

TOWARD A PARTY PERSPECTIVE

Part I

The period from the Communist Manifesto to the Russian Revolution saw the long upward climb of the international workingclass as an organized conscious force. The Russian Revolution seemed to herald the beginning of that "final conflict" which would speedily crown the long upward road with its final victory in World Socialism.

But after a few stormy years in which the decision still seemed in doubt, the workingclass was stopped dead in its tracks and then forced backward and downward until the defeats became catastrophes and the retreat a rout. Today, 27 years since the bright dawn in Russia, the movement lies prostrate in a veritable "valley of death," broken, bleeding and bewildered with its "mass" remnants befouled and corrupted. Today, 96 years since the Communist Manifesto, those who still base their politics upon its tenets number hardly more than in the first years after its publication.

The years of ascent were years of hope, of expectation, of unshakeable faith in progress and ultimate victory. The Marxist movement, even in its reformist wing, generated a calm confidence in its future. Despite the decay already at work beneath the surface, the movement lived in an atmosphere of idealism, of freshness, of newness and sincere devotion to its high moral purpose.

The years of descent were years of decay and degeneration; confusion vied with cynicism as the leading characteristic. From Noske to the Social Democratic Reichstag vote of confidence in Hitler's government, to the GPU in Spain, to the Moscow Trials and the final stages of degeneration in Russia, to the role of Stalinists and reformists in the second imperialist world war, marked the long downward trek upon which we still find ourselves today. The sight of thousands of workers remaining in the Communist ranks as Browder embraces the National Association of Manufacturers seems almost an effort on the part of a sadistic fate to force the last bitter dregs upon the tortured movement.

But, today, we can also for the first time speak truthfully of a counter-current that promises to reverse the trend. The European proletariat is stirring once more. True, it more than stirred in Austria, in France and in Spain in the last decade and yet the downward trend continued. But today it is significantly different. Then it still thought it had a stake in the status quo and fought defensively, burdened down with the shackles of "anti-fascism." Today it begins with a clean slate. It has nothing to defend on the Continent. It can only tear down and build anew. No matter whether it succeeds or not. No matter what the betrayals, the disappointments, the detours. The fact in the situation that over-rides all else is that the two-decade long retreat is about ended and the new movements on the Continent will see the proletariat on the offensive.

This marks the end of one epoch in the history of our class and the beginning of another. We stand at the end of the bitter downward road and on the threshold of the new rise. Where it will carry us cannot even be speculated upon now. Whether after a few stormy years we will once more plunge downward or whether we will achieve the heights and hold them depends

not upon our conjectures but upon our actions. But before we can gird ourselves for our role in the coming epoch, it is necessary to analyze the long road downward and where it leaves the workingclass movement in general and the revolutionary Marxists in particular.

The year 1914 closed not only an epoch in the history of Marxism but also in the history of capitalism. This fact became a corner-stone in the subsequent political thought of Lenin and has since become commonplace, with revolutionary Marxists. The outbreak of the war signalized the end of Capitalism's role as a progressive force in expanding the means of production. By the same token it signalized that the time had come for the workingclass to seize hold of the rudder and usher in Socialist production.

With the defeat of the workingclass in the post-war revolutionary wave, capitalism settled down to its own "stabilization." But the pre-war world of capitalism was gone for good. The 1870-1914 era of continued economic expansion, of the growth of political democracy, of liberalism and pacifist internationalism gave way to the bitter post-war disillusionment. The industrial graph of capitalism became a fever chart. The ruddy glow of bourgeois democracy in the Weimar Republic and the re-created small national states proved to be, not a sign of health, but the last feverish flush before death. Bourgeois democracy proved impossible amidst the economic decay of an out-lived social order. It gave way to the most vicious and unbridled reaction.

It could not be otherwise. We lived in a social order that had really died in 1914. The stench of the corpse left nothing unaffected -- but nothing. From economy to politics to culture to morals -- everything suffered a breakdown. Society sank ever deeper into the filth which engulfed the lowlands and splashed up to the highest pinnacles.

The great split of the organized workingclass into a reformist and revolutionary wing during the years of "sturm and drang" became ideologically meaningless as both wings kneeled in the mire. From pre-war critics of capitalism, the reformists now became its indispensable saviours. They struck down the revolution and grubbed along in the twilight of capitalism as its ministers, taking responsibility for the corpse, until relieved by fascism. No maneuver was too shoddy and no prostration before the capitalists too debasing. Where Luxemburg once wrote reams of indignant denunciation of South German provincial Social Democrats for making unprincipled blocs with liberals, "Socialist" police chiefs now forbade May Day marches and gave order to fire upon demonstrators.

But the stolid stupidity of the reformist bureaucrats doing the dirty work of capitalism was soon "caught up with and outstripped" by the studied duplicity of the new Russian rulers who made a science of seducing the finest motives, the holiest purposes, and the most consecrated watchwords. In place of revolutionary idealism, the new masters enthroned the dictum that ultimate success was all that mattered. The Marxist explanation of the class basis of morals became for them the barbarous concept that nothing that "serves the Soviet fatherland" can be immoral. Murder, character assassination, torture, blackmail, informing and debasing "public confessions" became virtues in the service of the fatherland.

(Just measure the depths of Socialist morality when Lovestone's paper found it possible to say that the Moscow trials were concocted of fantastic

lies but objectively served progress and were, therefore, to be endorsed and defended. And this was swallowed by hundreds of Lovestone's followers who saw in it no contradiction of their efforts on behalf of Socialism.)

2. But a lie can serve the interests of progress.

Thrown off balance by the halt in the forward march of Socialism and depressed by the atmosphere of defeat, the politically conscious workers felt themselves on the defensive and sought to cling to that which was at hand. For the reformist workers this meant the struggle to defend bourgeois democracy as the repository of their post-war gains. Socialism became ever more a chimera and the defense of some "Weimar" or other ever more an urgent reality -- particularly as each passing year saw additional hundreds of thousands of the embittered victims of capitalism pass over into the camp of fascism.

