

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

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## CLASS STRUGGLE POLICY IN THE UNIONS

(Political Committee Draft Resolution)

In recent years class relations have been relatively stable in the United States. Conservative tendencies have maintained their domination over the labor movement. The workers have remained entrapped in the capitalist two-party system. The union bureaucracy has sought to preserve class stability with the hope that American capitalism will remain stable for a long time to come.

Many one-time radicals, softened by prosperity, have abandoned the socialist movement to seek lucrative careers under capitalism. New crops of capitulators have appeared, calling for a "new orientation" toward the "new reality" and sneering at the revolutionary socialists as "political bankrupts" stuck in a "routinist rut."

Social stability is being undermined, however, by the deepening capitalist contradictions that are beginning to disrupt the uneasy balance of power between the antagonistic class forces in America. Conditions are ripening for a major social crisis.

### Class Polarization

The class polarization in this country is probably the greatest that exists anywhere in the world. At the summit of the capitalist social order stands a numerically small class of bankers, industrial overlords and land-owners who hold as their private property the means of production and the natural resources of the nation. Through their monopoly control over social production they have been able to seize the government and use it to advance their private interests at the expense of the population as a whole.

Next appears a social layer of middle class elements whose small private holdings in the means of production face being swallowed up by the monopoly capitalists or reduced in grade. At the same time there is appearing in the ranks of the middle class a growing body of managers, scientists, technicians, lawyers, farmers, etc., who have little or no economic independence from the monopolists. Because of its hybrid character the middle class is incapable of playing any independent political role whatever.

At the base of the social pyramid stands the working class, the producer of all the nation's social wealth. The workers, with their families, constitute a decisive majority of the population. From their key role in industry and their general social weight the workers have acquired a potential power far greater than that of the capitalists.

During the past twenty years the working class has attained far greater cohesiveness and solidarity as it fought to legalize the mass unions through the class struggle. The union movement has made a qualitative leap in both size and scope.

In 1933 organized labor amounted to only a weak craft union force of about two million. Today the combined membership of the AFL, CIO and independent unions is in the neighborhood of 17 million. Of these about ten million are claimed by the AFL which would make it appear that the AFL has around twice the membership of the CIO and a definite majority of the total national union strength.

Although weaker numerically than the AFL, the CIO because of its position in basic industry is predominant in concentrated numbers, influence and social weight. From the start the CIO has functioned as a social movement obliged to contend with the strongest monopoly capitalists. The mass production workers of the CIO are least subject to middle class influences and have produced a decisive change in the composition of the union movement.

Also symbolic of the attractive force of the modern union movement is the fact that a beginning, but only a timid and faltering beginning, has been made in marshalling the working class of the South under the union banner. Implicit in this over-all economic power of the workers at the union level is a decisive revolutionary power at the political level.

### Class War in Industry

With the proclamation of the "right to organize" decree when Roosevelt first became president, workers everywhere, impelled by the deep social crisis of the time, responded to the union slogan "organize the unorganized." A series of fierce battles were soon underway to smash the open shop, improve wages and conditions and establish union control on the job. The first strike wave developed in 1933 but it produced few results because most of the struggles were betrayed by the AFL craft union bureaucrats.

A second strike wave in 1934 proved far more effective. Pitched battles were fought against police, troops and corporation thugs by the Toledo auto workers, Minneapolis truck drivers and West Coast waterfront workers, with the unions emerging victorious all along the line. The Minneapolis and Toledo struggles were led by cadres of the Socialist Workers Party and SWP elements played a prominent role in the waterfront struggle. These strikes, born of a fusion of rank and file militancy with class struggle leadership, were models for the struggles to come and signalled a turning point in battering down the bureaucratic restraints.

A floodtide of organization followed, culminating in the rise of the CIO and the powerful 1937 strike wave in basic industry that suffered a major setback only in Little Steel. In these battles the workers came up with ingenious new methods of combat, especially the technique of the sit-down strike, a demonstration in itself of the revolutionary potential of the working class.

A fourth wave of strikes in 1941 retrieved the 1937 defeat in Little Steel, conquered Ford's open-shop fortress and brought the captive mines of the steel corporations under union control. Immediately thereafter the United States entered the war and the union bureaucrats unanimously made a no-strike pledge and accepted a wage freeze.

War-time prices rose, taxes increased but wages stood still. By 1943 the coal miners were in open revolt against the wage freeze and they broke it through a bitterly fought series of strikes with the Stalinist finks supporting Roosevelt's strikebreaking attack on the miners' union. Inspired by the miners' example workers throughout basic industry began to protest the no-strike pledge and demand wage increases. When V-J Day came another great strike wave developed.

This series of strike struggles demonstrated several vital political facts: The workers showed their readiness to assault the great corporations and stand up against strikebreaking attacks by the capitalist government. In the sit-down strikes the workers taught the capitalists, if not the union bureaucrats, that they have no respect for capitalist claims to private property rights in industry. The proven ability of the unions to halt production has given the workers great self-confidence. They have become socially transformed to the highest level of union consciousness. This was made clear by the war veterans who employed union methods to force their speedy demobilization after V-J Day, brushed aside the war-time anti-union propaganda of the military brass hats and took their place in the forefront of the 1945-46 picket lines.

Still another decisive political fact has been demonstrated: The capitalist reaction to nation-wide strikes involving whole sections of basic industry, which arose as a necessary component of the economic struggle of the CIO workers, have made it impossible for the workers to defend their interests through economic action alone.

Every big strike quickly becomes a national political issue with the government intervening against the workers. Every major struggle of the workers becomes elevated into a political struggle. Strikes won on the picket line are soon lost on the political arena because of the false policies of the union leadership. A glaring contradiction has therefore developed between the social power of the workers and their lack of independent political organization.

Implicit in the rise of the CIO was a titanic social struggle over who shall rule, the capitalist class or the working class. Labor has failed however to employ its power at the union level as a springboard for independent class political action as the dynamics of the fundamental conflict required. This political failure has enabled the capitalist class to use its control of the government for an attack on the workers' union fortress. That attack has never let up since passage of the Taft-Hartley Act.

### Workers Sense Political Needs

The workers sense that strikes have today become political class battles. As a result they hesitate to walk out unless they see a clear chance for some gains or find strike action necessary to beat off a corporation attack. The workers are today searching for forms through which they may express their class political sentiments. In their own fashion they are beginning to act along class lines in national politics.

They tend to vote more and more as a bloc, following as a class a false "lesser evil" course of support to the Democratic Party. The mass search for forms of political action also finds distorted expression in the capitalist party primaries, as in the recent California elections where Tenney the witch-hunter was defeated and Condon the witch-hunted nominated.

