American imperialism.

No one can deny the ability of American imperialism to give concessions nor the relative fluidity that still obtains in class relations as compared to the much greater class stratification elsewhere in the world, nor to the peculiarities in the development of American imperialism that gave it certain advantages. But other imperialisms also developed and were able to give concessions to *their* workers, and were able to keep on giving these

concessions even in the period of the general crisis of capitalism—the very period in which Communist parties developed—and yet not all of these other imperialisms were able to weaken the ties of their workers with their Communist parties, nor to weaken their conviction that capitalism stinks. The French party has retained the adherence of the majority of the French workers for more than a decade. The British party has more members absolutely and relatively than we have and has strong positions in the trade unions. The Italian party, basing itself on the most flexible methods of work, adroit and flexible tactics, and the broadest kind of non-sectarian policy, was able to re-establish itself, together with the Left Socialist party, as part of the united leadership of the majority of the Italian working class. In each of these instances, as well as in others where the party is in weaker positions in other countries, it is nevertheless regarded by the workers themselves as a section of working class opinion, and not outside of it. Therefore, the references to the objective strength of American imperialism as the explanation of our weak position is wrong, and strengthens our own smugness about the way in which we work, and as far as policy is concerned, it strengthens Leftist tendencies, the tendencies of “go it alone,” of the inevitability of being isolated from a “corrupted” working class, and a “wait for crisis,” or a “wait for depression” attitude.

Nature of Program

It is indeed important to recognize the peculiarities of American imperialism, its sources of strength as well as of weakness, the peculiarities of American social development—but for what purpose? For the purpose of drawing up a correct program, for the purpose of being able to influence the masses at the level and for the aims that they accept and will accept as their own. If American imperialism is still able to grant concessions, it is important that these concessions continue to be wrested from them, and a prime task of the party is to participate in the wresting of these concessions, and to imbue the masses

with the sense of the strength of their organized power, and to help educate them that this organized power can win more concessions and can further expand democracy.

The issue is not as to whether the concessions are to be accompanied by a strengthening of illusions as to the character of bourgeois democracy. Such victories are accompanied above all by the realization on the part of the masses as to the significance of their organized power. It is no illusion if this organized power results in an expansion of democratic liberties. The present Negro liberation movement, although far from totally won, is a case in point.

Consequently, the special objective features of our country should only lead us to be more sensitive as to whether our program is correct or not, is adequate or not, and as to whether our methods of work are the best possible.

All this points up the cardinal need for the drawing up of a strategic program.

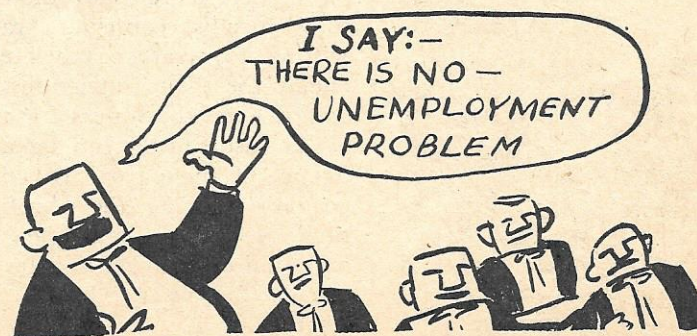
The next relation of class forces that is in the offing for our country, while it will most certainly mark a strengthening of the democratic forces, will not have socialism as its aim. It is with this kind of strategic perspective that we have to deal. It is movements short of socialism—in a strategic sense—that we have to influence. It is in the course of such movements that our party must earn its spurs all over again, new adherents, fresh recognition and acceptance as a genuine component of American life. None of this means abandonment of socialism as the ultimate goal, nor

abandonment of propaganda for socialism, but it does mean the recognition that to set socialism as a strategic goal is dependent upon a new relation of class forces, and that to set this goal as part of our program now is to condemn us to leftism and to increasing isolation. For whether or not the strategic goal can be socialism is not determined exclusively by the development of the productive forces; it is determined by the aims that the various anti-monopolist sections of our country set before themselves, by the relations between the various classes which compose those sections; and it is even determined—to a degree which requires great study indeed—by the aims, and shifts in aims which may occur on the part of the ruling class itself in the face of a world situation constantly developing to its disadvantage.

Programmatically, it has been a great weakness of our party that it has dealt with political developments tactically, and only twice has it dealt with them strategically. Browder dealt with them strategically, and he was all wrong. The Program of 1954 set the feet of the party in the right direction, in my opinion, in the sense that it sought to gear program to the level of the mass movements, even though it erred on prognoses. But strategic program is a cardinal matter.

At the same time, it is by no means the only matter. On the contrary, it is inextricable from the cadres and methods of work needed to test, amplify, fulfill, apply and modify the program.

(To be continued)



SOME ERRORS

By UPSTATE CAP

THE mistakes of the Soviet Party and its leadership as regards to glorification of individual leaders are not theirs alone. We also indulged in the same thing in relation to their party and its leadership and to some extent to our own. From healthy respect and admiration for the accomplishments of the Soviet party, its leadership and the Soviet people, we went overboard and idealized them to the point where "they could do no wrong." Now obviously they couldn't be right all the time. And our non-critical attitude towards them helped the lying accusation of our enemies in the minds of the American people that we were not a genuine American political party but an appendage to a foreign hostile party and an instrument of its foreign policy. . . .

This mistake seriously affected our relationship with the American people and consequently, our work in their mass organizations, the trade unions, etc. and in my opinion was the biggest single contributing factor to our isolation amongst them.

While paying lip service to criticism and self criticism, the atmosphere created by this mistake, limited criticism within certain narrow confines. This mistake was responsible for undemocratic trends which affected us to the point where not only the rank and file but also the leadership couldn't feel free to be critical (if they had criticisms), of Soviet policy etc. Without being labeled anti-Soviet, capitalist spy, and horror of horrors, Trotskyite stooge. We were as a whole, straight jacketed in our attitudes on this question along narrow sectarian lines.

The rightful association in the minds of the American people of hero

worship and dictatorship holds in my opinion the key to why we have been isolated from them. . . . They did not differentiate between the hero worship of the fascist leaders . . . Hitler, Franco, Mussolini, Peron, Salazar, etc. with that of the Communist hero worship. In their eyes, leadership glorification was linked with and synonymous to repression, thought control, and other anti-democratic practices. Because of the deep rooted democratic traditions of the American peoples, this question was especially repulsive and alien.

The capitalist class here recognized this and exploited our mistake to the full, for example, their reference to us as red fascists. Not being practical politicians with our feet planted in the grass roots, we failed to recognize the significance of this and continued explaining away our isolation and inability to build our party with the well known and oft repeated reasons. (Lack of class consc., petty bourgeois tendencies amongst the masses, etc. etc. These were of course valid contributing factors but of themselves were not sufficient to explain away our isolation from the people in general and especially our inability to attract to our ranks, that advanced, socialist conscious section of the people. It should have been obvious to even the most politically naive people that out of 166,000,000 people there must have been more than thousands of some socialist conscious brave souls willing to weather the fire of the enemy for their convictions. But we couldn't see the forests for the trees. It's an insult to the courage and intelligence of these particular people to go on repeating the above reasons plus the usual others, (fear of intimidation etc.) and it will be political suicide for us to do so. And we should face it.

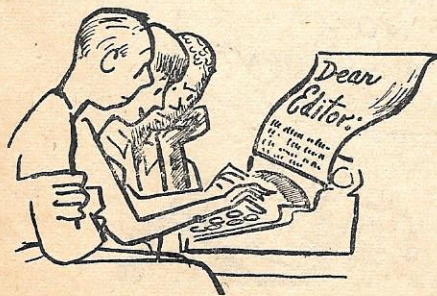
Trade Unions

Our work in the trade unions was also of course affected by this mistake, the good work and relationships established by individuals of the party was affected adversely by this in addition to the other factors, intimidation, etc. Despite the intimidation, I feel substantial numbers of the lower officialdom of the unions and trade union activities could have been won to us. I think we have all met at one time or another, guys who would go along down the line with us in the shops, etc. But when it came to joining up, they would say that while they agreed with our aims they felt they could not submit to the discipline that formal membership required, or something to this effect. I think this may have been their way of saying there wasn't sufficient freedom of expression in our party, not enough democracy.

This mistake also strengthened the lie of the Meany's and Co. that the party wasn't really interested in democracy, welfare of the people, etc. but was only interested in using them, their organizations, their struggles, to achieve their own ends.

Marxist Education

Another point raised at the 20th Congress that we can benefit from is that relating to education of our members in the science of Marxism-Leninism. We've stressed the importance of this education, without finding means of getting it to our people and taking into consideration the different levels of education of our people. It isn't being realistic to expect a comrade with a limited education to wade through theoretical works when a comrade with knowledge from college has difficulty unless of course his higher education



OF OUR PARTY

CAPITAL DISTRICT

was in related subjects (Political Science). The present educational program does not encourage acquiring a Marxist-Leninist knowledge. Especially for those with a limited education who are of course predominantly workers. The consequences of not correcting this shortcoming will be a tendency to develop a leadership top-heavy with people of non-working class backgrounds. . . . On this point we might take under consideration the proposal of Mikoyan to the 20th Congress, it's imperative that special theoretical text books be created for this purpose for comrades of different levels of education." If this isn't practical for us, then we should look for other solutions.