The goal of Socialism was everywhere replaced by the fatal trap of "anti-fascism". Its results were no where better illustrated than in Austria, where the hounded and retreating workingclass produced from its ranks that incomparable band of rank and file Schutzbund men. Poorly armed and poorly organized, they mounted the barricades, with the deliberation of an army of the doomed. They offered themselves as a desperate, sacrificial rear-guard, not to save an army in retreat, but to save the honor of their class.

In the ranks of Communist workers, the place of "defense of democracy" was taken by "defense of the Soviet Union," until with the 1935 change in Russian foreign policy the two concepts became identical in Stalinist politics. As the prospects of revolution in their own country seemed to diminish, the existence of that "sixth of the earth" loomed as an ever more imposing reality. Soon they lived for nothing else. As the rise of Hitler made the threat to the "fatherland" all the more real, the communist ranks were more and more taken into the confidence of the party chieftans and taught, with a knowing wink, the grand strategy of "defending the land of Socialism" at the expense of their own native workingclass interests. The Communist ranks became less dupes and more "in-siders" who were playing their little, but necessary role, in saving Russia, even to the present acceptance of capitalism and post-war national unity.

"Socialism," "Class Struggle," "Class Solidarity," all the brave words with capital letters that once aroused and inspired the awakening pre-war generations, were now only pronounced for holiday effect on May Day. Workers considered it "old stuff" that gave forth a stale odor. Nor could it have other than a false ring when mouthed by "Socialist" ministers busy ministering to a sick capitalism. These concepts were replaced in the worker's thought with a growing skepticism, given vent by a shrug of the shoulders and a defeatist, "What else can one do?"

This decay of class feeling and militancy was an inevitable result of the decay that penetrated the entire social organism. No class, above all not one so basically rooted in the productive process as is the proletariat, can base its politics upon the status quo of a rotting society without beginning to rot itself. The proletariat could only save itself in a revolutionary struggle against the status quo.

But only a tiny segment of the workingclass understood this and was willing to wage such a fight. More accurately, it was not even a segment of the class but only an ideological grouping that consciously expressed

the historic aims of the workingclass and identified itself with the most advanced program and revolutionary traditions of the workingclass.

This core of irreconcilables was all that was salvaged from the revolutionary years. They remained all but immune to the all-pervading decay of the times.

Beginning their struggle in one of the chief centers of the gangrenous growth, in Moscow itself, men of integrity gathered around Leon Trotsky and turned flint-like faces against the stream. In the midst of the growing popularity of "being practical," Trotsky took his stand upon Theory. As the mass of the party functionaries reconciled themselves after 1923 to a long period of Russian isolation in a capitalist world and embraced the new nationalist concept of "Socialism in One Country", Trotsky became the incarnation of uncompromising principles and preached Permanent Revolution and Internationalism.

Though many, if not most, of his Russian collaborators were to break under the combined strain of physical suffering and the depressing effect of unchecked defeats, their example inspired similar handfuls in other countries to take their stand upon principle. Their struggle kept alive an indispensable tradition and trained an invaluable cadre. The Russians who grouped themselves under the banner of the Opposition hoped to strike off the spark for a new revolutionary flame in the Communist International. But it was in keeping with the character of the epoch that they succeeded only in striking off additional sparklets that glowed feebly in an engulfing darkness.

There is a far greater affinity than is superficially apparent between the Russian Opposition marching off to Stalin's isolators and execution chambers for the preservation of Marxist principles and the Austrian Schutzbunders shedding their blood to save the honor of their class. In a sense the GPU was right when it denounced the Schutzbund refugees in Russia as "Trotskyists" when they sought to leave Russia and take their chances in the underground in Dollfuss Austria; the totalitarian stench having proved too much for those wholesome Viennese proletarians. Their "Trotskyism" consisted in having done in Vienna what the Opposition did in Moscow -- to face the overwhelming odds rather than bend their knees and disappear in the swamp.

Yes, we Trotskyists have come through the Epoch of the Great Darkness with least loss of principle, of honor, and of integrity. But we withstood the seige at a terrible cost. For two decades we struggled in isolation from the main stream of our class. However, ours was not the cloistered refuge of intellectual detachment. Those who took this course were lost. We saved ourselves as a movement and Marxism as a banner in relentless struggle against the tide on every battlefield of the epoch: the struggle over the "New Course," the Anglo-Russian bloc, the Chinese Revolution, The Third Period Insanity, the German events of 1930-33, the Spanish Revolution of 1930-31, the French events of 1936-38, the Spanish Civil War, the Moscow Trials, the defense of Bolshevik morality against Stalinist perversion and reformist detraction, and the defense of international solidarity against the defeatist acceptance of imperialist war as the last barrier to world fascism.

It is still too soon to adequately judge how much we owe our intransigence and clarity to the titan who captained the fight. Without Trotsky i

would have been all but impossible. He personified the link between the two epochs of Marxism. He lived the latter half of his political life that the best of the old epoch be preserved and transplanted to new cadres. The physical destruction of Trotsky was more than an insane emotion with Stalin. It served a cold-blooded practical purpose. But it came too late to completely achieve its aim. Trotsky had not fought in vain. He left behind more than illuminating ideas set on paper. He left a living movement schooled in the "old" Marxism and its application by Trotsky to two decades of political life.

(The Socialist editor who recently, in defending the victims of the Minneapolis frame-up, referred to Trotskyists indulgently as somewhat naive people who still believe in the "Communist Manifesto" as originally written hardly realized the historical significance of his statement. Yes, Trotskyists are the only people to whom the great document of Marx and Engels remained a living program.)

The two decades of struggle against the current proved an unbearable strain to most of our fighters, both in the ranks and in the leadership. No need to refer to the capitulators in Russia or the many stalwarts of the early Comintern in Europe who disappeared from political life. Suffice it to note how few of the pioneers of the Communist League of America still remain. It is difficult to estimate how many thousands have passed through the organization in the last 15 years. (Among them a host of very able men like Luste, Burnham, Hook, Spector, and others.) No more severe tests could be devised to test the optimism of a movement than those to which we have been subjected upon one field of workingclass defeat after another. Only those with a broad historical vision, a firm grasp of theory and life lived in close personal connection with the movement and the problems of the workers could survive.