Despite the absence of their own mass party the workers find themselves compelled to take some interest in the broad political questions of the day. In their consciousness as a class lurks the disturbing knowledge of their direct experience with capitalist crisis

in a great depression and two world wars. In their travels abroad as part of the imperialist armed forces they have gotten a first-hand look at the colonial revolution, the socialist aspirations of the European workers, the utter viciousness of fascism as an anti-labor force. Hence there is today a greater potential for organized opposition to capitalist foreign policy. The workers are also becoming more aware that their unions, their democratic rights, their standard of living are the prime targets of capitalist domestic policy. In both spheres, foreign and domestic, they are becoming more critical of the ruling powers above them.

The real drift of class sentiment cannot be judged by manifestations at the top of the union movement or by the failure of the workers to attend union meetings made dreary by a bankrupt policy. In the past the workers responded immediately to leadership that had some grasp of their needs and showed some will and ability to fight. That same capacity for battle remains very much present in the working class today. What is needed to gain new response is a class struggle program and leadership. Given that key the workers will leap onto the political arena as an independent class force with the same sweep and power they displayed in building the modern union movement.

### Bureaucratic Misleadership

At the head of the union movement stands a conservative bureaucracy that acts as a conscious agent of the capitalist government and is utterly devoid of any independent working class program or aims. Having long existed in the old craft union AFL, a bureaucratic formation of this type was introduced into the CIO from the start. The integration of the Social-Democrats into the CIO leadership strengthened the grip of the bureaucracy by giving it new weapons of social demagogy with which to divert sentiment for independent labor political action back into capitalist political channels.

In collective bargaining the bureaucrats are concerned, not with how much the workers need, but with how little they can be forced to accept. A quest for "fringe benefits" has been substituted for a fighting wage policy. New piece-rate outrages and a stiffer speedup are accepted in return for stingy health, welfare and pension plans. The auto workers have been saddled with a five-year contract during which period the Korean war has come and gone, automation has cut big slices in manpower requirements, a sagging economy has precipitated heavy layoffs and yet the workers still must wait until 1955 for new contract negotiations.

"Unauthorized" strikes are ruthlessly put down by the bureaucrats in open collaboration with the corporations and the government. In the steel industry the workers have witnessed the obscene spectacle of the CIO union president, David J. McDonald, making a "good will" tour of the plants with one of the labor-hating steel barons, Benjamin Fairless. But the greatest betrayal of all is the political alliance the union bureaucrats have sought to make with the capitalist ruling power.

The line of the CIO officials is to compete with the monopoly capitalists for the friendly support of the government. They have relied on government intervention in collective bargaining and on

social legislation to improve wages, hours and general conditions. In return they have supported the government's imperialist war program and helped to maintain the capitalist two-party political monopoly. Under the pressures of the developing social crisis, the AFL officials have gradually teamed up with the CIO heads in attempting to carry out this policy.

Although the government has given the bureaucrats precious few social concessions, it has become ever more demanding of them. Above all they are required to serve as political police within the labor movement, ferreting out opponents of the imperialist war program and advocates of socialism. These government demands serve to sharpen and intensify the natural inclinations of the bureaucrats to suppress democracy within the unions.

The existing bureaucracy was able to fasten its parasitic grip on the industrial unions primarily because of the Stalinist corruption in the labor movement. The Stalinists miseducated and demoralized many of the best worker-militants and destroyed the great opportunity to build a mass revolutionary party that arose during the radicalization of the Thirties.

As the CIO took form the Stalinists were shifting toward a Peoples Front line calculated to influence the foreign policy of the American government toward friendly relations with the Kremlin. Thus the Communist Party followed a political line like that of the new CIO bureaucracy, although for different basic reasons. Like the old-line union bureaucrats and the Social-Democratic lackeys of capitalism, the Stalinists therefore found it natural to join in the suppression of rank and file democracy insofar as they could do so without cutting their own throats.

Apart from the brief interlude of the Stalin-Hitler pact, the CP lived within the CIO bureaucracy on the basis of a pro-Roosevelt line from the rise of the CIO movement through World War II. When the cold war began the imperialist-minded CIO bureaucrats turned on the Stalinists, driving them into an isolation from which they are today trying to recover through a new Peoples Front turn.

#### The Labor-Democratic Coalition

The attempt of the union officialdom to forge an alliance with the capitalist government has taken the political form of a coalition with the Democratic Party. Unlike the old Gompers practice, the CIO heads have followed a more organized course of action. In the 1936 presidential elections the CIO formed Labor's Non-Partisan League, and in New York state the American Labor Party was launched, in an effort to divert the workers' political strength into the framework of Democratic Party politics. After the elections the LNPL was allowed to disintegrate but the ALP remained in existence.

In the 1942 elections the Republicans made gains as many workers abstained from voting in protest against the policies of the Democrats. To corral dissident workers and lead them back into support of the Democrats, the CIO bureaucracy organized the PAC in 1943. Efforts were redoubled to palm off PAC as a form of independent labor political action when mounting opposition to Roosevelt's war-time

domestic policies gave rise to the Michigan Commonwealth Federation, a tentative step by the auto workers in the direction of a labor party. The PAC, of course, remained controlled from the top, supported capitalist candidates and generally functioned as a vote-getting agency for the Democratic Party. It was not until the Taft-Hartley attack came in 1947 that the AFL leadership finally followed the CIO example and created Labor's League for Political Education as a factional weapon within the Democratic Party.

Whether they know it or not the shift in class relationships has thus brought the union officialdom a step closer to independent labor politics. They will find themselves compelled to take even further steps in that direction under the pressures of the sustained capitalist attack that has been going on now for eight years and is becoming bolder and more vicious all the time.

### The Capitalist Offensive

When the 1945-46 strike wave erupted the union leadership responded by settling the strikes with whatever corporation concessions they could get through government mediation, sought to put a damper on rank and file militancy and looked to the Democratic administration to help them out of their difficulties. The monopolists, however, had decided the government must drop its mask of neutrality and settle down to some good old-fashioned strikebreaking and union busting. Under their pressure Truman ordered a strike-breaking government seizure of the railroads and went to the courts to slap a \$3,500,000 fine on the striking miners union.

A lynch-labor campaign was launched by the capitalist propaganda organs. The Republicans captured the Congress in 1946 and under Taft's leadership opened a legislative assault on the unions. The strike gains were wiped out by scuttling price controls and weakening rent controls. The Taft-Hartley law was passed and Truman used its injunction provisions to attack strike after strike.

Democrats and Republicans teamed up behind the bipartisan cold-war policy as a general witch hunt was launched by the Truman administration. The workers became disoriented and the consequent recession in their militancy strengthened the conservative elements in the unions enabling them to take the offensive against the left wing.

The balance sheet as the 1948 elections approached showed many capitalist successes. Strike struggles had been discouraged. Confusion and fear created by the Taft-Hartley law was crippling the fighting power of the unions. Red baiting was on the increase in labor's ranks, reactionary coalitions were seizing union office and the militants were becoming isolated.