Building a Mass Workers and Farmers Party

I don't feel we probed deep enough in the past, as Marxists should, to determine why we didn't attract more workers, farmers, and Negro people, to our ranks. Certainly our basic aims are not in conflict with the aspirations of these people. Instead we attracted the middle class idealist intellectual element, not that this was wrong to attract these honest progressive people but that we did not attract sufficient numbers of workers, etc. The mistakes that contributed to our divorce from the people were compounded in that they led to others. For example, our inability to properly gauge current trends and moods amongst them which led to false estimates of given situations. Our strength varies and our political ability fluctuates in proportion to the extent of our ties with the people and their organizations. Like the mythical god Antaeus, whose strength was strongest the closer he was to Mother Earth and weakest when his feet were off the ground. So also are we strong-

est when closest to the people and weakest when we are removed from them.

We acclaim ourselves the leaders of the working class but I wonder if we aren't engaging in mental gymnastics. For in reality, we didn't provide leadership and certainly weren't accepted as such. For example just what direction have we given to recent issues; peace movement, AFL-CIO unity, segregation issues in the South, etc. I think we should have a frank appraisal of just where we stand in relation to the American political scene. I think we have had a tendency to degenerate into parlor pinks and backroom strategists, condescending in our belief that someday the people would wake up and see that we had all the answers to their problems.

Our Party has had roots, influence, and has given direction to struggles in the past out of proportion to our size. I am confident that once we overcome our shortcomings we will do so again and will begin to build a mass workers' and farmers' party. We have the beginnings in our core of loyal devoted people.

Inner Party Democracy

There is obviously room for improvement here. In our structure and maybe more important, our attitudes. There is a tendency to place the leadership beyond the pale of criticism. This should be overcome. We should consider the present methods of choosing our leaders at all levels, and ways of improving them (periodic elections?). On our attitudes, we stress the importance, with words, of not being dogmatic, but we do not follow this up in real life, in practice. We should look for ways to guarantee full freedom of expression even for what may seem to be at the time, an unorthodox opinion. We should

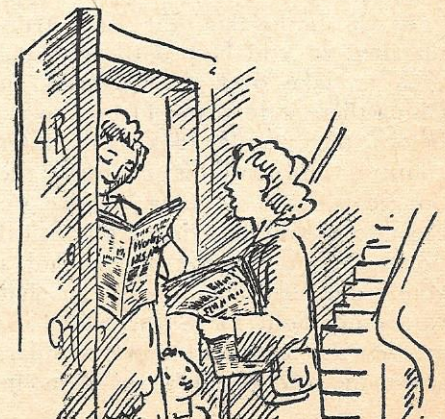
have as our object, democratizing our organization more to reflect our particular environment and to be in rhythm with American traditions of democracy.

The new fluid conditions existing in our Party and our thinking provides us with the opportunities to overcome the shortcomings in our work. We shouldn't be glad that mistakes were made, but we should be glad that they are being brought to light. This should stimulate our thinking, bring forth fresh ideas, and get us out of the rut we've been in. It may well hasten the day when we find the keys to the doors leading to the particular road to Socialism in this country.

We must be aware of certain dangers that are always present in this kind of a situation. The capitalist press is already whooping it up in anticipation of splits, etc., and any opportunities to cause splits, disruption, etc., will certainly be seized by them. They never have been fond of us and would welcome the opportunity to close the lid on us. But in guarding against this danger, we shouldn't go to the other extreme and limit or stifle discussion.

The object of our discussions should be to expose our mistakes, improve and strengthen our organization, eliminate narrow sectarian tendencies, find the correct applications of our ideas and science without being dogmatic, always keeping our minds open to consideration of fresh ideas and approaches.

How we conduct ourselves on this question will determine the vitality of our Party and will affect the rate of progress of the American people towards Socialism.



ON THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

(Discussion by D. at a Brooklyn section organizers' meeting)

I do not see the bourgeoisie giving up its power without a struggle. We have always held as a precept the advocacy of a policy of peaceful transition. But I cannot see after reading all the arguments to the contrary that a bourgeoisie that shoots down Westinghouse strikers and Negroes boarding a bus, will give up its life blood—profits—without trying to spill the blood of the American workers. I am not sure that there is a basic difference between a class collaborationist policy, which sees a bourgeoisie giving concessions to the working class—the Browder concept and the arguments that Mac Weiss has put forward in his original thesis and the two articles this week. I think there will be sharp class struggles on the way—Dennis is certainly more specific on that than Weiss and the historic developments which will determine the outcome of the transition are dependent on the victories of these class struggles. I think that the thesis which Weiss expounds paralyzes and misleads the Party and the working class, and gives them the rosy dream of socialism being handed on a silver platter. He uses fancier language to expound the theory that if Henry Ford wants to organize his own party—after socialism, and try to destroy a socialist state, he has that right—and all the trimmings he uses doesn't hide that fact. He may be able to see a constitutional convention, all nice and pretty, with the vote being made on whether socialism should be in power or not, and the ayes have it—and everyone has a victory dinner—but I don't see it.

In Czechoslovakia, the Red Army marched in, and helped the working class to take over the factories, in China there were years of bloody war, before the people took over their country, and in this country, the bourgeoisie is not going to give up the means of production, its political power, because of the outcome of a vote. And that does not mean that we cannot fight for a line which organizes the broadest, most popular, anti-monopoly people's coalition in

the period ahead. And engages in mass struggles for the economic and political rights of the people. And the time, the conditions, will determine the forms of transition to socialist society.

I agree that the main danger we have suffered from is left sectarianism, from having a position which did not always tally with reality—of living both personally and politically in a way that is different from our neighbor. I feel that while we often spoke of representing the needs and desires of the American people, we did not in most cases know those needs and desires. I think that we also during this period hid the face of the Party, did not discuss socialism. I think that it follows that in period when we are isolated from the masses of people—aggravating and deepening the serious objective difficulties we faced, that this right error would follow. In the thirties, when we were in the midst of mass struggles, in the leadership of people struggles, we brought forward the role of the Party and our socialist perspectives as never before.

This left line grew out of erroneous estimates on a number of questions. One of the reasons it is hard for many comrades to follow this reasoning is that in the main we did not know of many of the policies of the leadership of the Party and weren't carrying them out anyhow. We went along on the necessity for a split in the CIO, we weren't in the shops, a lot of progressive trade unionists had deserted us when things got tough and we accepted the entire fabric of the line. We did not know that there were many comrades in the shops who fought against the box they were put in—they were not listened to and we did not get the benefit of their experiences with the workers in their shops.

Left Peace Centers

But on some other things we did know better. We knew that maintaining left peace centers became meaningless. The people were finding their own ways to express their peace de-

sires thru the organizations of which they had been a part for years. I happen to feel there was a time at the height of the hysteria for war, when the peace groups, small and fragile as they were, sounded a note of hope and courage that was needed. But the American people did not want war, and their peace hopes were linked up to their everyday needs. On the ALP elections we met opposition from those who had to carry out our confused line. They answered us by doing nothing.

More Democracy

Well, that brings me to a proposition. We can make estimates and being human we can be wrong. But those who think that the question of party democracy, the level of bureaucracy in our Party is an organizational question which will be handled at an organization conference later on, are guaranteeing the end of our Party in my opinion. Those who think that the discussions on democratic centralism are becoming too much the center of discussion are apparently still far away from the membership. Our comrades are concerned with this problem because of their deep desire for socialism, because of their devotion to the Party and because they want to see our Party give the leadership it must to the American people. Because they see a Party without a program that makes it possible for them to work with a perspective and results. Not because they want to see heads roll or breast beating. They are concerned with it because they feel that the leadership not only has not properly estimated the movement of the people, but is removed from the Party membership and its experiences and estimates. Could I have any idea of the thinking of the people in my community if I tried to estimate it from within my four walls? No more can a leadership which is breathing the rarified air of its own experiences. They feel the leadership has not listened to the ideas and estimates they have tried to give. These comrades

How Deep Is Our Sectarianism?

(Remarks made at a County Discussion by a Brooklyn Section Organizer)

who have in the past couple of years become a part of the organizations of the people can help make those estimates, must help make the policy and program which we are in the process of hammering out. They want a two way street of collective thinking—and nothing in the past gives them the confidence that this is an integral part of our organization. They do not have the confidence that this will exist after this period of debate.

They do not feel they have been working in a left way, isolated way. They have tried to carry out their own work based on their own thinking regardless of the leadership and its policies. I have learned more than I can hope to give from these comrades and like others, have reached a blind alley of frustration caught between the bureaucratic policies handed down to me, without discussions, and the attempt of the membership to break out the imposed straitjacket.

The sincere desire of the leadership to learn from the comrades at the point of production and translate these experiences collectively into line and policy is the only hope I see of preventing us from making the wrong estimate at the outset or of correcting a line which we see doesn't stand up in life. We have to have this approach to our own Party before we can have an acceptable approach to non-party socialists, liberal forces, social democrats, etc.

This, in my opinion was almost totally lacking in Dennis report and has to be part of our reevaluation of the situation we face today. We have to have confidence in our own comrades if the floodgates of their creativity are to be opened. We can help them translate our common scientific thinking into the tactics of everyday life—which can be tested, and renewed in life. That has not happened nationally and here in Brooklyn.

Democratize our Party now—next February—that is way I think we can come up with a Marxist answers to the major problems of the future of our Party—on the roads to socialism, the correct policy for the struggle for Negro rights, and every other question that needs clear thinking and perspective.

First I would like to say that I liked the report. I agreed with the main propositions it advanced. I liked the discussion that was reported here too which went back even farther than the last ten years—to 1935-39 and 1939-1941 periods to show that our main left sectarian error went back even to that time. I liked the title of the report too—Communists Take a New Look.

However, I'd like to advance this proposition: that the new look doesn't overcome our isolation but perpetuates it and that our isolation is not limited to the period from 1945 or from 1935, but has existed from the very beginning.