But the biggest price we paid during these decades was not in the losses of numbers. Rather it was the inevitable isolation from our class. The barriers we threw up against the poison of degeneration also became barriers that separated us from the mass of the workers, who drifted with the tide. For many years now "Trotskyism" has been synonymous with "sectarianism" in the view of our political opponents. Especially was this the favorite complaint of the centrists who shied away from acceptance of the crass formulations of reformism, who kept speaking the language of pre-war Socialism, but who lacked the theoretical clarity and flint-hardness necessary to take their stand against the stream. To do the latter, they explained, would be "sectarian." It is "more practical" they thought, to drift along with the mass movement and engage in its reformist practices while salving our consciences with occasional outbursts of radical phrases.

We yield no ground to these straddlers when we admit that their charge against us was essentially true. In the main, "Trotskyism" was a sectarian current for the whole period of its existence. The harm lies not in admitting this. The harm lies in denying it. For to understand it, to comprehend its basis, to explain it, is to prepare the ground for its removal. However, to deny it is to accept our isolation as the normal condition of revolutionists instead of the abnormal role forced upon us in the epoch of decline.

We salvaged the Marxist program and the Marxist core by throwing up a barrier of principle against the opportunist flood. The higher the flood rose about us, the more did we concentrate upon strengthening the barrier.

The broader the flood spread out over the plains of workingclass activity, the narrower became the grounds for our own participation, often reduced entirely to a polemical participation in the events. As we saw the reformists and then the Stalinists pervert and trample upon every principle of Marxism, the more precise and exacting were we in our formulations ("dogmatic" and "hair-splitting Trotskyites" our opponents said).

We have pulled through the long seige more or less intact as the revolutionary Marxist current. However, it would be most foolish to delude ourselves (worse, it would be dangerous) with the thought that we have come through immune and unscathed. It is excluded that a grouping can so insulate itself for 20 years as to remain wholly unaffected by the poisonous atmosphere of a decaying social order while living in a workingclass prostrate from its corroding effects. In the period of the great retreat, we retreated least. In the period of the great contamination, we were least affected. More than this cannot be said.

Our rigid adherence to principle soon uncovered tendencies toward adaptation to the drift of events, i.e., centrism, and drove them out. In doing this we drew heavily upon the theory and practice of the Bolsheviks during the rigid underground life and during the military life of the party in the Civil War days of 1918-22. More often than not these experiences were underscored for us with myths and legends of those times that caricatured historical fact. Political concepts and organizational practices were passed off in our ranks as being "genuine Bolshevism" that really were semi-Stalinist (Zinovievist) contraband. In contrast to Stalinist degeneracy, the practices of the early Comintern were idealized. Instead of submitting the history of Bolshevism and the Comintern to critical study, it came to be viewed as sacrosanct. Any practice or theory that found precedent before the Fourth Congress of the C.I. was considered as firmly established by that fact alone.

The advent of a workers government in 1917, coinciding with the World War which had stripped world politics down to its bare essentials of power, injected a new note of "real-politik" into the workers movement. Lenin's directness and simplicity of formula typified the new approach to practical political questions. However, in the post-revolutionary period the note of realism turned sour. It became more "real" and less attached to Socialist idealism. It adapted itself not to the needs of a workers state maneuvering among great powers until rescued by the world revolution but rather to the cynical "real-politik" that became the hallmark of decaying capitalism and fastened itself upon a disillusioned and disbelieving world. It found its prophets in Churchill and Clemenceau and its final, perfect expression in Stalin and Hitler. A strain of this approach fastened itself upon the early Comintern and through it was transmitted to the Opposition. Everything was reduced to a cold-blooded political calculation. Relations between parties, relations between factions and relations between individuals were passed through a fine-mesh screen and "cleaned" of everything but a political content. The powerful simplicity of the challenge "Which side are you on?", born in the class struggle, was now a hostile question directed down the line to one's closest factional collaborators and became the total determinant in political relations.

Read the tragic story of relations among the political prisoners in Stalin's prisons as told by Anton Ciliga, and particularly the view of the Oppositionists that they stood in closer bond with their GPU tormentors and jailers than with their fellow-prisoners from other workingclass parties.

Their "political" approach required such a suppression of a primitive human instinct of solidarity of the oppressed against the oppressor, not to speak of the more developed feeling of Socialist solidarity against the policeman and jailer, that one must ask whether the basic Socialist idealism of the revolutionist can long survive it. As late as 1934, the "Trotskyist" delegates at the international conference of Left Socialist parties in Holland opposed a resolution that called for the release of all workingclass political prisoners in Russia, confining their demands to the imprisoned Party Oppositionists.

Consider the tragic accounts of factional activities in the early period of the Communist Party in this country, beginning at a period when Stalin's name was hardly known to the members. Venom for factional opponents was so heartfelt and bitter that there was little left for the class enemy. Denunciations of the latter were reduced to standardized formulae that seemed robbed of any genuine feeling. The word "Comrade," which once symbolized human relations in the Socialist movement, was wrung dry of any meaning other than the formal mode of address. "Comrade" was used to address the very person who was being subjected to the vilest accusations (or in giving instructions as to whose mail should be stolen.) Even those who were later to break and organize the Opposition in this country, found it possible to vote a condemnation of Trotsky's "Lessons of October" without ever having read the book.

The people who founded the Trotskyist movement here and elsewhere broke with the official policies of the Russian rulers. But it was more difficult to break with habits and methods learned in the Comintern. Many of these methods found new points of support in our great devotion to political rigidity. Every political difference became cause for serious alarm and factional war of major proportions. In a world of backsliding, every innovator in our ranks was suspect. Often his motives were subjected to greater scrutiny than his conclusions. "He has a difference? What is he up to?" Any form of the broader class idealism that once characterized the revolutionary Socialism was suspected either as "mush-headed sentimentality" or political conciliationism. Our narrow theoretical confines necessitated by the nature of the struggle seemed to leave no room for such "luxuries." We were, like the Bolshevik Party of 1918-22, living through a state of siege. They, in danger of being engulfed by a military wave, we, by a wave of political opportunism sweeping through the workers' movement. The inclination, therefore, was to wield a dictatorial club against dissidents.