Yet the capitalists paid a price for this partial victory. They were forced to reveal their aims of crippling the unions, curbing civil rights, drifting toward police rule and cutting down labor's living standards. This alarmed the masses, created a new wave of resistance and caused the monopolists a temporary setback.

### Unstable Interlude

Repelled by the Democratic administration's assault on the unions, the workers were on the lookout for a new means of political expression. The existence of a large body of radicalized workers was indicated by the big following attracted in the early days of the Wallace movement. Wallace, who favored a deal with the Kremlin, had left the Truman cabinet in a dispute over foreign policy. With Stalinist support he had assumed the leadership of the newly established Progressive Party.

Inside the Democratic Party the liberal-labor wing, feeling the mass pressure and alarmed over the Wallace-Stalinist threat, pressed for liberalization of administration policy. Truman responded to the pressure and launched a campaign of unrestrained social demagoguery in the 1948 presidential elections through which he stole Wallace's thunder on domestic issues. Although the Dixiecrats bolted the Democratic ticket, Truman was swept back into office and in the first flush of victory uttered his one true statement of the campaign -- "Labor did it."

The two-party system had been saved for the time being, the Democratic Party had become revitalized and the leftward swing of the workers retarded. This opportunity was seized by the CIO bureaucrats to clean house on the Stalinists as the climax to a series of moves that graphically revealed their slavish service to the imperialist government.

When Wallace broke with Truman over foreign policy and made his alliance with the Stalinists, the CIO officials invited Secretary of State Marshall to speak at the 1947 CIO convention where they launched a sharp attack on the Stalinists. In the 1948 elections the CIO Executive Board ordered all affiliated unions to support Truman and outlawed support of Wallace.

In 1948 the imperialist government launched its Smith Act thought-control attack against the Communist Party. The CIO leadership chose the occasion to prepare the expulsion of several affiliated unions where the Stalinists played prominent roles. This high-handed act of expelling entire unions because of the political views in the leadership marked a new stage in the bureaucratization of the industrial union movement.

Because of their key role in reelecting Truman and their lackey-like support to the government in expelling the Stalinists, the union bureaucrats figured they were entitled to greater recognition from the administration. They were further impelled to make demands by new pressures arising from the ranks, especially after the imperialist debacle in the Korean war following the Chinese intervention.

The United Labor Policy Committee had been specially created to do business with the administration. In February 1951 it ordered a general walkout of labor representatives from their war mobilization posts in government. The ULPC correctly charged that labor representation was only window dressing in a Big-Business dominated mobilization program that was being aimed against labor. They demanded genuine economic relief and social protection for the workers and above all a place for the union bureaucrats in the governmental



power structure; but they quickly settled for a few administrative changes to speed up the functioning of the wage-control board. The bureaucratic hacks went back to their government jobs as recruiting sergeants for the imperialist assault on the Korean revolution.

### The Rupture of the Coalition

The basic problems of the workers remained unsolved, as did those of the middle class who had hoped the labor leaders would do something to help them as well as the workers. In fact the CIO has from its birth had great attraction for the "little people" of the country. Middle class hopes for social improvement had soared when labor took the offensive after V-J Day. Small merchants, professional people and similar elements eagerly supported the strikers. A national committee of publicly-prominent middle class figures supported the long General Motors strike.

When the union bureaucracy succeeded in diverting the union struggle back into the old class-collaborationist channels they left the middle class as well as the workers caught in the vise of exorbitant costs and inadequate income. Losing hope in a solution under labor's leadership the middle class began a shift toward the Republicans. A yearning arose among them for a strong man who could solve the economic puzzle.

In 1952 the Republicans provided such a candidate in Eisenhower. He was paraded as the conqueror of the Nazis, a strong man and yet a man of the people, just an old country boy from Kansas. Varnished up with demagogic misrepresentation of the imperialist war policy, this line won Eisenhower the election.

With his coming to office a change occurred in the form and method of capitalist rule. Government under the Democrats in an informal coalition with the labor bureaucracy was replaced by open monopoly capitalist control. Eisenhower appointed a cabinet of multi-millionaires. Their philosophy was summed up by Defense Secretary Wilson when he told the Senate, "What's good for General Motors is good for America."

For a time an aspiring "labor statesman," Martin Durkin of the AFL, provided window dressing to the anti-labor cabinet as Secretary of Labor, but the assault on the unions soon made it impossible for him to remain. He was replaced by an open representative of capital.

### Union-Busting Under Eisenhower

Eisenhower quickly abolished the price controls that had been reinstated during the Korean war and finished the job of scuttling federal rent control. Enforcement funds for the minimum wage and child labor laws were cut. Legislation was initiated to shift more of the tax burden from the rich to the poor.

Eisenhower signalled the anti-labor attack by proclaiming the Taft-Hartley law "basically sound." A drive quickly began to institute a government-supervised secret ballot in strike votes, to authorize anti-union "brainwashing" by the employers and to sanctify the "right not to organize." The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that "disloyalty to the employer" constitutes legal grounds for discharge.

Vigorous efforts were set in motion to pass a "states rights" provision authorizing unrestrained enactment of anti-labor laws in the state legislatures.

The administration has introduced a bill to outlaw "communist-infiltrated" unions and has called for extension of the "loyalty" purge into every business establishment holding government contracts. Congressional committees and the military brass are deepening the witch hunt in industry to set the stage for a direct assault on the unions.

Victims of the witch hunters are fired by the corporations as they busily prepare their own "subversive" lists of union militants. They will make full use of Eisenhower's directive whereby workers can be ruled a "security risk" on framed-up charges of drunkenness, recklessness, immorality, mental instability and similar fantastic grounds.

Still another government attack is aimed straight at the union bureaucrats through fishing expeditions to uncover financial irregularities and income tax violations. The object being to probe for financial scandals among vulnerable union officials as a wedge to impose government supervision of union funds used for strikes and political action.

### The Fascist Menace

In this witch-hunting atmosphere a new fascist menace has arisen that implies a tendency to extend the attack beyond anti-labor legislation and "loyalty" purges in the form of direct action against labor. Fascism has as its fundamental aim and purpose demolition of the unions, annihilation of democratic rights and destruction of all social reforms.

Monopoly capitalism is fully conscious that serious social reform is impossible under the capitalist system. Yet it helps to encourage the illusion that basic reforms are possible so long as it can afford to grant enough minor concessions to permit the class collaborationists to maintain their grip over the labor movement. However, when labor develops serious organized power and begins to struggle for serious demands, sections of the capitalist class begin to pose the question of taking the fascist road.

Such was the case when the CIO sit-down strikes of the Thirties posed a serious threat to capitalist private property. Fascist demagogues like Coughlin and Hague entered the political arena with a certain amount of capitalist backing. Again during the 1945-46 strike wave Gerald L. K. Smith opened a fascist offensive with some capitalist support. Although these fascist manifestations proved premature they heralded a threat that labor will have to face.