When our Party was born we had to make our main proposition the defense of the Soviet Union. The theory that the Soviet Union was in greater danger as time went on kept this proposition foremost in our minds. We did not develop into creative Marxists in terms of the American scene but applied by rote the experiences, and science and even the phraseology of the Russian Revolution. Furthermore, as time went on the very existence of this immense Socialist state with growing successes in every field and its own growing theory served as a gravitational distraction for our Party from the problems of the American scene. We thought more about the impact of the Soviet Five Year Plans on the American scene than we did about our own plans.

This prevented our Party from ever serving as a focal point for all the Socialist oriented movements of the past which based themselves on American problems and American democratic applications of Socialist theory. It further served to pull our people away from their family connections, social ties, churches, community groups, and even trade unions. It made us *firstly* Party people.

One of our section committee

pressed the other day for one single contact said: "I have no non-Party friends—I gave them up long ago." If this sounds extreme, how many of us have heard the remark—"I can't talk to my relatives anymore." I'll tell you, I can, but I don't have time to—and they are industrial workers and little middle class people—and not the class enemy.

We could no longer even see the big and positive things about our own country as others see it. Instead we idealized Soviet democracy, Stockholm Peace petitions and Bucharest theory—never stopping to think that our own country had a contribution of its own to make in all these fields.

One restaurant worker offered the Worker by a waitress Party member told her "I just can't read that paper, they're such calamity howlers. They're always against something. What in the world are they for? Everything is bad, nothing is ever any good. I just don't see our country that way."

The big thing that this new look should do is see that we are now unfettered and able for the first time to become a really American Party of Socialism. But does it do it? Listen.

Still Sectarian

But firstly I'd like to preface this by saying that in our section and I believe in our country we're not as isolated as Dennis' report indicates. The last three years have seen a change. However, I think its true all over that the biggest part of our membership is still isolated. And where our isolation was broken it wasn't broken by the approach that the following quote indicates. (Dennis: Communists Take a New York, p. 39.)

"Here there are two cardinal and inter-related questions that should be

stressed—while striving at all times to come forward as the best representatives and builders of the mass organizations of the people, and participating in all genuinely progressive coalition and movements, we Communists should also endeavor at all times to imbue our shopmates and associates with a class conscious, a Socialist outlook and understanding.”

I’ll repeat “participating in all genuinely progressive coalitions and movements.” Here we are already setting standards of genuinely progressive coalitions and movements that we are going to participate in. What is going to guarantee that anything is “genuinely progressive.” We’re setting pre-conditions like we did toward the LaFollette movement in 1924—spelling out a program on the basis of which we’d participate—so Foster makes the point—they went along without us and we were isolated. We’re doing the same thing now. If we’re part of the people (which we are) and have the same problems as the people (which we have) we’ll belong to the same organizations—in a more modest way than giving them a litmus paper test to determine whether we’ll belong and be their “best builders and representatives.”

Or listen to this: “Obviously, there is no simple answer. The road ahead is not an easy one. Together with developing inner-Party democracy to the

maximum and mapping out correct policies, *we must make a more determined effort to go among the people and participate more effectively in their mass activity and movements. There is no therapy like mass work and struggle.*” (p. 38)

We Are People

Isn’t this a continuation of the same isolated outlook, the same failure to recognize that we *are a part of the American people*, that it is not “their” organizations but *our* organizations; that we live somewhere, we work somewhere, our children go to school somewhere, and we all need higher wages—that these are our organizations moving on *our* needs in one form or another, that nobody has to give us a directive to belong to. These are the organizations from which we have sprung and the peculiar thing about us is that we have been holding ourselves aloof from them. So long as we can formulate “a determined effort to go among the people” (Remember the Narodniks?)—well what are we—freaks—that we have to think in terms of a “determined effort” to be with people?

Or “participate . . . in their mass activity and movements.” This sounds like the slanders against us—that we are “boring from within.” It’s as if we were to say: “If we didn’t have other

motives for being in the lodge or organizations than the rest of them, we wouldn’t belong.”

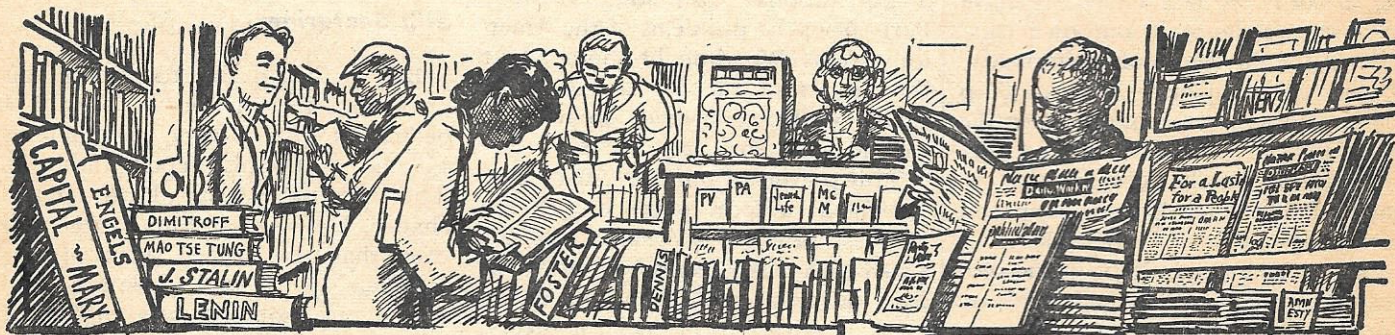
Or “no therapy like mass work.” That’s it again. We’re going there for a cure—not because its part of the American scene from which we have sprung and where we belong.

I just want to make this point. If you belong to a community group working for playgrounds you belong, not because it’s a progressive coalition, but because the kids are dodging the wheels of the cars on the street and they have no place to play but the gutter or the filthy sidewalks. The “progressive coalition” can be helped along by your being there. I feel the section “Tasks and Perspectives” as well as the Jeff School, as well as our press should deal not so much in scientific terms, draft programs, directives, but in terms of understanding and being part of the American scene, American movements, American organizations, so that our membership, reading the paper, going to Jeff school, and belonging to clubs, should feel imbued as a result of their experiences with the idea of returning where *they belong* and not looking askance at us and questioning—

“What for?”

“Will it do any good?”

“Isn’t it reformist?”



Social Relations Among Communists

By A BRONX NEGRO WOMAN COMRADE

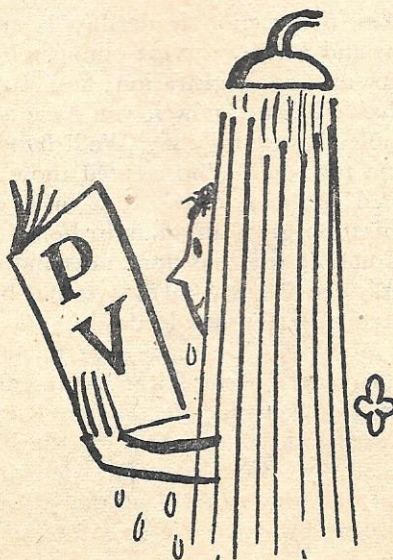
AS a Negro, a part of the most oppressed people in our land, the most important thing that attracted me to the C.P. was its fight for Negro rights, before I knew what Anti-Semitism meant, or cared. I was merely concerned with the things that made my people suffer, such as menial jobs at the lousiest pay, poor schooling for our children, dirty, rat-infested holes to live in, *mean white men, mean white women*, as bosses in factories, as bosses in domestic kitchens. When someone mentioned the C.P. to me as an organization that fought against all these things, I jumped at the chance to be part of that organization. I found that it fought for all these things and more. But I also found something that it lacked. I found to my greatest surprise that Communists, and the majority I am acquainted with are *white*, are not warm people, they do not become your friend, they are not friendly, and here I am not throwing out charges of white chauvinism, etc.

Friendship in Party

After you join the party you become like a machine. You feel that you have a job to do, you have to work with a certain amount of people, you get the job done, and that's that. But it is particularly bad when you are working in a Negro or Puerto Rican community. Today after being a part of the organization in this community since 1943 whom in the Prospect section or even in Bronx county can I call my friend, even if people have moved away, for if you have a friend you can still talk to him on the phone. The party has been functioning in this community for a long time—how many Negro members have we got? The whites have moved but the Negro people are still in the neighborhood. The Negro people we have recruited have left the Organization. Recently, a party leader talking to a Negro comrade who has been

in the Organization over 10 years, asked him how many friends he or his wife had in the Bronx, East or West, he said NONE. Comrades, I don't think that says very much for us. And believe me they are very warm and friendly people. Why is it that I still have a close relationship with people I worked with in a shop 8 or 10 years ago. We meet once a month or once in two months, go out to dinner or a show. Yes, these were Negro shop workers. I worked with them in a shop every day, but I also worked with my comrades in the community practically every night, in the period when we were very busy. Yet, no such relationship developed. After working only for the past two years among Tenants, with Negro women, they have invited me to their homes, we have gone to their club dances together, we can get on the phone and talk for hours on any old nonsense. I can honestly say that I couldn't get on the phone and talk for an hour with any of the white women comrades in this room. After you say how are you and how are your kids, that's the end of the conversation, unless of course, it's on politics.

And aside from Negro-white rela-



tionships, comrades, how many of us remember to call a comrade whom we haven't seen for awhile unless we are going to register him, collect dues, or renew his sub. How many of us remember to send a comrade a card after he's had a baby or becomes ill, has an operation etc. Unless of course he is a personal friend. We do go to shows, do have a friend in occasionally, but most of the time that friend is not the person down the block you worked with or the Negro woman you met in the park, or the comrade you went canvassing with that morning. Comrades, don't get me wrong I'm not trying to tell you who your friends should be, I'm only trying to say that Comrades should be friends.