The adherence to scientific exactitude in theory and program and the propagandistic nature of our activities robbed what little agitation we conducted of that righteous indignation against wrong that once characterized the writings and speeches of a Bebel, a Luxemburg, and even a Lenin, not to speak of our great native agitator, Debs. "Wrong" was submitted to a precise analysis and coldly explained upon its economic and class basis. Such a tendency toward objectivity cannot even be found in "Capital" where Marx cannot contain himself as the economist and continually bursts forth as the revolutionary agitator denouncing the system that came into the world, "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt." The manuscript for "Plenty for All" was subjected to criticism by some leading members on the ground that it was unscientific, that "capitalists didn't mismanage our machine age," etc. This is the typical reaction to Socialist agitation by those whose schooling was solely in our propagandist movement. It is necessary to understand that a revolutionist must not only think with his head but

also feel with his heart. Scientific thought must be added to our basic class emotions as workers and not substituted for them. "Labor Action" has in the last few years established a new tradition in the Trotskyist press precisely because it has begun to again find a common language with the worker in its agitation. It is a new tradition for us but in reality is the restoration of the great pre-war tradition of Socialist agitators. We have still many inhibitions in this respect, however. We still have not completely rid ourselves of the fear that someone will regard us as naive or unsophisticated in our agitation if we become indignant at injustice when "we really know it is an inevitable by-product of capitalist economic relations."

Our great pre-occupation with political principles placed such a premium upon theoretical precision that our sectarian movement developed its own even more sectarian wings, composed of those who had learned only one lesson from us, that principles should be hard and fast. Political re-evaluations or organization "turns" threw forth the Oehlers, the Fields, the Marlens, and their innumerable off-spring. Our factional fights often took place in an atmosphere totally divorced from reality. The reality of the class struggle could have little direct bearing upon a grouping divorced from its class roots. This often gave to our internal struggles an air of a romantic drama in which people strutted and gestured to the grandiose manner of world strategists disposing of continents and empires. And in all of our struggle to save the Marxist program, we somehow lost our feel for its essence, the ideal of Socialism itself.

R. Fahan had some very important things to say upon this question in his article on "The Socialist Ideal in the World Crisis" (New International Dec., 1942). The lack of notice which this important article received is due in large measure to the difficulty which people trained in our movement have in grasping the concepts which he deals with.

As Fahan so well underscores, without a doubt the greatest dose of the poison of decay that was passed off into our system of thought was the theory of the "degenerated workers state." It kept our thinking including that of its author, Trotsky, trapped for years in its choking contradictions.

No other single idea or even combination of ideas did so much to harm our thought processes as revolutionists as the theory that Russia must be a workers state because a workers state is one in which the property is nationalized. We were willing to identify with the workingclass in power a regime so inhuman and barbarous that fascist states compared favorably with it in some respects. Never have Marxists been called upon to identify themselves in class solidarity with something so utterly repugnant to their feelings as workers and as revolutionists as in viewing the totalitarian state as a workingclass institution. Such a theory could not result in anything different than in viewing the GPU as class brothers and their Menshevik, Social Revolutionary and Anarchist victims as class enemies. It could not but do serious damage to our whole fundamental concept of Socialism and the nature of the workingclass institutions of power. How warped must a Socialist's logic have become to coin the phrase, "counter-revolutionary workers' state?" Fahan puts it well in his article:

"That poisonous distortion of the Socialist ideal crept into our system -- and its main vehicle was the theory of Stalinist Russia as a workers' state. Perhaps no more decisive proof of this can be cited than by quoting

f from a recent article of George Collins, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party (Cannonites) which is the most graphic available example of the situation we have discussed in the previous paragraphs.

"Writes Collins with regard to the resistance of the Russian armies at Stalingrad: 'But the workers and Red soldiers of the Soviet Union fight with a bitterness unmatched in this war because they are defending the Socialist achievements of a workers' revolution. Factories, mills, mines, railroads, workshops belong to those who work them. The soil belongs to those who till it. A man who will not defend such treasures is either a coward or a traitor; a man who fights to the death for them is more than a hero -- he is a socialist worker.'

"We may well ask ourselves after reading this: Just what is the vision of socialism of a man who believes that in Stalinist Russia today (which is characterized by his own colleague, John G. Bright, as a 'jail' in which the workers serve a 'life-term imprisonment'), that in this despotic, bureaucratic oligarchy, in Stalinist Russia the 'factories ... belong to those who work them,' that 'the soil belongs to those who till it'? And that this is, to top it off, nothing more nor less than...a 'treasure'!

"Is it impolite -- or undialectical -- to then ask how this 'treasure' can also be a 'jail'?

In time of peace the nicely rounded symmetry of Trotsky's theoretical constructions on the degenerated workers state were generally acceptable in our ranks, though not without increasing doubts stimulated by spectacles like the Moscow Trials and the purges. Could the mantle of a workers' state, regardless of how degenerated it may be, cover these barbarisms? Perhaps. But the invasion of Poland and Finland was more than the Socialist idealism of the best of our people could swallow. The spectacle of the Fourth International (figuratively, of course) marching into Poland in the train of the GPU executioners -- where did this fit into Socialism? Into class solidarity? Into workingclass internationalism? We shrank back. Even if our minds could not immediately supply a new answer to the question of the character of the Russian state, our feelings as revolutionists rebelled at accepting the practical conclusions of "workers' statism" in the form of unconditional defense. We broke with the closed-circle logic of Trotsky on Russia and fought as revolutionists for the right to declare ourselves before the workingclass public. The majority viewed, not their own attitude toward the invasion of Poland, but our demand for a public organ as incompatible with Marxism. The very nature of the question brought to the ranks of the "Minority" and into the Workers Party those who were most idealistic and least affected by the poisoned atmosphere that had found its way even into the Trotskyist movement. Once in our own party we soon liberated ourselves completely from the "workers' state" concept which daily becomes more apparent as an adaptation to Stalinism in practice. In so doing we took the first big step in cleansing our system of thought from the most serious malady that had affected our Socialist understanding.