Today a new fascist menace has arisen, represented by a coalition of anti-labor, race-hating elements polarized around Senator McCarthy. At present the fascist senator maintains a studied silence on the labor question, preferring to employ an oblique attack. His real views are already on record, however, from his 1946 proposal to draft the striking miners and if they still refused to work have them court-martialed and shot. Nobody took McCarthy seriously in 1946

but such is the mentality of the man who heads the most serious fascist threat yet to appear in this country.

McCarthy has not yet received the go-ahead sign from the main sections of the capitalist class. They are not yet sure that it is necessary or that the time is ripe to hit the fascist road on an all-out basis. Nevertheless, the McCarthyite movement has serious capitalist backing. It is growing in mass support among the middle class elements who turn toward fascism when labor fails to give them leadership. And the McCarthyites are making headway through the deepening of the anti-labor witch hunt on which they thrive.

McCarthy's skillful exploitation of his key position in the Senate has brought him into conflict with the Eisenhower administration in what has the surface appearance of a dispute over definition of the executive and legislative powers in government. In reality the Eisenhower-McCarthy dispute results from a faction fight within the capitalist class over how it can best carry out the imperialist war program. The main issue is: can war be conducted with the present form of government under an Eisenhower or must a fascist dictatorship be attempted under a McCarthy? Both factions are agreed that labor must be curbed. The dispute is over how to do the curbing.

#### Democratic Medicine Man

Among the liberal capitalist politicians and labor bureaucrats some recognize McCarthyism as a fascist threat, others don't. All seem more or less agreed that it must be fought. Yet they begin by proclaiming their solidarity with the government attack on the capitalist-invented "communist danger," thereby conceding McCarthy's main premise for his fascist drive.

The liberal-labor coalition proposes to solve the McCarthyite problem through a series of "lesser evil" maneuvers: Support Eisenhower as against McCarthy on the issues of the day. Strengthen the Democrats in Congress in the 1954 elections. Restore Democratic control of the administration in 1956 and return to the New Deal-Fair Deal era.

In line with this strategy one of the leading Democratic medicine men, Adlai Stevenson, in a recent speech both deplored McCarthyism and pronounced socialism "obsolete." He boasted that the Democrats had "narrowed the gap between the rich and the poor," calling attention to the anti-trust laws and social security measures. These, he predicted, represent only a preview of the bounties to come under the Democrats.

Then Stevenson gave the lie to his whole speech when he said, "Instead of isolation our policy is total involvement." In that remark he assured the capitalists that the needs of their war program would be placed above all other interests.

The imperialist war program excludes any possibility of social reforms. Instead it requires a driving down of mass living standards. Any curtailment of war production, on the other hand, will increase unemployment because neither the pump-priming of the Thirties nor the war spending since has overcome a single basic cause of crashes like 1929. Unemployment is already mounting in the midst of

large-scale arms production. Like a dope addict, the capitalist economy must have ever larger doses of artificial stimulant to prevent a breakdown.

Capitalism faces either catastrophic war or catastrophic depression. In neither case can capitalism grant any major concessions to the masses. Therefore the monopoly capitalists feel compelled to cripple the fighting power of the unions and try to destroy them entirely. In fact the basic aim of the all-out campaign to elect Eisenhower was to turn the clock back to the pre-CIO days.

Election of a Democratic administration would not alter the fundamental anti-labor course of the government. As the executive of the monopoly capitalist class a Stevenson would have to carry out the same basic policies as an Eisenhower.

Abundant proof of this fact exists in recent history. There have been no important social reforms since Roosevelt fully unveiled the New Deal as the War Deal. The trend has been the other way. Truman campaigned in 1948 on promises to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act and grant social concessions to labor. After his reelection he slapped a new wage-freeze on the workers and left the anti-labor law on the books.

Roosevelt laid the legal basis for the "loyalty" purge in government through the 1939 Hatch Act. His administration put through the 1940 Smith Act and in 1941 victimized 18 Socialist Workers Party and CIO Truckdrivers Union leaders under this thought-control law. The "subversive list" and other witch-hunting refinements were added under Truman.

The consistent practice of the Democrats has been to make illusory "welfare state" promises to get elected and then carry out police state methods when they get into office.

#### Popular Front Illusions

Yet the politically bankrupt labor bureaucracy, being incapable of fashioning new methods of struggle, continues to pin all of labor's hopes on the restoration of the Democratic Party to power. In this aim they are now criminally aided and abetted by the Communist Party.

The issue, according to the Stalinists, is not socialism or capitalism but democracy or fascism. They call for a coalition under the two-party system with all capitalists who are "opposed to the McCarthyite program of fascism and war."

The Stalinists are vigorously pushing this disruptive line in the unions, seeking at the same time to curry favor with the right wing bureaucracy as specialists in fighting left-wing advocates of independent labor political action. Thus a trend is set in motion toward a united front of the right wing and the Stalinists on a political line that violates every fundamental need of the workers.

This trend can be expected to make headway for a while because of the Popular Front mood among the workers. The coalition line will also find support among middle class elements who are disappointed in Eisenhower but do not wish to go over to McCarthy. This mass mood

is reflected in the recent Democratic election victories. Support to the Democrats flows from opposition to the Eisenhower regime, illusions that the Democrats can make good on their "welfare state" promises and lack of another vehicle for mass political expression.

Manifestations like the CIO-sponsored slate of independent candidates in the recent Newark elections are still rare. The tendency among the union officials is to demand a greater voice in the selection of Democratic candidates. This course has led to union challenges of machine candidates in Democratic primary elections and the CIO action in Newark may have been largely intended as pressure on the Democratic machine in the same general sense.

The notion of labor reforming the Democratic Party in this manner is bound to meet with response among the workers. It will take a certain amount of experience for them to learn that labor can't reform a capitalist party, that the workers will remain on a political dead-end street until they form their own independent class party.

While combatting the mistaken idea that labor can make any progress by working as an organized faction inside the Democratic Party, the revolutionary socialists must at the same time give critical support to independent labor candidacies, using the independent candidacies to hammer home the labor party idea as was correctly done in the Newark elections.

#### Contradictory Pressures

A trend toward independent labor political action is bound to arise out of the contradictory pressures of the present period. Capitalist policy toward the unions has undergone a fundamental shift from the class appeasement of the early New Deal era toward harsh class repression in preparation for a counter-revolutionary third world war. Although some carry-overs from the former period still exist, the capitalists are today preparing bigger and bigger pills of repression for the workers with less and less sugar-coating of appeasement.

Labor's consciousness of this fundamental shift in reality has lagged seriously behind the march of events. This lag has been most pronounced among the union bureaucrats whose false political policy, arising from their social function as a class-collaborationist agency within the labor movement, has served to drug the political class consciousness of the rank and file. Those who see conservatism among the workers as the cause of their political backwardness are therefore wrongfully blaming the workers for the criminal policies of their leaders.