A Negro woman comrade invited a white couple to a New Year's eve party (incidentally, her husband worked with them in a mass org.). The answer she got was, "we don't drink, we won't enjoy it, we are planning to stay home anyway." She later found out that they *had* gone out. And why assume its going to be a drinking party? For several years her husband had been working with them in a mass organization, they had never invited them to their home. She had been particularly bitter against whites in the movement, referring to them as PHONIES. There are too many Negro comrades going around referring to whites in the party as Phonies. I think we should think about this seriously comrades and find out why. I can sit here tonight and cite incident after incident. Phrases and slogans are thrown around about Unity, Negro-white unity, Jewish-Puerto Rican Unity, Unity, Unity, and Unity. From a theoretical point of view we are the most united people in the world, and after the most eloquent speeches, we all go our merry ways.

How many of you comrades here have noticed a group of our Puerto Rican comrades at a Bronx or Down town function? They are always by themselves. They come in together,

after the meeting they go in for coffee together, and they go home in the same subways or bus. How many of you comrades here with cars have ever offered to take a Puerto Rican comrade home. How many comrades, east, west, or south Bronx know where Comrade C. lives. C. has been a Puerto Rican woman leader in the Party for many, many years, has been a leader in her shop, a member of the ILGWU, and doing excellent work among the Puerto Rican, in her community for years. I thought I would burst, on May Day when I walked into a restaurant across the street from the square and found C. sitting at a table having supper all alone. No comrades, the answer is not as we so often hear, "What can we do, we don't speak Spanish, they don't understand English, Comrade C. speaks fine English.

Integration

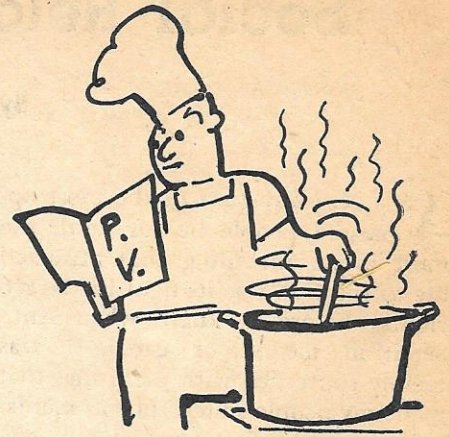
How have we integrated the Puerto Rican people into the party, when did we ever consult with the Puerto Rican people in the making of policy concerning work among the Puerto Rican people? How many Puerto Rican people do we have in the party in Bronx County? Have we any idea how the Puerto Rican people live in our area? The most burning issue in Bronx county as far as the Puerto Ricans are concerned is housing. How are we treating this question?

And now for the top leadership of our party. How many of you have been introduced to a leader of the party for about a dozen times and have him or her look at you and smile each time and say so nice to know, so nice to know. You know after the second or third time you begin to wonder if there is something wrong with you, but after the sixth or seventh time you begin to wonder, period. No, it's not that they see so many people, it's because they don't see and know the membership. I think that if there is anything we have created, it's a mess of snobs. I think that communist leaders are the worst snobs I have ever known. If there is anything we have copied from the capitalist class it is our ability to keep ourselves from the working class. We don't mingle with the man at the bench. We don't talk with him, we talk to

him, or at him. How many of us knew before the arrest and jailings of our leadership, who their wives were? How many of us even knew they were married? How many of us have participated in fund raising parties or any other functions, and invited a leader of the party to speak. They make their speech, smile sweetly, take their coats on their arm and tiptoe out saying, "I'm so glad I came, it's such a nice, a wonderful party." Why can't they bring their wives, take part in the general celebration, mingle, get to know the membership and their friends. No comrades, we are not equal socially, we have different social standards. At least the Republican and Democratic leaders shake hands and kiss babies around election time. Until the recent attacks upon the Party, the closest most of us got to the leadership, was at a meeting at Manhattan Center or Madison Square Garden.

The Negro Minister in addition to preaching on Sundays, attends christenings, Confirmations, Weddings, and Anniversaries of all kinds. They bring their families, and take part in the celebrations. The Negro loves his minister and is proud of his minister, because that man is his friend as well as his adviser. The tremendous thrill you get when you read about Montgomery Ala., you also get when you enter any church affair and witness the relationship between minister and congregation. We must mingle more often. Let's get out and see how the other half lives.

Yes, our section leadership is anxious and willing to visit our membership around registration and fund drives. "Let us know if you have any problem cases, they say. We'll handle them for you." Who created those so called problem cases? If a mass organization gives an affair in honor of a Comrade who has done outstanding work, the County takes a table, but do you see County leadership in attendance? No, we make sure to have Negro and Puerto Rican representation, 3 tickets for the Puerto Rican Section and three tickets for the Negro section. Comrades I'm sick and tired of eating dinners, so that Bronx County can have Negro representation.



Our Drives

I feel very strongly about policy pertaining to a particular area being decided without the people of that area who will have to do the work participating in those decisions. The attacks upon the party have hurt us tremendously, but they are not the only factors in present state of the party. Our bureaucratic methods of work are mainly responsible. I think that the leadership have to get out of some of all those meetings, and find out that is happening in, and to the organization. They have meetings in the morning, meetings in the afternoon and again meetings at night. And all directives handed down result in our having meetings 5 nights a week, and Saturday and Sunday too, if we would let them.

In the past three or four years any Education that was carried on in the branches, was the responsibility of the branches, if you had meetings or did not have meetings, no one knew or cared. But comes the fund drive, press drive, or any kind of drive, you were sure to see the section or county leader. People drifted in and out of the Party as they pleased. Some times you found out from a neighbor that a comrade either moved to L. I. or Jersey or even died.

Comrades, there are still a lot of us left to make this a fighting and wonderful party. But let's act quickly, because we are also getting tired. Think carefully about this new type Party. We've got to make a much better party. And I still feel that we have some of the finest people in this American Party of ours.

Democracy and The Party

By AL E.

WHY—despite all our resolutions and determination—is insufficient democracy in the Party?

I want to express my own opinion on two, possibly basic reasons.

The first reason is what I consider weaknesses in conception, due to a doctrinaire, and dogmatic approach to democratic-centralism which distorts what democracy really is and means for the Communist party.

We have blindly followed the words of Marxism-Leninism's organizational principles, without absorbing their spirit. We have copied Lenin's organizational precepts mechanically, though Lenin's formulas were meant for a Russia which, while backward in certain respects, nevertheless was in a revolutionary situation.

We must develop our own, specifically American, organizational precepts. We can do this by taking what is universally true in Marxist-Leninist organizational principles—and applying *them as a guide* to the American scene.

The guiding organizational principle of Marxism-Leninism, democratic-centralism, has been mechanically interpreted by us to mean mainly centralism. Democracy is sort of tacked on. The result has been, unfortunately, that we have evolved into a Party of conformity.

Centralism expresses the integrated unity—the sovereignty—of the membership as a body. It expresses the strength of the Party as a whole, through the fullest self-expression of the clubs, sections, counties, and state sub-divisions.

Concretely, centralism is expressed by our Party having one theory, one program, one line, one national convention, one national leadership, etc.

There can be two types of distortions, usually, in the practice of democratic centralism. One is "pure" democracy, which leads to endless debate without coming to a conclusion. The other is excessive centralism,

which leads to bureaucracy, and the negation of democracy.

An American working class party must avoid both "pure democracy" and excessive centralism. It needs democratic centralism.

Most national organizations in the U.S. operate on some basis of democratic centralism, more or less. It is not a completely foreign idea, at least not in practice.

Now for the second basic reason as to the lack of sufficient democracy in the Party. This, in my opinion, are the weaknesses in org structure, which distort or omit procedures in the Party and prevent the broadest and fullest expression of opinion and interchange of experience.

New Rules

The specific structure of democratic centralism should be determined by the Constitution and Rules of our Party. It is time that we re-examined our Constitution and Rules and made a thorough overhauling. Since we are to have a National Convention in the near future, I propose that this be one of the main tasks undertaken in the Pre-Convention discussion and at the Convention itself. A Preliminary Draft Revised Constitution and Rules should be presented as soon as possible for discussion by the membership.

The Rules as revised should be so constituted as to contain a whole series of precise safeguards of the democratic rights of the membership, which are either non-existent today, or are present in the most general

and abstract sense. Here are some concrete proposals:

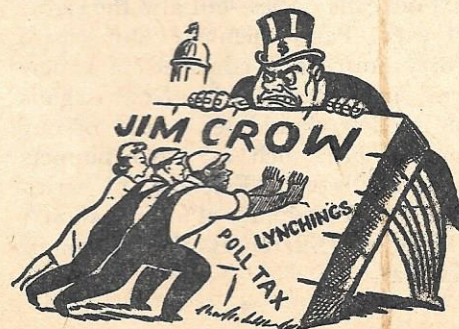
National Convention: The foundation stone of our organizational structure is the club. The highest authority is the national convention. Between the foundation stones and the highest authority there should be steel bands—so that the entire structure is as strong and as flexible as the mighty cables that support the George Washington Bridge.

There are many aspects of our national conventions that could be improved upon in order to create those "steel bands" with the club. The national convention could be made still more democratic, and therefore better from a Marxist point of view. Take representation. It is my opinion that given the present size and distribution of our Party—*every section* should be represented at the national convention. Every section should elect at least one delegate (or more, according to the size of the section).

Take the matter of resolutions. Every club, section, region, etc., should be *encouraged* to submit their own resolutions and amendments on the Draft Resolution for the National Convention. A Pre-Convention Resolutions Committee should be set up to receive, and *print* all resolutions and amendments as soon as they are submitted. A resolution or amendment supported by six sections from three different states—*must be submitted to the convention for action.*

Controversial and New Issues: Controversial and new issues should be presented to the Party as a whole for action. Presentation of issues should not be limited to the majority view. Differences should not be hidden under the facade of "unity."