It was not accidental that the fight against "unconditional defensism"

became linked immediately with the fight against the organizational methods of Cannon. Even we, trapped by the snare of "workers statism" were not aware at the time of the close connection between the two questions. Time and events permit us to have a more penetrating perspective. Trotsky wanted us to ideologically stand shoulder to shoulder with the GPU in what he declared was the civil war against the Finnish bourgeoisie. Cannon, denounced us as traitors to the Red Army who, if in Russia, deserved to be shot and proceeded to act toward us accordingly. Cannon, like the Trotskyites in Stalin's prisons, felt a greater solidarity with the GPU agents in Poland who were rounding up the Ehrlichs and Alters than with the revolutionists in his own party whom he denounced as defeatists. Cannon was logical. Trotsky's political views were tempered in their execution by an unquenchable spirit of revolutionary idealism that, together with a saving common sense, kept him from carrying his views to their logical organizational conclusion. Cannon's education as a political person was almost entirely in the epoch of decline. He took his politics straight, untempered with either idealism or common sense. The Soviet Union is nothing but a big trade union. The Red Army is out on the picket line. The "petty bourgeois opposition" are nothing but a bunch of scabs. And, by God, he was out to treat them as such. Lacking state power, the best he could do was to force, what he has since called, "the preventive split."

Cannon learned his politics in the early (1920-28) period of the Communist Party. This was the period when former left wing Socialists and Wobblies were being taught "Bolshevism" in the school of Zinoviev and later Bukharin. The party morals developed in the fierce factional warfare were not the sole property of Lovestone and Foster. Nor did the acceptance of Trotsky's politics necessarily and Zinovievist organizational methods. The peculiar "non-political" faction fights in the first years of the Communist League of America were evidence of this.

Cannon had learned one thing about organization -- it is necessary to keep control of the party apparatus. If this cannot be guaranteed by the superiority of one's leadership then it must be assured through clique and machine politics. This was the root of his bureaucratic machinations.

The conservatism of the Cannon regime was based upon his lack of perspective for the party. The "mergers" with Ruste and Norman Thomas, gave Cannon an opportunity to function in a field he was best equipped for, the field of maneuver and inner-organizational politics. Here he greatly enhanced his reputation as an "organizer". However, the possibility of continued "mergers" did not exist. Once again independent in the now enlarged organization, the SWP, Cannon again revealed his basic sterility. He fell back upon party routinism and hum-drum trade union activity. He showed no evidence of the imagination or grasp needed to make the party a factor in the life of the average worker. Essentially, Cannon, the "great organizer" and the "mass leader", never rose above a propaganda group perspective. In a clinch he fell back upon fakery to cover his nakedness. Typical of this was his famous slogan for the 1939 convention of "\$10,000 and 30 organizers". As though this could substitute for an organizational perspective and program.

Not only did Cannon lack the necessary imagination to launch the party upon mass activities, but he reacted conservatively to all proposals that emanated from others, for instance, Burnham's advocacy of a "campaign party" or the youth's attempt to build a fighting and colorful movement. It is a good guess to say that had Cannon been in the country he would have reacted negatively to the Madison Square Garden demonstration against the Nazi Fund.

as he did against the subsequent anti-Coughlin street activities. His reaction to the participation of the youth in this activity was to denounce them in the party's public press as being "adventurist."

These were not merely personal traits of Cannon. They were the end logic of his propaganda group perspective and inability to approach the task of building a mass party. This conservative policy, coupled by bureaucratic control of the party apparatus, constituted the essence of the "bureaucratic conservatism" of Cannon.

The importance this experience has for us, if we are not to conclude that "bureaucratic conservatism" is the result of an evil influence of an individual, is that conservatism in policy and perspective lead to sterility and induces the leading group to depend upon bureaucratic machinations to keep the reins in their hands.

Trotsky never seemed to comprehend this process at work in the American section. It is childish to try to explain this failure of his on the basis of the mis-information supplied him by Cannon. He received enough information from both sides to permit a mature judgement of the forces in the American party, even if it was loaded in favor of Cannon. Yet his estimate was totally false. And what is worse, his intervention was dishonest and, consequently, destructive. He intervened not to combat bad practices and educate the party to good ones. He intervened to guarantee the ascendancy to the side which he believed was best able to build the party, the Cannon group. Once he had concluded the latter, he followed the dishonest policy of maintaining a complete silence about the derilections of the Cannon group and twisting and distorting facts to blacken the minority. Consider how unfairly he argued in "From a Scratch -- To the Danger of Gangrene". Trotsky listed his famous 10 "precedents" that were to prove that Shachtman in particular and the minority in general had long constituted a petty bourgeois current in the party. Almost without exception they were based upon party decisions taken together with Cannon or with some supporters of Cannon. Others were almost entirely unrelated to Shachtman's work in the party and could just as easily be blamed upon any other member of the National Committee. In this procedure Trotsky followed a much-practiced policy in the movement. This consists of deciding which group is the more valuable to the party and then finding all possible arguments to support it while being careful not to weaken its position with any criticism. Does not this approach find its ultimate expression in Lovestone's endorsement of the oscar Trials on the basis that Stalin's policies are right and Trotsky's are wrong? Granted that Trotsky, personally, was too much of a revolutionary idealist and had too much intelligence to carry it to this extreme. But Trotsky trained a leadership of the S.P. which falls far below him in both of these respects. The rapid decline of the S.P. into a monolithism, into leader worship, and into a near-Stalinist attitude toward political opponents is one of the end-products of this education.