Disoriented by the union officialdom, the workers still hope to protect and improve their standard of living through continuation of the labor-Democratic coalition. Yet it would be a great mistake to think that the workers' present standard of living has so thoroughly conservatized them that the capitalists and union bureaucrats can lead them around by the nose. All semblance of complacency in the union ranks will give way to militancy the moment their conditions of life become seriously impaired. The workers don't consider their

present standard of living a gift from big-hearted capitalists. They feel they are entitled to whatever they have and they will fight to keep it.

Evidence is already mounting of changing conditions that will arouse the workers to greater consciousness of today's fundamental reality and impel them toward class action. The Korean truce precipitated an economic downturn that soon thrust at least five million people into unemployment according to union estimates. Millions more suffered a reduction in take-home pay through loss of overtime and reductions in the work week at reduced pay.

Inflationary prices are decimating the workers' savings. They are in debt for homes, cars, TV sets and other things they consider necessities that have been bought on the installment plan. Thus unemployment means for them a plunge toward pauperization that will begin even before their meager unemployment compensation has run out. Consequently there has been a sensitive mass reaction to the first signs of depression danger, a change in the workers' mood has been noted, especially where unemployment has struck the hardest.

During World War II and again in the Korean war the workers reacted sensitively to encroachments on their living standards. Pressures from this source played a role in emboldening the United Labor Policy Committee to make its brief and ill-starred 1951 protest against the war mobilization policy. Adverse pressures on their living conditions thus tend to arouse worker criticism of government policy in both the foreign and domestic fields.

The recent years of relative prosperity have not generated mass confidence in the future. People were made crisis-conscious and fearful of the future by the 1929 crash and its aftermath. Although the masses are not yet fully aware of the fact, they are losing faith in capitalism and are sensitive to the need for action in defense of their interests.

This is manifest in the workers' tendency to engage in "wild cat" strikes against the will of the union bureaucrats and in defiance of them. The well-organized and skillfully-conducted 1953 "wild cat" strike of the Lackawanna steel workers represented a significant sign of the times.

Strikes that the union officials will have to support can be expected in the period ahead. Depression conditions and rising unemployment weaken labor's ability to defend itself through production stoppages. The corporations will seek to take advantage of this situation through strike provocations intended to pave the way for strikebreaking attacks on the unions. Such attempts to smash the unions will provoke fierce worker resistance.

A preview of the modern workers' ability to stand up against union-busting pressure has been given in the case of the campaign to smash the International Longshoremen's Association on the East Coast after it was expelled from the AFL. The ILA has managed to defend itself against the combined assault of the AFL officialdom, the city, state and federal governments, the courts and the vast capitalist propaganda machine.

Through Taft-Hartley injunctions ILA members and officers were fined and jailed and the union's treasury was impounded. Gangster penetration into the union was sensationalized by the press. Union officials were brought to trial on charges of financial irregularities. And a "subversive" smear was manufactured against the organization.

Despite this all-out attack the ILA won two successive union representation elections against the AFL challenge. The reason is simple: The longshoremen know they must have a union. They looked the situation over and decided the ILA remained the best bet for them despite its weaknesses. So they supported the ILA picket lines and voted ILA in the elections.

In this story of the ILA will be found the workers' answer to the union-busting assaults now in preparation by the capitalists and their government. The American workers understand that they must have unions to protect their interests and nobody is going to take their unions away from them.

### Explosive Character of Contradictions

Beneath the preliminary class-struggle manifestations now rising to the surface lie a whole series of fundamental contradictions. The workers represent the greatest social force in the nation, yet the capitalists rule to the detriment of the workers' interests. Although possessors of vast potential power the unions are rendered impotent because of a wrong political program that entangles them in the capitalist net. The union bureaucracy resorts to suppression of internal democracy in order to put down opposition to its false policies in the ranks. As a result the nation is drifting toward fascism under capitalist rule at a time when socialism has become historically necessary and a realistic perspective for the present epoch.

The irreconcilable contradiction of interests between the workers and capitalists is leading toward political differentiation of the two classes for a showdown fight. Naked political preparation for an all-out capitalist attack against labor has taken the form of a fascist crystallization around McCarthy. Political polarization of the working class has developed in the form of a tendency to choose between capitalist candidates as a class and a tendency to intervene as a labor faction inside the Democratic Party.

There will be ups and downs in this political development. But under the impact of capitalist crisis political collaboration between labor and capital will become less and less tenable. Since the 1934-37 strike struggles independent labor political action has become an imperative class necessity. Twenty years delay in the realization of this political necessity has produced a whole new complex of pressures culminating in the rise of the most dangerous fascist threat yet to appear. The fundamental antagonism between capital and labor will thus have an increasingly explosive effect on class relations and the political backwardness of the workers will be swiftly overcome under the pressure of necessity.

The revolutionary upsurge that will come with mass labor politicalization will far surpass in scope and tempo the power drive of the Thirties to build the unions. Once the dam of political class-colla-

boration breaks, the two-party system will crumble and the final showdown will begin between the power of monopoly capitalism and the greater power of the working class.

When the mass radicalization comes the workers will use their unions as the foundation on which to build their own party, combining their organized economic power with organized political power. The fight for leadership of the radicalized workers will therefore begin as a fight for leadership of the unions. For that reason the trade union question is the key question of revolutionary politics in the United States. The militancy of the workers must be fused with a revolutionary leadership bringing class consciousness and a spirit of determined struggle into the union movement.

In the coming radicalization the struggle of tendencies will have the double aspect of a fight for leadership of the vanguard and of the broad mass movement. The contest will occur between three forces: the union bureaucracy, the Stalinists and the Socialist Workers Party. Of these tendencies only the SWP will constitute a vital historic force. Neither the union bureaucrats nor the Stalinists have any progressive historical mission, both are transitory obstacles to be overcome on the road to socialism.

The union bureaucracy has in the past drawn its main strength from the ability of capitalism to grant the workers concessions that served to stabilize a labor aristocracy on which the bureaucracy rested. At the present advanced stage of capitalist crisis the ruling class has less ability to make concessions to the workers and is preparing to take away those previously yielded. The labor aristocracy will thus begin to lose its privileges. Differentiations will take place within the aristocracy and find their reflex in the bureaucracy itself. Demands for class struggle policies will mount among the least privileged and most dynamic union elements.

The sharpening class antagonisms will reverse the effects of the union officialdom's tie-up with the capitalist state. From its former role as a source of bureaucratic strength this tie-up will become converted into a source of weakness that will lead to the bureaucracy's downfall. Therefore our union work must be firmly based on an understanding of the transient nature of the stability presently manifested by the union bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy on which it rests.

Stalinism plays a disorienting role in the union movement, contaminating the class consciousness of the workers with a class-collaborationist line dressed up in radical language and seeking to restrain them from independent class action. An attempt is being made by the American Stalinists to lead the workers into the same fatal course that brought defeat to the European workers at the hands of the fascists. This time, however, the treacherous line of the Stalinists will not prevail because the SWP will meet them head-on in irreconcilable political combat.