During a pre-convention discussion this should not present too much difficulty. But what about between conventions? What about new questions? Must all discussion be cut off after a



decision is taken? No.

In my opinion new issues should be discussed and battled out with the membership as a whole—before a decision is taken. The membership should not be presented with the decision and “clarified.” *Rather the membership should participate in the making of the decision from the very beginning.*

For example, recently a national leader wrote several articles for the *Daily Worker* on our attitude towards civil liberties before and after the establishment of socialism, which represented fundamental change from our previous position. Yet, without any consultation in any form with the membership, this appeared in a form that could only be interpreted as a final decision. This is a concrete example of what I mean by our present org structure and practices limiting democracy in the Party. The articles on civil liberties should have been presented as a *draft*, or discussion article.

Votes on Policies

Basic formulation or alteration in policy should be made impossible—by Party law—in our new Rules, except by voice and vote of the membership either by Convention, Referendum or etc.!

Would it not have been better if the whole Party had been involved in a discussion on civil liberties—and a decision taken either at the National Convention or by a referendum? Just imagine the hot discussions in all the clubs, sections, etc! Interest in the classics (Lenin's *State and Revolution* and *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*) would have quadrupled! Attendance at club meetings, dues payment, education, mass work, press circulation, enthusiasm in the Party, etc.—would have reached a new high.

This is what we need: More Democracy! This is how we should work.

In our revised Constitution, By-Laws, and Rules concrete provision should be made to prevent bureaucratic, undemocratic procedures. Iron-clad provisions for conventions, special conventions, conferences, special conferences, discussion bulletins, full-



est debate, referendums, etc., should be *riveted* into the org structure of our Party and made part of the everyday work. A regular National Discussion Bulletin should be issued where *any* question relating to Party policy could be raised at *any* time. Similar arrangements should be provided for in the various State, City, County, etc. organizations.

For example, in 1953 and 1954, we faced a unique electoral situation in New York. *Why couldn't we have had a special resolution, followed by a discussion period, discussion bulletins, etc., ending in a special conference—with representation from every section—to discuss and vote on the tactical issues?* True, the abnormal objective situation might have prevented us from holding such a conference then. But what about other procedures?

The point is that our present methods completely exclude such an approach. The point is that this approach should become part of our concrete practice of democratic centralism—a regular part of our organizational procedure and structure.

We must institutionalize democracy in our Party!

The new Rules should emphasize not only the duties—but also the rights of every Party member. Our entire Party must be re-educated in a new way, in a new spirit. New slogans or maxims should seize hold of our membership, such as: “No puppets in the Party”; “Freedom of Criticism”; “Freedom of Discussion”; “Right to Differences of Opinion in the Party.”

* * *

Democracy in the Party is not an

abstract issue. It is directly related to *mass work*. Democracy in the Party is strengthened by the most intimate contact with the masses. Masses are estranged from our Party by the lack of—or weaknesses in—our inner democratic spirit.

An organization that serves the masses and is part of the masses must reflect this in its every internal organizational form.

An organization that serves the masses and is part of the masses will constantly be refreshed with new people and new ideas.

In this way the Party will always avoid becoming senile and losing flexibility of mind and body.

In his last speech Lenin urged the world's working class movement: “. . . to study, to start from the beginning . . . (to) . . . really understand the organization, structure, method, and content of revolutionary activity.”

This holds many lessons for us, and is true to this very day.

I am mindful of the fact that what I have presented here is only a beginning and is not complete. Much more could be said on the questions discussed. More issues could be raised, such as: what should be the minimum requirements for Party membership; what is the *first task* of all Party members; what do we mean—in the light of today, by “the party of a new type”; what are the rights and duties of each individual Party member; collective leadership; what do we mean by a monolithic party, etc., etc.

My intention is to stimulate discussion on these and other similar issues.

Toward An American Form

By ROBERT MANN

I'D LIKE to take as the starting point for my comments the critical mention, in Max Weiss' report to the recent national committee meeting of the Communist Party, of the phenomenon he calls "the summary" (or, as some people say, the summation.)

We're all familiar with the summation. A meeting takes place. A report is delivered; perhaps by the leader of the group, perhaps by a representative of a high body. Controversy over the report may be sharp. It may evoke proposals contradictory to the report and even proposals opposed to each other. But after the discussion is finished, the reporter will "sum up." If he has total recall and if he is totally objective, he will try to synthesize the discussion, take the best elements from every side, or indicate the approach which seems to be the majority view. Or, he will merely repeat what he said in the first place. In any case, the meeting will be left, not with a sense of accomplishment, a specific understanding of decisions made, responsibilities undertaken, but, at worst, a sterile debate and at best a general awareness of agreement unsupported by any specific action by the participants.

But why? Why do we do it? The answer, one answer at any rate, is that we have always done it. When we look, as we are now doing, with fresh, clear eyes, we see the absurdity, even the un-democratic nature of the "summation" and the manner in which it shifts from the entire group—on whatever level—to one individual—the burden of, in effect, making up the group's mind.

But I would like to pursue the relatively minor matter of the summation to the very nature of the Communist Party, its procedures, structure and methods of work.

Because personal experience is the aptest teacher, I'd like to talk in terms of my own experience, although I am convinced it parallels the experience and observations of many.

I joined the movement in my late teens at the height of the depression. I found as hundreds of thousands did, that the ideas of socialism, the militance, dedication and leadership of the Communists answered my deepest needs. In a very real sense, the Communist Party, because it opened the door to a better life and a collective struggle to great numbers of Americans, was and remains the most democratic force in existence.

But, although I had had no long experience in other organizations, trade union or otherwise, I quickly came to recognize a disparity between the methods of work, either already existing or fought for by Communists and others in organizations and unions and in the party organization itself.

In the unemployed organization to which I belonged, I insisted on elections, minutes, motions, decisions, check-up, majority rule and parliamentary process. In my club, I became increasingly conscious of the absence of all this, but decided—not uniquely, no doubt—that it didn't matter because all Communists were of a single mind, anyhow, and it was a waste of time to bother with forms when we shared the higher democracy of common purpose.

This is not to say that the Party has not oftentimes struggled against bureaucratic methods of work or un-democratic processes. It has. But what was at the root of these methods? In my opinion we have never come to grips with the question. Nor, to my knowledge have we ever definitely resolved for ourselves the kind of party we sought to create or, more

important, the kind of party that could be both socialist in guiding principle and characteristically American—and palatable to masses of Americans, in form.

What Type of Party?

Why, for instance, did it prove so difficult, a few years back, to resolve the argument between those who sought to tighten party membership requirements and those who sought to maintain or relax them?

Why have we oscillated between the concept of "dedicated revolutionaries" and a broad, flexible movement wherein membership requirements consist only of acceptance of general principles and a readiness to read our literature? Why have we alternately, sometimes even simultaneously, demanded nightly activity from members or continued as members even those who did nothing, read nothing, promised nothing?

I think the answer lies here. We swallowed whole the concept of a tightly disciplined, "chain-of-command" type of organization, adopted from abroad. Because this kind of movement was, presumably, necessary for a particular country at a particular time in its own history, we assumed that it was preordained as the only legitimate type of socialist party or organization for us or, for that matter, for anybody.

When life in these United States demonstrated that what had been effective in Stalin's Russia was not necessarily so here, we struggled with



the practical problem. But we left untouched the essence of our problem:

How to determine on the basis of American national differences and political realities what kind of party organization could best attract socialist-minded Americans?

In the 1930's, as I mentioned earlier, thousands of young persons like me, flocked into the movement. Since that period, new generations of American workers have come into the trade union movement and other organizations. Without idealizing the democratic character of these organizations, it is still a fact that large numbers of workers have learned something about democratic processes. To a greater or lesser degree they have had a state of local autonomy, a characteristic of American organization even though it is not everywhere religiously maintained.

Isn't it clear that to attract Americans such as these, a socialist party must offer more, not less, in these qualities?

Democratic Centralism

I have read and heard a good deal in recent months about the violations of "democratic centralism." Yet I have seen nowhere any questioning of the principle itself. I am not here arguing for scrapping it. I don't know enough about it, and I haven't actually seen the principle functioning in practice. What I do know is that Marxism, if it is no dogma, does not preclude our taking a hard look at democratic centralism or anything else to determine—for ourselves—whether it is a first principle or just something we borrowed heedlessly because it worked somewhere else. (Although even that presumed success is now in question.)

I do not sneer at decisions to improve ways of working. But I believe we have long underestimated the importance of forms as aids toward the fulfillment of our good intentions. Some of us used to disparage bourgeois democratic forms because we knew where the body was buried. We knew that elections every four years and two thirds' vote to override a veto and appeals to courts were all

concealments of the essence of power—somewhere else, in the billionaires who never took office at all. And so they were, but they were more than that. And in the harsh years of McCarthyism we began more fully to appreciate the complexity of this government and political structure of ours.