It is absurd to try to explain the present ideological decay of the S.P. in terms of Cannon alone. We are seeing the flowering of roots that go back much further in the history of the Trotskyite movement. They are part of the poison that penetrated the revolutionary barriers during two decades of economic, political and moral decay. They will only be entirely eliminated when we are once more able to boldly wade into the coming revolutionary stream. But that does not release us of the obligation to identify them and combat them now. What is more, unless we do, the new period shall find them acting

as handicaps upon our revolutionary initiative.

But are we prepared to "boldly wade into the revolutionary stream"? Or has our doctrinaire past, perhaps, conditioned us to stand on the banks and call to the stream to turn into the channels we have marked out for it? Isn't there a too literal belief that all we need do is "keep our banner clean" and the masses will "of necessity" turn to us when all else has failed them?

In this sense too many in our ranks find solace in comparing the role of "Trotskyism" to the role of "Bolshevism" before the first World War. This can be very misleading. It is based upon a false understanding of the history of "Bolshevism" and a false evaluation of the role of "Trotskyism".

The false understanding of the history of "Bolshevism" consists in the substitution of a mythology for fact. The mythology has it that the Bolsheviks existed as a small and isolated group in the Russian workingclass movement which, because of its uncompromising revolutionary program, could not build a mass party until 1917 when the revolutionary masses swept over to the Bolshevik side because of the latter's correct slogans. From this it is reasoned the "Trotskyites" today occupy an identical position and when the masses can find no other way out they will espouse "Trotskyism" as once the Russian workers did Bolshevism.

The "slight" error in this analogy is that the Bolsheviks were the largest, strongest, and best organized party in Russia until 1917. The February Revolution awakened successive layers of politically backward workers and peasants who first swelled the ranks of the moderate Socialist parties, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries, and gave them the pre-ponderance over the Bolsheviks during the first period of the Revolution. The latter fact has, in large measure been responsible for the rise of the myth about the "small Bolshevik minority".

Compare this concept with the following:

1. When the Bolsheviks constituted themselves independently as a party in 1912 they were recognized as the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party by the Socialist International despite the hostility of the leaders of the latter toward Lenin's view. The Mensheviks, meanwhile, constituted some four or five factional groupings, publishing on the whole sectarian, factional papers.

2. In April, 1912, the Bolsheviks established a legal daily paper in St. Petersburg. The Menshevik "Liquidators", consisting of activists who had left the party organization and carried on "mass activity" in the labor movement, likewise founded a daily paper. In large part the papers were financed by collections among the workers in the factories. In 1914 (January to May) 2,873 groups of workers took up collections for the Bolshevik's "Pravda". In the same period only 671 workers groups took up collections for the Menshevik daily. These figures are for St. Petersburg alone. In Moscow the ratio was even more favorable to the Bolsheviks. In the provinces the Mensheviks did somewhat better but were still only to show half the support given the Bolsheviks,

3. Of the 13 trade unions in Moscow in 1914, 12 were under the direction of the Bolsheviks, one under the direction of the "Liquidators". Of the 20 trade unions in St. Petersburg in that year the Bolsheviks directed

all except those of the draftsmen, pharmacists, office clerks, and one-half of the printers. These latter were under "Liquidationist" leadership.

4. The Russian government had established a workers' insurance system with worker representatives elected from the shops. In the All-Russian elections the Bolsheviks elected 47 out of 57 authorized delegates.

5. The daily circulation of the legal Bolshevik paper was 40,000 copies daily. The Menshevik paper had a daily circulation of 16,000.

6. Of the nine deputies elected by the workers curia (elections being on a class basis) to the Russian Duma in 1913, six were Bolsheviks and three were Mensheviks.

7. The Bolsheviks had their own publishing house, a theoretical organ published abroad, a number of weeklies published in the provinces, and similar adjuncts of a mass workers party. All this at a time when membership in the party was illegal and risked exile to Siberia.

8. The so-called Inter-boroughites ("Mezhrayontsi") whom Trotsky joined in 1917 and with whom he entered the Bolshevik Party in August, 1917 had 4,000 members in Petrograd.

9. The membership of the Bolshevik Party on the eve of the February Revolution, according to conservative estimates, was easily some 25,000.

All this hardly confirms a picture of the "small, isolated groups of Bolsheviks." Historical fact is that the Bolsheviks won their decisive place in the Russian workingclass, not in 1917, but in 1911-14, through their mass activity and party-building. The latter in turn was, of course, predicated upon the intense political-factional struggle waged for the preceding eight years. Without the mass workers party which was finally moulded in 1911-14 Lenin, with the most correct program conceivable, would have been as hopeless as Trotsky in 1917. After we have given program its proper (i.e. primary) place, it is still necessary to recognize that parties, not slogans alone, make revolutions. With the wrong slogans a party can isolate itself or break its neck in adventurism. But without the party the slogans are meaningless.

In contrast to this picture of the Bolsheviks as a mass workers party, the "Trotskyite" organizations stand out clearly in their role as ideological propaganda groups. Nowhere have they produced an organization that became the party of the class, as were the Bolsheviks. "Trotskyism" has remained a current of revolutionary thought contending for a particular set of ideas in a workingclass which has adhered to reformist or Stalinist organizations. (The only possible exceptions, Indo-China and Ceylon, are relatively unimportant countries and the "Trotskyite" leaderships in these parties have shown no tendency toward international leadership or originality in theoretical contributions.) The Russian Bolsheviks were not merely an ideological current seeking to influence the mass movements. They were the one mass workers party of the pre-war International which had remained, for various historical reasons a revolutionary Marxist party.

In the light of this it is understandable that Bukharin could, in 1914, realistically speak of the need of "Bolshevism on a Western European scale". However, it is most unlikely that the coming upsurge of European labor will be "Trotskyism" on a European scale, in the sense of the "Trotskyism" we have known for the last 20 years.