In the pending struggle of tendencies the SWP has an excellent chance to win leadership of the vanguard and the radicalized mass movement. Our surest guarantee will be the party cadres forged in the unions, class-conscious fighters armed with a powerful revolutionary-socialist program meeting the historic needs of the workers.



### Transitional Program

Our perspectives must flow from the maximum possibilities inherent in the new opportunities to arouse the masses against the fascist threat growing out of the war-depression nature of capitalism. Leftward-moving elements in the mass movement must be imbued with the correctness and inevitability of our socialist program. We must note all signs of a shift in mood among the workers, respond sensitively to mass initiative and support every demand that will tend to draw the workers into politics as an independent force.

The party must demonstrate in action the correctness of its policies, its ability to provide mass leadership in struggle. Side-line commentators and critics can never become mass leaders. The workers will listen only to those who are themselves in the thick of the fight, those who demonstrate by deeds their ability to lead.

Our strategic task is to overcome the contradiction between the fully-matured conditions for independent labor political action and the political immaturity of the working class. A transitional programmatic construction is required to bridge the gap between the present demands of the workers and the full revolutionary-socialist program. That requirement is basically fulfilled by the Transitional Program of 1938 which the convention reaffirms in its fundamental line.

On the key question of war a correct transitional policy must be composed of two elements: an uncompromising opposition to imperialist war and an anti-war program based on the experiences of the masses themselves. The need for anti-imperialist solidarity between the American workers and the masses abroad can be demonstrated through examples like the United Fruit Company's role in Guatemala. A parallel can be drawn between the capitalist government's counter-revolutionary intervention in support of the American corporations against the workers abroad and its strikebreaking intervention in support of the corporations against the workers here at home. An identity is thereby established between the slogans "Hands off the unions" and "Hands off the colonial and social revolutions."

Employment of American troops abroad can be shown to have the same fundamental aim as does their use as strikebreakers in this country. The slogan "Withdraw the troops" thus has the same basic meaning with respect to Europe and Asia as it would have in regard to a miners strike in Harlan County.

Once these fundamentals are recognized the necessity of taking the war-making powers away from the capitalist government will become clear to the workers. They will respond to the demand, "Let the people vote on war," as a class demand, as a step toward taking the ruling power away from the capitalist class.

In combatting the second big threat under capitalism -- unemployment -- we raise as the key immediate demand: a shorter work week with no reduction in pay, popularly translated as a 30-hour week with 40 hours pay. This demand has been adopted in principle by the AFL convention and many CIO unions.

In auto and steel, however, the bureaucracy has sought to suppress the 30-40 demand in favor of a guaranteed annual wage scheme to be established at some indefinite future time. We too support the idea of a guaranteed full income for the workers on an uninterrupted basis, but the proposals in question neither provide that guarantee nor assure reemployment for workers now being laid off. The 30-40 demand on the other hand would tend to keep down unemployment and provide jobs for some already laid off, at least until the economic crisis deepens.

Other immediate demands we should raise include: Unemployment compensation equal to full trade union wages for the entire period of unemployment. Large-scale public works on socially-useful and necessary projects. Cancel all war appropriations and use these funds instead to build homes, schools, hospitals. Repeal the sales tax, the wage tax and the hidden taxes on consumer goods. Tax the monopoly corporations, banks and real estate trusts to provide government funds. Cancel all political restrictions on trade with the USSR, China, etc., which would help to reduce unemployment. Although the Stalinists raise the trade question as a cure-all, neither this nor any other measure short of socialism can overcome the capitalist crisis.

In industries like textile, where depression conditions have become chronic, demands should be raised for the opening of idle and partially idle plants under workers control with the government providing the necessary funds. As the economic crisis deepens this demand, tied up with the labor party question, should be extended throughout industry.

It is the duty of the unions to mobilize the unemployed, make special organizational provisions for them within the union structure and lead the fight in their interests. However, the unemployed must not be segregated in the unions in a manner that would deny them their full voice in matters of union policy. Specific provisions for unemployed members will vary from union to union according to practical circumstances. The basic approach in every case must be to cut through all routine and find a solution that will safeguard the democratic rights of the unemployed.

If the unions fail to meet their responsibility to the unemployed and the unorganized there will be grave danger of worker elements falling into the hands of fascist demagogues. From the first appearance of fascist types like Coughlin to the rise of McCarthyism, the SWP has been the first to warn against this danger to labor.

Once the workers understood the danger our call to action against the fascists evoked a mass response. Time will bring a similar response in the fight against McCarthyism, but it would be a mistake to attempt the substitution of limited vanguard forces for genuine mass action.

It is an even worse mistake, however, for union leaders to give the fascists the silent treatment. It is sedition for them to cooperate with fascist-minded witch hunters and shirk defense of their worker victims. It is treason to use invasion of the unions by Congressional committees as a cover for a bureaucratic assault on local

union autonomy as Reuther has done against the Ford and Chevrolet workers.

Labor should follow the example of the San Francisco longshoremen. When the Velde committee came to town they denounced it as an enemy of labor. Longshoremen called before the committee refused to testify and the union backed them up with a protest strike and a mass demonstration against the hearings. Inspired by the longshoremen, opposition to the Velde gang arose throughout the area and they were forced to beat a retreat. Every act of aggression against labor must be met by a similar union counter-attack.

Organized labor must smash through the barriers of repressive legislation to mobilize under its leadership the employed and unemployed, the organized and unorganized. Class struggle actions must be launched in opposition to fascism and in defense of the economic and social interests of the masses.

More than a million youth just graduated from school to meet "No Help Wanted" signs in industry. Insecurity under pressure of the capitalist crisis has created political ferment among the youth who want jobs and the right to build a future. A fighting labor movement can win the support of the nation's youth. If labor should fail them they will fall under fascist influence.

Capitalism deals its heaviest blows to women as wage-earners and housewives. Women are drawn into industry in war-time and pushed out in periods of depression. Even when jobs are available they are caught in a trap of discriminatory conditions on the job and the burdens of housework and child care at home.

The needs of working-class women must be infused into our transitional program: The right of women to a job. Equal pay for equal work. Upgrading with full seniority rights. Union action to minimize job fatigue. Social legislation to provide such needs as maternity care and union-managed nurseries financed by the government. Union and legislative action to regulate shopping arrangements and other community facilities for the benefit of working class families.

The Negro people are today the most radical section of the population. Like the Mexican, Puerto Rican and other minority groups whose special problems are similar to those of the Negroes, they are natural allies of labor. Negro workers play a dual role as members of the working class and as members of a persecuted racial minority. They are among the best union fighters and they are most capable of giving leadership to the Negro community.

Spearheaded by the Negro unionists, organized labor must give solid support to the fight against discrimination, segregation and police brutality. Battle must be waged for an effective FEPC to be enforced by the unions.