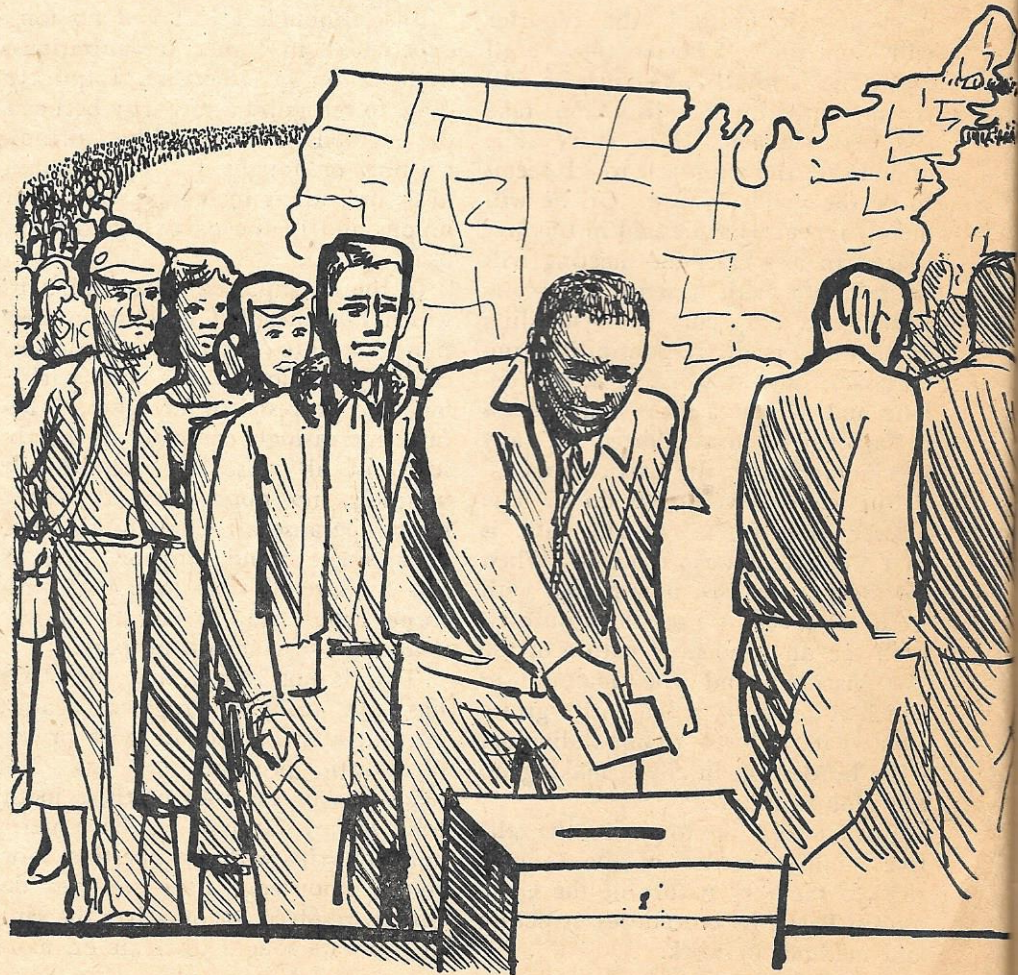
Can it be denied that an insistence, even on the form of regular, annual conventions of the Soviet Communist Party, could have served as a check on the violations of socialist democracy?

Shouldn't we here take a good look at all our organizational forms, including the virtually lifetime tenure of people in official posts? (Nor am I personally convinced by the argument in this particular connection: 'Look at the trade unions; their presi-

dents hold office for 50 years and more.'—we cannot at the same time lay claim to being the most advanced and excuse our faults by comparing them to the most backward traits of others.)

The point is that a party of socialism must, instead of giving up the forms of liberal democracy, maintain them with fidelity and make them more meaningful than ever by using them to win socialism for and with the American people.

And to do this we have to use, not the mummified methods and structure and yes, even language we mistakenly considered as the essence of Marxism, but the forms that will ring a bell with an American worker, make him say: This is for me.



Comments From An Industrial Section

(From the Discussion at the State Committee Meeting)

By S. Z.

IN MY section which is in basic industry, we were all unhappy that there was only one report from the national leadership. Since every single aspect of our work is being opened up for re-evaluation, we feel that we are entitled to the thinking of all of our leading comrades. We look to the national and state leadership for direction, but we don't want to look to only one point of view. Often articles in *Political Affairs* are very logical and convincing, but they often contradict one another and they both seem right. In our section, the comrades are raising questions about the responsibility of leadership. We want to be able to examine every divergent point of view. It seems to us that a line cannot be correct if our industry can't apply it.

In our industry in the past 4 or 5 years we have come from practically nothing to a point where we exercise considerable influence in the shops and unions. This has been achieved by coming into conflict with our party policies very often. We have found it impossible to go into the shops with our line. The only way we were able to survive was by developing a base and united front ties with leading forces who take positions that are often contrary to our party's policies. Our program came about therefore out of necessity and not from understanding. If an idea isn't right we find that we have to pull back and try again in another way.

For instance we raised the demand for an FEPC in our contract. We got no response on this, so we dropped it. We then intensified our fight on grievances in a large department that had mostly Negro workers. We also raised it again privately with the shop leadership. We were successful in that the union adopted the demand for an FEPC for their contract. There is a lot to be learned from this method of work. We do not use it enough.

Even on the Negro question in my section, and the comrades asked me to raise this here, we are not con-

cerned with the question of self-termination. What we want is a policy that will enable us to advance the interests of the Negro workers. For example, in our industry, the employer hit the workers with arbitrary penalties. Almost all the workers penalized were Negro workers. We could have raised it in two ways. First—as the Negro question. 25 per cent or less of the workers in the industry are Negro and it turned out that the white workers were not ready to come out directly on this issue as a fight for Negro rights. The second way we could have raised it was as a trade union question, and when we did the white workers were interested and put a stop to the penalties. This fight was won not by the Negro workers alone, but by all the workers in the union.

After this fight on penalties, it became possible to raise such issues as support to the Montgomery bus boycott, the Till case, and so on.

Left Sectarianism

We generally agree that left sectarianism was a very serious danger with the majority thinking it was the main danger. Take for instance the fact that our union proposed excellent demands for its next contract, because of the pressure of the workers in the industry. These workers think that these demands express their feelings and feel that they are even somewhat beyond achievement. However, our party came out with an article proposing a different set of demands. That does not reflect the feeling of the workers and that is really pie-in-the-sky stuff. According to this article, even if the union leadership wins its present demands (and the workers would consider that sensational) we would have to call it a sellout. That's the kind of thing we think is wrong.

This article apparently came out of a meeting of some kind of committee that didn't include the section organizers in the industry.

Broadening Our Relations With Other Groups

I saw a relative of mine recently. He is a social democrat and he has devoted his whole life to the labor movement. He said to me "you guys are getting on the right track but I won't work with you until you tell me that I am not an enemy agent." I think an apology is in order to all these people we have called names in the past and as well to many to our own comrades and ex-comrades, who have been driven into inactivity by our harsh treatment of them.

On the Economic Crisis

There is a feeling on the part of almost everyone in my section that we are still going off half-cocked on the question of an economic crisis. In the Khrushchev report the point is made that Stalin was wrong about the possibilities about further industrial expansion in capitalist countries. Comrades say that there is possibility for industrial expansion, if we take into account East-West trade, increased purchasing power, high productive level, etc. I agree with that. Given these conditions, there is still possibilities of further expansion. Whether it will happen is another thing. But we can't go on the assumption that there is no more room for expansion. If there is that assumption then the guaranteed annual wage should be our main demand.

On Leadership

There is a lot of discussion about the fitness of the leadership—have they worked correctly, etc. In my section, this is not the situation. All of us with only one exception feel that the leadership is good and honest. We feel that there are serious weaknesses that stem from a lack of contact with our party organization in the clubs and sections and a lack of contact with people, just people. They recommend that a person on my level, that of section organizer, begin to discuss directly with the state leadership just what is going on in the clubs, in the shops, etc. Let's end a policy of having three or four people not in intimate contact with situations and people in the shops make policy for those in shops and situations.

Problems of Art and Literature

By S. F.

I WISH to take up the question of the Communist Party and cultural life, with particular reference to the arts. This will be divided into three parts: (1) The situation today. (2) The importance of culture and the arts. (3) Some proposals.

The Situation Today

At no time in the past twenty years has the prestige and influence of Marxist thinking and the progressive movement in the arts of the United States, fallen so low as today. This does not mean that no good work is being done. Excellent works have appeared in literature, painting and music, ranking with and in many cases surpassing the best work done in the so-called "proletarian 'thirties," by progressive creative people who have shown great courage and determination in the face of adverse conditions. Yet the situation is as follows. At no time in the past, so much as today, has there been so complete an absence of Marxist leadership felt in the arts. One can almost call it ideological bankruptcy, or surrender of leadership. There is no direction felt; no guiding line. There is no program, that anyone can point to, as representing, in our country, what Marxists ask of American creative figures in the arts. Never has there been so great an isolation of progressive creative figures from one another. The tendency is for each to work alone; to solve his or her craft and ideological problems alone; to produce and market the work alone, or almost alone; even, in the case of literature, to start personal publishing houses. There is an almost complete absence of creative, collective criticism and discussion. There has been a great loss of creative people from progressive work, as may be seen, for instance, in looking at the board of contributing editors set up by *Masses and Mainstream*, in 1948, and asking how many of these names are doing consistent, creative work.

The "coverage" of cultural work, in publications, such as *Masses and*

Mainstream, and the *Worker*, is on a low level in quantity and quality. We have fallen even more than the past, into the practice of mentioning only those who happen to be closely connected to the Marxist movement, or those whom we bitterly attack. Thus, even though we make sincere proclamations against "sectarianism," we lay ourselves open again and again to the charge of not following our own proclaimed principles; of paying attention to, or looking with favor on, only those who we know have progressive ties; of abandoning genuine standards, and judging creative work through whether the person involved is known to be "friend" or "foe," rather than through the actual content of the work, and along with this, its artistic achievement.