It is necessary to distinguish here between "Trotskyism" as synonymous with Revolutionary Marxism and "Trotskyism" as a tradition of revolutionary criticism over 20 years of politics. If we can speak of "Leninism" as the Marxism of the period of revolutionary upsurge, 1917-23, then for purposes of better understanding we can refer to "Trotskyism" as the Marxism of the period of retreat, 1923-1944. However, the new revolutionary groupings will not base themselves upon so narrow a tradition. It will be fatal for the "Trotskyites" to attempt to cram the great sweep of the new revolutionary wave into such a rigid ideological shell. This is precisely what Trotsky's epigones of the SWP are attempting. They assume themselves to be Trotsky's heirs and the heirs of Revolutionary Marxism and that this accords them the right to admit or to excommunicate parties and ideas from the Marxist church. With a flourish of the pen they have already read the Italian group of the faith. They insist that the new or revived groupings not only kneel before the icon of Trotsky before being licensed to operate in the revolution, but that they submit themselves to examination for non-Trotskyite heresies, like "petty bourgeois" deviations on the Russian question. History has a way of sweeping aside such pretentious ultimatums.

(However, it is disturbing to note that the Italian group itself seems little aware of the new possibilities accorded the revolutionists in the coming European events. Their manifesto reads much like dozens of similar documents the "Trotskyites" of various countries have issued (with of course, the highly important change in attitude toward the Russian state.) It seems too little rooted in the problems of Italy of 1944. It is no doubt explainable in large measure to the emigre character of the group. If this is so the actual experiences in the struggle in Italy will have a corrective effect.

The only other active group in Europe that we are informed about, the English "Trotskyites" suffer from the above tendency with the additional handicap of their great reliance upon the political guidance of the American SWP.

If the Revolutionary Marxist current of our day weds itself to its 20 year old tradition of enforced isolation and remains blind to new tendencies, it will be condemned to a total sterility. To avoid it, it is necessary that we recognize the danger and establish the political frame of mind that makes adaptation to new trends possible. In the first place, it is necessary to recognize that the 20 year old role of "Trotskyism" (i.e. the special form of Revolutionary Marxism in isolation from the mass movements) is coming to an end. Its future lies not in an artificial continuation as a special ideological current while the revolutionary curve is on the rise, but by exploiting the pro-revolutionary tendencies of the new mass movements and linking it with our Marxist program. In this sense our intervention in the class struggle will be by means of our transitional program rather than a propagandistic arguing for the theory of permanent revolution. On the organizational side it will be an emphasis upon affecting a re-groupment, a linking up, and a moulding of new forces rather than following the Biblical advice to the faithful to "come out and be ye separate".

At this point many will ask, "Just what are these new tendencies referred to? Just what sort of political forms will the workers organizations take other than what we have already known?" This cannot be answered at present. It would require either a personal knowledge of the life within the factories of Europe, or an embarkation upon the field of unrestrained speculation. Suffice it to note that the outstanding political characteristic of post-war

European labor will be confusion. Lack of stability and lack of clarity will dominate the new movements. We could, with complete justification, find ready-made labels to apply to all the various tendencies. In this sense it is quite unlikely that there will be something new under the political heavens. Those poor souls who seek "something completely new", something that has never been seen in the past 100 years of Marxism are chasing a will-of-the-wisp. What is here being referred to is the fact that the movements can in a formal sense be tagged as anarchist, syndicalist, semi-Stalinist, centrist, left centrist, etc., but that such a formal designation may blind us to their real essence if not properly understood in a new historical epoch. It is additional testimony to the genius of Lenin as a revolutionary politician that he saw in organizations like the IWW and the Spanish CNT concentrations of revolutionary proletarians to be brought to the Comintern. This lack of fetish about outward form and declared program and theory and ability to penetrate to the revolutionary essence will be ten times more necessary in the post-war period. It is quite likely that the resistance movements will give birth to all sorts of non-Marxist and pseudo-Marxist political groupings which will be essentially revolutionary in that they express the workers will toward power and a new social order. There is, for instance, the recent report of an underground conference of "International Communists" in Germany. Emerging from the bitter experiences with Communist and reformist bureaucratism and the long isolation of the underground it is quite unlikely that they will take over a ready-made program from the "official" "Trotskyites". Nor should we feel that they cannot teach us much, based on experiences we have never undergone. We have already seen the condition of the Italian Stalinist movement, a condition peculiar to that country precisely because of the long period of underground isolation, in which there is an "official" and a "non-official" Communist Party. This is symptomatic of the ideological confusion that will effect all political currents emerging from the underground into the blinding light of open political conflict.

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Role of the Workers Party in the New Epoch

(Part II of "Toward a Party Perspective")

The first part of this study was devoted to an historical evaluation of "Trotskyism". It, therefore, dealt with the movement on the international scale. However, much of what was underscored, like the impending revolutionary upsurge, has a direct pertinence for Europe and only indirectly for the United States. It would be an error, though, were one to place Europe and America into separate compartments -- one marked "revolutionary" and the other "status-quo". The difference between the two continents is one of varying levels of the class struggle and the tempo of their development. Obviously a workingclass that has yet to organize its class party will begin the struggle upon a different level than one that is about to re-constitute its class parties for the second time in history. It is likewise obvious that the two continents will enter the post-war struggles at two different starting points. Europe will be hurled directly out of a devastating imperialist war that has uprooted its institutions and shaken the old continent to its foundations, while America will see a post-war period during which the far-reaching economic breakdowns will only accumulate a political reaction of revolutionary proportions.

The differences are, however, outweighed by the historical factor of first rate importance that they have in common. In both Europe and America the workers movements will undergo historic breaks with past traditions and, sooner in one than in the other, embark upon revolutionary struggles.

It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt an analysis of the prospects of American capitalism after the war. We conceive of its prospects in the same terms of social crisis as set forth in our discussions of 1938. If anything, the social crisis of American capitalism will follow a more hectic and precipitous course precisely because of new aspects of instability injected into it by the war-time economy.

What must never be forgotten is the need to proceed in the first place from an economic analysis. For regardless what the gap between political events and their economic basis, our strategy for the period (hence our program and slogans) must proceed from our analysis of the objective situation of capitalism. All of the results of our analysis of American capitalism to date indicate that its contradictions will once more paralyze it as soon as the war economy (and perhaps a short-lived "consumers goods" prosperity) is liquidated. It is because of this that we must avoid the illusion of a "revolutionary post-war Europe" on one hand and a "peaceful post-war America" on the other.