By backing up the Negro struggle for equality labor can win its fight to unionize the South. Abolition of second-class citizenship for Negroes is also the road to abolition of the Southern open shop and wage differential that attracts Northern runaway shops.

In their drive for representation in government the Negro people are setting an example for labor. Their demands should be supported by the unions. The victorious Turner candidacy in the Newark elections demonstrates the power a labor-Negro alliance would have in political opposition to the capitalist parties.

United mass action cannot await settlement of petty squabbles among the bureaucrats over collection of dues in a fusion of the AFL and CIO. A speedier method of preparing united action by labor and its allies must be developed through rank and file pressure for local Congresses of Labor. Creation of such local vehicles for united action will help prepare the way for a giant national Congress of Labor. The local gatherings should launch independent labor political action at the local level. The national gathering would have as its task the launching of a general labor party movement in a drive to establish a Workers and Farmers Government.

The first expression of independent class political action can be expected to take form through a labor party with an essentially reformist program. In the formative period we will not necessarily make program a criterion in deciding whether to give critical support to labor candidates. The first task is to bring about a break from capitalist politics. In giving critical support we insist on independence from the capitalist political apparatus. Under no circumstances will the SWP cross class lines to support a candidate on a capitalist ticket.

As the term "critical" indicates, even in the formative stage of the labor party we reserve the right to point out errors and inadequacies in program. Once the labor party becomes a reality questions of program will become paramount. We will work to crystallize a left wing, on the revolutionary-socialist program. Whether our party will make an entry into the labor party or not is a purely tactical question that will be decided only by future developments.

In any case our party will under all circumstances preserve its political independence. The party cadres in the mass movement are not working to build a substitute for the SWP. All our work, in all spheres and at all times, is carried on for the purpose of building our revolutionary-socialist party.

### Tactical Problems in the Unions

The fight to restore union democracy is inseparably tied to the campaign for independent labor political action. Suppression of union democracy reflects the officialdom's subordination to the capitalist state and their consequent retreat before the police-state attack. Observance of union democracy, on the other hand, is a reflex of class-struggle action in defense of the workers interests.

Advocates of a class-struggle political policy in the unions are the prime targets of the government witch hunters and their bureaucratic collaborators. That is why the political militant of the Fifties must conduct himself in the unions much like the union militant of the Thirties had to conduct himself in the open-shop plants. Good judgment by the political militants in this regard will be interpreted by the workers as a mark of leadership capacity.

The problem is to push realistically toward class-struggle objectives and yet avoid needless victimization through carelessness or excessive boldness. Our union work thus requires considerable skill, patience and endurance. The militants need to arm themselves with the long view, reinforce their confidence with a sound grasp of the party program and draw inspiration from the union rank and file.

It would be disorienting to count on vanguard action by the old militants who stormed the open-shop bastions to found the modern union movement. They are wearing out along with the limited union program of their militant days. The party must look to the new young layers of potential militants and to the women workers, the Negroes and other minority groups. They are the ones who will spearhead labor's political radicalization. Although the workers in basic industry will constitute the main force of the mass political vanguard, workers in the secondary reaches of industry and trade will also comprise an important section of the politicalized labor force. Careful attention must therefore be paid to party work in secondary as well as basic industry.

Union tactics must be kept carefully in tune with mass sentiment, guarding against actions that would go beyond the given limits of mass support. Mass militancy without a high degree of class consciousness has a strictly limited potential. Hostile pressures cannot be withstood indefinitely by the union ranks. Our tactics must therefore be attuned to the limitations as well as the possibilities of the given situation.

We oppose the concept that strikes must be "authorized" by the union officials, but strikes conducted in defiance of the bureaucrats present one of the most complex union problems. Rank and file rebellion against no-strike decrees has the greatest power when the issues involved touch the general interests of the entire union ranks, the strike aims are attuned to the mood of the workers and there is the greatest possibility of sympathy among the secondary layers of the union officialdom.

A class struggle program cannot be injected into the unions simply by following a "lesser evil" course in union power politics. We take a practical attitude on internal union struggles as one aspect of a whole complex of tactics. It is sometimes profitable for us to intervene in support of a given candidate or slate when our work can thereby be advanced, but our main energy must be directed toward politicalization of the union ranks.

Tactical thinking is sometimes confused by the mistaken notion that sheer personal ability will enable a person to make himself so useful in the union that he can penetrate the official apparatus without becoming involved in unprincipled official union policies. But nobody can cheat the laws of the class struggle through talent, maneuvers or any other gimmick. Union careers of that type commonly lead either to victimization or compromise, and the longer it takes for the showdown the greater the latter danger becomes.

It is a one-sided and wrong view that our main struggle is for strategic positions in the unions. Our main aim is to develop class consciousness in the ranks. We subordinate the fight for strategic positions to this aim and connect that subordinate activity with this

aim. This is a poor time to be pushing for leading posts in the unions. Grievance committee positions are in general a more realistic sphere of functioning in the present period. If we make too great a mistake in judging what posts to run for, the workers themselves will most likely introduce the necessary corrective. They hesitate to put fighters in key top positions at a time when they can't see their way clear to launch a fight.

When a union post is held on a realistic basis, it is of course necessary to take precautions against needless loss of the position. Past experience has revealed, however, that exaggerated precautions are sometimes taken to a point where political activity becomes reduced below the limits actually imposed by objective conditions.

Comrades holding union posts have at times tended to over-rate the importance of maintaining close relations with non-political elements having "know-how" of a strictly union character. This tendency has led in turn to under-rating the importance of comrades in the union ranks who have less union "know-how" but are vastly superior in political class consciousness. Such a tendency impairs party-building work. In the last analysis individuals with "know-how" are key elements only if they can be brought into the political vanguard.

#### Party Coordination with the Fractions

The party fractions tend to reflect the one-sidedness of the union movement. Large political issues become obscured by narrow union problems and the fractions are under constant pressure to make practical adaptations. That is why individuals cannot remain revolutionists without the party which rises above narrow questions of detail and generalizes from the large political issues.

Party branches must not be permitted to become mere appendages of union fractions nor must the fractions be permitted to drift without close branch attention. The fractions must have a firm political foundation in the branch in order to maintain a proper political balance in union work. A solid branch base is equally vital to aid fraction recruitment and speed the integration of new worker members into the party.

Immersion in local work also tends to narrow the branch point of view. Close coordination is therefore necessary between the party center and the branches. Lacking such coordination the branches would tend to become influenced by expediency and practicality arising from local problems and the large national and international issues would be pushed into the background. The center in turn would tend to deal with political issues in an abstract fashion that would fail to meet the needs of the party workers in the field.