"Cold War"

A major reason for the situation outlined above is, of course, the "Cold War," the assault on the progressive movement, the assault upon the American democratic heritage, and upon the democratic, realistic, progressive and critical heritage. Yet this was not the decisive factor, for this very assault created the conditions by which the progressive movement could take up boldly the defense of the American democratic and critical cultural heritage. Yet this has not been done in any effective way, largely because of, in my opinion, what I call above the "bankruptcy" of leadership in the field. And the truth is that present conditions show broad critical, humanist and democratic currents in every field of cultural work, often very unclear in their thinking, and yet opposed to or critical of reactionary or inhuman tendencies. The connection of the Marxist and progressive movements with these currents is very slight. This is true as well of the situation in schools, colleges and universities.

Great mistakes have been made organizationally as well as ideologically. Some years ago, certain forms of bringing creative cultural figures to-

gether regularly, were dissolved. These forms, clubs, etc., had proved to be bad and unworkable. Yet, in dissolving them, the leadership only paid lip-service to the almost unanimous opinion of the people involved that some other forms must be created to bring people working in the arts, together for creative discussions. In this case, the leadership showed, in my opinion, what can be called hypocrisy, with a most destructive effect. In the past, when there was some organization, the leadership made what was in my opinion, the grievous error of paying attention only to the problems of the craft organizations, unions, guilds, etc., of people in the various arts, of the livelihood of the workers in these fields, and of stimulating actions on political issues. Certainly, no one can deny the central importance of such activities. But neglected, and even scornfully attacked by the leadership, was the equally important task of instituting and encouraging a battle of ideas in the realm of culture, a battle of creative work. This frightful error has been compounded in recent years.

A Portrait

I would like to offer a portrait of a Communist leader in the field of cultural work, who I will call Comrade X, although he is a real person, and what follows is based on personal observation.

Comrade X is "known" as the Party "authority" on the arts, philosophy, ideology, etc. He made major reports at conventions, on these topics. He was also an editor of the leading theoretical organ, *Political Affairs*. During the years that he was editor, however, what attention did the magazine give to such matters, which were, according to his reports, of such importance? The answer is, practically none. During these years, the publishing house mainly devoted to Marxist thought in the United States, International Publishers, published



numerous works of importance, on the arts, history, philosophy, etc. What reviews or discussions of these works do we find in all these years, in *Political Affairs*? Practically none, although these works raise profound ideological questions, and PA is supposed to be the guardian and inspirer of ideological growth. The works neglected include major works on American history, and the labor movement, as well as philosophy and the arts. The main exceptions are as follows. When Comrade X writes a pamphlet, it is immediately reviewed, with great and fulsome praise, and sometimes further letters of praise printed in later issues. Also, in two or three cases (in ten years), a book or pamphlet is reviewed three or four years after it originally appeared, since by now it is clear that it has some errors, and PA can confidently and courageously tear it to bits. Why does the situation appear? Is it the lack of competent people to review and discuss such works? That is an obviously ridiculous answer, although it is often used as a subterfuge. The reason, in my opinion, is that Comrade X, who is most courageous in facing outward reactionary forces, has been developing, and encouraged to develop, a great timidity on ideological and inner Marxist questions. Since creative works in the ideological, historical, cultural, philosophical realm, etc., approach new problems, which cannot be answered solely by quotations from past Marxist classics, they move into the realm of the "controversial." Thus they might also have some errors. They might also have some new truths. For Comrade X, or the magazine he edits, to take a position on these matters, may lay himself open to some future accusation of having made an error. And this he must avoid at all costs. He must al-

ways appear unblemished, as the man who made no errors.

In other work than editing, Comrade X plays the same role. His attitude to discussions on anything that may be controversial, is, avoid them at all costs. Don't print them, if they are raised in writing. Don't hold them, if they are meetings or forums. Veto them, postpone them perpetually. Thus avoid trouble. If he is consulted in advance, by some writer or editor who wants an "opinion" on a piece of work, he is known as the "morgue"; in other words, generally nothing is heard about it any more. What is the result? An atmosphere is created in which criticism is carried on in the most un-Marxist, unprincipled and destructive way, namely, through word of mouth, gossip, innuendo, rumor, and similar means through which the poor writer concerned feels helpless, unable to cope with them, or, for that matter, to learn from them.

Comrade X also makes lengthy reports, on culture. How does he prepare them? Since he is generally too immersed in inner-Party matters, he is out of touch with what is going on in the field, and in American life in general. And so he calls in numerous comrades, each a presumed "specialist," to talk with him, and enlighten him. He collates the material, puts it in order, adds his own views, and delivers his report without any mention of the other comrades he had called upon. What does he then do with the report? He sees that it is published. Does he make any attempt to fight for the carrying out of the proposals in his own report? Not that anyone can notice.

Error Hunters

What kind of a person is Comrade X? He is really a fine person, of rich human, intellectual, and even creative qualities. He is, of course, personally responsible for the mistaken attitudes mentioned above. But also deeply responsible is the national leadership of the Communist Party, which knowing these methods of work, encouraged them, instead of encouraging his best qualities. It showed a gross underestimation of, and even

contempt for, cultural work, by this procedure. I wish to say flatly, furthermore, that the entire national educational and ideological leadership of the Party, in these many years, has gotten itself known to be primarily "error hunters," and "error denouncers." Rarely, if ever, do they appear as people doing real creative Marxist thought on a new question. They play a "safe and sane" role; lip-service to creative Marxism, but let others do it, while they denounce the errors. I am not condoning errors. They are always bad. But many times, an error occurs because the writer is attacking a new problem. And in hunting out the errors (sometimes a few years afterwards), the great educational theoretician never seems to be aware that there was a new problem, which had to be coped with, adding some real creative thinking to the solution of it. He or she is satisfied to uphold the pristine purity of the classic formulations, and heroically appear as the defender of them against insidious attempts to undermine them.

This is, I think, a primary reason why, not only in the realm of the arts, but in the realm of culture in the broadest sense, including the entire field of ideas, of superstructure, of philosophy, science (history is, due to some individual's work, something of an exception), we have to so great an extent lost touch with American life, including the progressive currents which always existed and are increasing strength today. And instead of helping to organize vanguard, Marxist work, the tendency has been to disorganize it; to spread far and wide a feeling that freedom to work creatively, is better done alone, or even outside of the organized progressive movement; to orient intellectual leadership on documents from other countries.

The Importance of the Arts

This importance can be seen in the fact that no Marxist party has made achievements in the realm of building or creating the groundwork for building socialism, without paying

major attention to the arts. And this is done in spite of often the most meagre resources, and the most pressing other practical problems, such as building basic industry, and defending the people against military attack.

Why is this so? To beat back the attacks of monopoly capital on the people, to extend the organization and strength of the working class and working people, to fight war, preserve peace, and build socialism, demands science, including the social sciences, economics and history, not art. Only by knowing the real laws of nature, and society, and learning to use them for human progress, can we change the world to better fit human needs. But the point is that we do this to fit human needs, of which the arts are the profound and main spokesman. Thus science and art are like the right and left hands of human progress. We need the arts to answer the attacks on socialism, such as that it is a mechanistic blueprint of society, that it creates an "ant-hill," that it sets up a society which works like a machine, with human beings simply cogs in the wheels. Science gives us the actual laws of our real existence. Art gives us a consciousness of our real existence, in terms of ourselves as human beings, linked to other human beings, with the same miseries, potentialities, troubles and hopes. Science tells us how to change the world, to fit it better to human needs. Art makes us want to do this, by showing what reaction does to human potentialities and values, by breaking down the isolation of peoples from one another, by fostering the kinship of people with common hopes and strengthening them with this knowledge of kinship. Art brings to us, if properly understood, our kinship with the people of the past who have made giant steps in human progress. If science discloses to us "necessity," the laws of the real world, art tells us that each step in mastering these laws is a step to freedom, in terms of the ability of people to live and develop themselves more richly as human beings. The great tradition of the most realistic, critical and progressive art which grew in the struggle of capital-

ism against feudalism, and in the struggles within capitalist society itself, is humanism. Humanism is two things; the appreciation of the richness, powers, potentialities, conflicts, and psychological depth of the individual human being, and the appreciation of the miseries, troubles, problems, and potentialities of others. In other words, it raises the cry of both individual freedom, and the possession of a social mind. It is obvious that wherever reaction has been dominant today, its influence in the arts has been to turn "individual freedom," into the direction of self-centredness, self-pity, and a feeling of impotence, and also to destroy the feelings of confidence in other human beings, of human kinship, to alienate people from one another, to change them from human beings into something resembling animals. Our task is to take up this great tradition of humanism, and to transform it, by showing that the great potentialities that exist for human cooperation on a nation-wide and world scale, potentialities that never existed in past society, now make possible a far greater individual freedom, richness of life, richness of human relations, and growth, than was ever before possible. We cannot say this effectively in scientific terminology. We must say it through art, for the crucial nature of art is that it deals primarily with images, or portrayals of human beings, in their "inner" and "outer" life.

In the fight for peace and democratic progress, against war-mongering, colonialism, hysteria, racism and chauvinism, what better weapon is there than the disclosure of the common humanity of peoples, and common feelings and desires, regardless of nation, race, country, background and past traditions? And if what does this most effectively is of course, common action, around mutual needs, the great and necessary accompanying means must be the arts, which thrive exactly on such truths, and in so doing, touch the heart.