Coordination between the center and the field is also of critical importance in the political education of the party unionists. Workers find much of the revolutionary political language difficult. They need aid through basic training classes and general guidance in reading on their own. Worker education should begin with subjects like the Transitional Program, party documents of a similar nature and a study of the party's history. As their education progresses they should be led into study of fundamental Marxist theory, program,

strategy and tactics. Through this process the party will become steadily strengthened by cadre elements well-grounded in the political fundamentals and at the same time well qualified as mass workers.

If the paper is to fulfill its indicated role as the No. 1 party organizer, it must be a genuine workers organ. It must reflect the life of the workers, how they live and fight, what their immediate problems are and how they can begin steps toward a solution. Establishing contact with the workers in this manner at their present level of consciousness, the paper will be in a stronger position to help them generalize their grievances and demands on a higher political plane. They will then be able to understand why there must be a revolutionary-socialist party and why they should support it.

Party militants must have a clear grasp of the relation between union work and the party's general political and agitational work. Campaigns conducted by the party do not represent an attempt to bypass the unions. General party activity on the mass arena supplements our union work. It is directed primarily, although not entirely, toward the workers in the unions, for they alone are capable of sustained action because they alone are organized on a mass scale.

Progress in the union fractions depends in large measure on adoption of the campaign principle in general party work. Drives to expand press circulation help broaden the fraction contact lists. Party tours help speed the recruitment of contacts.

Efforts like the Trumbull Park action raise the political level of union activity. The party's anti-fascist campaign opens a whole series of political opportunities for the advancement of fraction work. Election campaigns enable party candidates to reach the union membership with the full party program, thus giving a boost to the union militants who can't fully speak their minds without danger of victimization.

Effective campaign activity requires the concentration of all available forces to achieve concrete and definite objectives. The fractions, branches and press, guided and coordinated by the party center, must function as a single unit revolving around the specific axis of the campaign.

In all our activity, from the daily work of the fractions to the most highly political party campaigns, the basic aim must be to forge a left wing in the mass movement under the leadership of the SWP. We must polarize around our fractions an expanding force of union militants who are awakening to political class consciousness. These combined forces will in turn be capable of drawing larger masses into motion during periods of upsurge.

Without our party fractions as the backbone there can be no revolutionary left wing in the mass movement. That is why union work that does not build the party forces is not revolutionary union work. That is why the key objective in all our union activity must be to recruit worker-militants into the party.

We go forward in our party-building work with supreme confidence in the revolutionary capacities of the working class. We say to the masses of America:

The revolutionary party exists and it fights in your interests. It is the Socialist Workers Party whose ranks, although not yet numerous, are highly developed politically and already tempered in battle. The party is strong in program, doctrine and in honorable tradition. Place yourselves under the banner of the SWP. It is the banner of your coming victory.

July 20, 1954.



UNPUNCTUALITY

By George Breitman

Some comrades may think that raising this question at this time, when the party is confronted with so many important political and theoretical questions on a national and international scale, demonstrates a lack of judgment, timing and proportion. All I can say in defense is that after waiting almost 20 years for the ideal occasion and place, I have begun to suspect that I will never find them, and have decided I might as well do it now before I am overtaken by old age.

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A public meeting or forum is called for 8 P.M. The organizer and usually the speaker are present on time. New people, reached by a leaflet or otherwise, start arriving at 8, or even earlier. But most of the members don't begin to dribble in until 8:20 or 8:30. The meeting doesn't get started until then, at the earliest. What kind of impression does it make on the new people? Hardly a favorable one. We've all known cases where some of them even get up and leave before the chairman starts talking.

A branch meeting is called for 8. The newest member arrives on time. But almost no one is there. The meeting starts at 8:25. This happens three times in a row. The new member concludes there is no sense in being there at 8 thereafter. So he starts coming around later and later. The comrades who do come on time are penalized for their punctuality; eventually, this affects even the most responsible of them.

Are these isolated examples? Not at all. This is the situation in most of the branches I know about, and I dare say most of the branches as a whole. It is also the situation with NC plenums, and with the highest body of all, national conventions.

With the exception of the 1944 convention, which I did not attend and do not know about, no convention in my experience has ever started any of its sessions on time. Perhaps this is excusable at the first session of a convention, when delegates are still arriving. But once they are there, they set a time for the next session. When the time arrives, a minority is present. At the end of this session, they set a time for the next day. At the appointed hour the next day, it's the same story. Most of the delegates stroll in, 15, 30 or 60 minutes late; none of them looks surprised that the session hasn't started or sorry that his tardiness has contributed to the delay. Such conduct might be excusable if they had sat in convention for an extremely long time the previous day -- but conventions are rarely in session more than six hours a day; or if they were mothers who had to take care of children -- but few of them are mothers in that position. Then the chairman announces the time of the next session; the delegates clearly hear what he says; no one objects that the time set is unreasonable; no one proposes a later time; but most of them will not be there at the appointed time.

The only exception I know of is the PC, which generally meets on time, and proves that such a thing is possible in a revolutionary party as well as in a factory, a movie or an undertaker's.

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With all my being I protest against unpunctuality. I don't think I am a crank on this subject, but even if I am so deemed, the problem itself has an objective reality. Unpunctuality is inconsiderate and rude. For those who want class characterizations, it is petty bourgeois and bohemian. It gives outsiders the appearance of a lack of seriousness. It wastes tens of thousands of man-hours of party time and party work each year. It's bad and harmful at any level in the party, and worst of all on the part of leaders, who are supposed to set an example.

What should be done? Passage of motions or resolutions will not accomplish much, unless the general atmosphere of tolerance for unpunctuality is changed. Let those who are dissatisfied with the present situation begin to apply pressure. Let them let the party know what they think (not by making speeches on the subject, but subtly, and by taking appropriate actions when they become possible). If one of us is chosen as a chairman for a public meeting, let him insist on opening the meeting on time; those who come late may learn a lesson from this; repeated, it may puncture their assurance that everything will be held up until they deign to saunter in; if they find themselves missing things they are interested in or concerned about, they may be forced to improve their ways. When a speaker is late, the chairman should apologize to the audience for his lateness -- not with hostility, but in sorrow. When someone arrives late at an assignment, it should be pointed out to him -- briefly and in a friendly fashion -- that his lateness held up three other comrades for 20 minutes, thus wasting a whole hour of party time. Organizers should begin to manifest some interest in why comrades are habitually late, although not necessarily on the floor of a meeting; privately they should ask such comrades if they would prefer to have a later hour set for the meeting when these comrades could be sure to arrive on time, etc.

The above suggestions will not solve the problem fully, but they can help, and maybe they will encourage other and better suggestions. The point is that comrades who find the present situation unsatisfactory should not become resigned, tolerant, passive or defeatist. Why should we have to grit our teeth and suffer when the fault is not ours but that of the delinquents, and when their fault impairs the general efficiency of the party? Without any illusions, inflated expectations or disproportionate efforts, let's exert our moral pressure toward correcting this situation which no one in the party really wants or benefits from.

Newark, N.J.  
March 25, 1954