American Road to Socialism

We speak of the "American road to socialism." The American road to

socialism lies in the Declaration of Independence, the War of Independence, the Bill of Rights, the Jackson movement against the power of the banks, the anti-slavery war, the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth amendments to the Constitution, the struggle for women's rights, the growing organizations of labor and farmers, the populist movement, the Socialist Parties, the formation of the Communist Party, the "New Deal" struggles against the monopolies and fascism, the Negro liberation movement, the peace movement, and further developments and transformations. The American road to socialism also, in the same way, lies in the writings of Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow, Melville, Whitman, Mark Twain, Howells, Dreiser, London; in the great political writings of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass; in the paintings of Bingham, Homer, Eakins, Sloan; in innumerable other figures, who have given the growing American nation, and the nationalities within it, a consciousness of themselves, and of the changing kinds of person and human relations growing in American democratic society. They upheld human values against the forces which seemed to be destructive of them, and they boldly tried to discover and put on permanent record what was new and developing in American society. Within them we can find more or less narrowness, more or less confusions, even, in many, racisms, or surrender to despair. We have to appraise them critically, for only in this way can we learn from them. But within them is the precious core, of consciousness of ourselves, in terms of the growth of the past which made the present. And this tradition is the tradition of all the peoples from many lands who, in stream upon stream, came to build American life and civilization. For this was the tradition which they took up, and this was the tradition to which they made creative transformations and contributions.

Let me take up, for example, one of the above figures, Frederick Douglass. It was a great contribution for the Marxist press to have recently published the collected writings, along

with a biography, of Douglass, in four volumes. But what efforts have we made to see that this extraordinary rich heritage of some of the greatest, clearest, sharpest, and most profound American political writing, is part of the consciousness of the progressive movement, and through this, of the American people as a whole? Practically nothing, so far as I can see. Yet I would like to state flatly that some central pillars of the building we call "the American road to socialism" are found in Douglass, who was no Marxist or socialist. I would say that even a rich body of the basis of American Marxist thought, can be found there, even though Douglass did not know it. I mention this as one example.

We speak, truthfully, that the movement for liberation of the Negro people is central to the progress of American democracy, and the defeat of the reactionary forces. We discuss the character, nature, development of the Negro people of the United States, as a nation. Yet I would state flatly that we will never come to clarity on this through economics, and population graphs and statistics alone. We will only master this when an understanding of the music, poetry, sermons, literature, and other art forms, created by the Negro people in America, and of its organic relations to all of American culture, becomes a part of the consciousness of the progressive movement, and of a major part of the American people as a whole. It is not for nothing that the basic Marxist definition of a nation includes culture, as one of the four elements.

We are discussing the need to "know" the American people and our nation as a whole. We will not be able to do this without an attitude to the books, stories, poetry, movies, music and other art works, which tell us, even if often in distorted form, what the people are thinking.

This is not a task exclusively for "cultural specialists" who have special talents and work in various fields, and scholarship is not essential. But the basic elements of cultural life, both of the American past and present, must become part of the thinking of every Communist leader.

Some Proposals

We must destroy the isolation of creative progressive cultural figures, from one another. We must bring them together, in an atmosphere of cooperation. They must be made to feel that the progressive movement is actively interested in what they are doing, and in their difficulties and progress.

We must break down the false opposition between struggles among cultural people, on the economic and political front, and struggles on the creative front; the front of the battle of ideas, and of creative, progressive work. This is a long-standing problem, in which there have been many mistakes, and it won't be solved by words alone.

We must institute, in the press, and progressive magazines, with whatever resources we can muster, an increasingly broad critical coverage of the main trends in the American cultural scene. Only thus can we get a picture of what is doing in the mind of the American people. We must in the process wipe out any parochialism, any "playing of favorites." We cannot afford to make proclamations against "sectarianism," and proceed then, in practice, to be sectarian. We must uphold genuine standards, and show that we uphold them in practice. We must be affectionate to those who have come to the progressive movement, and we must prove that this is a real affection, by being equally affectionate to those who are progressive in mind and heart, but who are distant from the progressive movement. We must encourage and welcome their expressions of opinion of us.

We must formulate a program for American culture, as an organic part of the Party program for American life and progress as a whole. Certainly this will require intense thinking and discussion. I would like to offer some thinking as to what such a program might embody.

1. A resolute uncompromising opposition to all forms of racism in the arts, (including the "popular" arts, so-called); to all attacks on democracy, and democratic society, to direct attacks on the working class, and



working people in general; to attacks on women; to views of life which make violence the essential motivations of human action.

2. A friendly attitude towards such form of art known as "experimental," and which we have sometimes characterized as "formalistic," abstract, subjective, and so on. This does not mean that we agree with such trends, necessarily, or that we hide our disagreement. It means, however, that we enter into friendly discussions, and that we try to encourage within this, ideas that we think are valid. We uphold the right of artists to search for new methods that develop their powers of expression, the only limitation being the points raised in (1).

3. We strive for as broad a knowledge as possible of the great achievements of the arts in the past, in the direction of their humanist qualities, their development of the many tools of art to provide an increasingly sensitive and profound portrayal of reality, in terms of nature, human relations, and the richness of human psychology. We strive to uphold and foster the many-sidedness of this art, and on this basis, to raise questions of trends which, in the name of progress, replace this many-sidedness with one-sidedness, and sacrifice precious tools developed by the history of the arts. We struggle against one-sided trends in the arts today, which try to exercise an open or hidden dictatorship over education and concepts of art.

4. We take up, as a special task, the restoration to general knowledge and appreciation, of the great American democratic and realistic heritage

in the arts, whether literature, music, painting, examining it both critically and appreciatively, and making it the inspiration for further developments of American art.

5. We raise among artists the necessity to be social minds, or in other words, to pay attention to the life of their fellow Americans. We strive for an art which will give the American people a consciousness of themselves, in terms of their real life and relations to one another, their history, and how they are moving to-day.

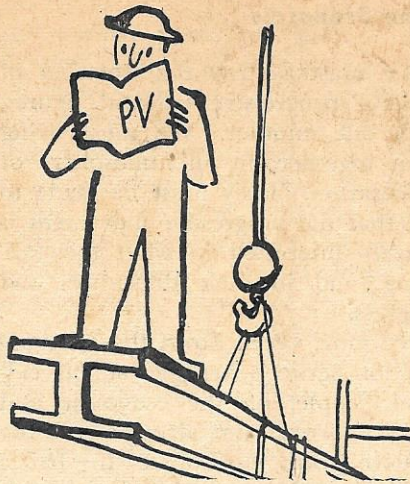
6. We encourage a growing cultural life among the many national groups, and peoples of different national backgrounds, who make up the American people; a cultural life that will develop their rich and particular contributions to American cultural life as a whole, and make their real life, history and character known to the people as a whole.

I would like to close with some thoughts on socialist realism.

There seems to be a trend, in discussions such as those taking place in *The Worker and Masses and Mainstream*, to scorn this concept, along with the general attack on sectarianism, bureaucracy and narrowness. I think this scorn is wrong, although there is nothing eternal about the term "socialist realism" itself, and it may be that another term may prove to be more useful. I think there should be a concept of a vanguard role for creative artists who are responsible Marxists. I will use the term "socialist realism," although it may be, as I say, that some other term may prove to be better.

I can define it best by contrasting sufferings, explain their plight to others, mostly of the middle class. An example is the attitude of Harriet to the main achievements of what may be termed "bourgeois," or "critical" realism, the realism that rose with the rise of capitalism itself, within and then breaking the feudal world.

1. "Critical" realism often portrayed the exploited people, the peasantry, the farmers, the working class, with great sympathy. But it did not create as one of them. It spoke "about" them, tried to commiserate with their



Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to the Negro people. "Socialist realism," or the realism possible today, in dealing with the working people on land or in factories, creates as one of the people themselves. The people recognize themselves, as they know themselves to be, in it. It embraces the morality of the working people, and on this basis, criticizes the "morality" of those who attack or exploit them. It shows the working people with their true depth of psychology. I can cite two of many examples which do this, although the creators did not think of this as "socialist realism." One is John Killens' novel, "Youngblood." Another is the recent drawings and paintings of the Negro people by Charles White.

2. "Critical realism" was able often to look at the past, and see it "historically," that is, in terms of the historical forces moving human beings. An example is Tolstoi's "War and Peace." In dealing with its own times, it could not see as clearly the actual historical forces moving people. "Socialist realism" or the realism possible today, can see its own times with a much more clear understanding of the full social and historical forces operating on its human characters. In other words, realism today can take advantage of the great scientific achievements in understanding the laws of history and society.

3. "Critical" realism tended, in dealing with its own times to summarize social conflicts in terms of the conflicts within one central character, "villain" or "hero." By so doing it of course extended powerfully the abil-

ity of the arts to reflect the richness of the human character, psychology and personality. The realism possible today will, I think move away from the "one central character" concept. It will find it necessary to portray reality in terms of more than one fully developed and rounded character, representing different types, generalizations and movements. Of course, by so doing, it will not make characters more schematic, but will extend further the sensitivity of the arts to the "inner" as well as "outer" life of people.

4. "Critical" realism tended to see "truth" as possible only through "non-partisanship," or by defying the morality and moral precepts of "official society." This was due to the fact that the leading party movements of its time, both those representing "new" and those representing "old," were exploitive, and their morality was often a narrow, hypocritical, class morality. The realism possible today sees partisanship and truth as united. The working people, the exploited, whose interests it defends, also represent the general progress of human society, and have no selfish, greedy or exploitive interests. Consequently a genuine morality, militantly used, can be a basic part of art, for it is a morality which rests on human progress and freedom. This does not mean that "socialist realism" must deal only with the working class. Its field is all classes of society.

5. "Critical" realism tended to choose one form of art over another, because of market place developments, or means of reaching a broad audience; the novel against poetry, the easel painting against mural painting, etc. The realism possible today will tend to use all forms of art, as equally needed by society, and will include among these what are known as the "popular" as well as the "fine art" forms.

I raise this not as a "blue-print," or critical check-list, or model to follow, for even if the above is valid, it represents a goal that will be achieved slowly and painfully. However, only by knowing such goals, can we understand, appreciate, and properly welcome every step in this direction.

S. F.