It would be a first-rate error to assume that the great riches of American capitalism is a guarantee against the rapid development of a crisis with serious political implications. The riches of American capitalism is based upon its highly advanced form. The more highly industrialized an economy, the more complex its set-up, the more delicately balanced its components, the more concentrated its capital, the more precipitous and far-reaching is the affect of crisis. We saw in the last world crisis how Germany was more seriously affected than Poland, how France was more seriously affected than Spain, etc. That is also why German capitalism, spurred by the bolching ovens of the Ruhr, moved through its fascist phase at three and four times the tempo of Italian capitalism, basing itself upon a far less developed.

economy. The source of American capitalism's riches is simultaneously its Achille's heel.

It is this concept of a rapid deterioration of American economy and its affect upon the class struggle that precludes placing post-war Europe and post-war America in separate compartments. The amazing "practicality" of America's empirical-minded workingclass may see them taking "practical" steps toward a revolutionary solution of the economic crisis ("Brewster sit-ins" in an advanced form, i.e., factory seizures, etc.) even before the decisive struggles have taken place in Europe. It is almost certain that the crisis of American capitalism will produce mass fascist movements long before fascism again revives as a mass force in post-war Europe.

This is the objective side of post-war America. As to the subjective side, we, as Marxists, know that in the last analysis the only effective force that can resolve the crisis in favor of human progress (i.e. socialism) is a revolutionary mass party. All history has taught us that the absence of such a party will prove catastrophic in the end regardless of how favorable the opportunities and how heroic the struggles of the workingclass. As everywhere else, the building of a mass revolutionary party in the United States becomes the key to the Socialist future.

Where will this party come from? Who will build it? How? These are the questions of perspective that we must examine and attempt to answer.

Can the Workers Party become the mass party of the American workingclass? Can we realistically expect to keep adding forces in a steady pace of expansion until our party of a few hundred numbers a party of the tens of thousands? How much time will be required for this? How much time does history still permit us? An examination of the question will soon reveal that such a perspective is most unrealistic. It would only succeed in reinforcing sectarian tendencies in our ranks. It seems a much more sound perspective to look forward to re-groupings and re-assemblings on the left political scene. The leftward sweep of the workers movement both in Europe and here will propel even more than in 1917-20, all sorts of groups, wings, and tendencies toward the revolution, regardless of how confused they may be and through what stages they will pass. It is by this process, rather than the steady accession of forces to the Workers Party, that the revolutionary party will take form.

However, for such a party of tens of thousands to emerge in a few years will create terrific ideological problems. Parties that grow over a long period build up in layers, like a coral reef. At their center stands a hardened core and about them the successive layers of gradually less experienced and less trained. A trained revolutionary is an indispensable mechanism in the party apparatus. He cannot be supplied for all the money in the world. He can only be taught and trained in years of activity and study. The trained people are the most vital capital of a revolutionary party. If the trained cadres are too small, such a party would look like our Madison Square Garden demonstration with our little handful swallowed up in the mass of 50,000 anti-fascist workers. Where will the cadres of trained people come from?

Our Workers Party should, if it utilizes its opportunities in the next year or two, be in a position to contribute the most decisive forces. Our role in this respect will be discussed at length later. We now want to indicate other sources of trained cadres.

The bulk of the radical minded workers have until the recent period, continued to find their way into the Communist Party as an expression of Socialism and "radicalism". Our utter disgust with the Stalinist movement leads many of us to want to wipe them off of our perspective. We refer to them as degenerate, as pathologically and hopelessly ensnared in the Stalinist system of thought, as petty bourgeois, as dilettantes, etc. The fact remains that there is hardly a shop or union in which we have people that the Stalinists don't outnumber us. And in most of the cases their forces are composed of worker militants. Is it conceivable that great mass movements, the emergence of an independent class party, violent class struggles, and other phases of post-war America as we see it will leave them 100% solid in their monolithic devotion to Moscow? This is inconceivable. Furthermore, experience and observation in the trade union movement has shown the author that we have a great effect upon the Stalinist workers where we operate as an intelligent and active progressive force. The Stalinist poison about "Trotskyites" being fascist agents begins to be diluted with doubt when confronted by "Trotskyites" in the flesh who are fellow-workers carrying on a militant struggle. The Stalinist fraction in one ship yard has twice experienced breaches of party discipline because of the attractive force of our policies in a specific situation.

A few months ago some forty shipyard workers joined the Communist Party in Local 1 of the ship union. Whatever one may say about the recent ultra-conservative face assumed by the C.P., the average rank and file workers who joined at Local 1 hardly did it because the C.P. was a conservative party. "Communism" is still radicalism to the American worker. If he joined despite his knowing that the C.P. is the Roosevelt party and the "in-the war" party, he certainly did not join because of these reasons. How long will these forty remain in the C.P. with its present course if it is seriously confronted with an active revolutionary party?

It is true enough to say that only a minority of the Stalinists can possibly be influenced. How many? 20%? This would mean, if Browder is right in claiming 80,000, some 16,000 workers. Twenty percent is probably a high estimate. Let us speak in terms of 5% to 10% of the membership. This would still mean a sizeable 4,000 to 8,000.

What is the value, it will be asked, of such former Stalinists when compared with "raw" workers. Any experience with the Stalinist militant teaches us that he is self-sacrificing and serious. If without theoretical knowledge (or worse, the wrong kind) he has, however, been taught to think politically and to think in party terms. The advantage of an experienced political activist over a completely new recruit is tremendous. Once cut loose from the deadening and poisoning influence of the CP, such a militant will quickly become a revolutionary, a valuable addition to the party cadres, a teacher and leader of new worker members. No perspective on the building of a mass revolutionary party can be complete without including the future developments in the ranks of the largest workers party in the country.

A second source of party cadres will come from within the Socialist Party and from those around it. Many will hold it completely impossible for the SP to experience another revival. It seems incredible. But who would have thought such a revival possible in 1928 when the SP, down to some 7,000 or 8,000 members, voted the class struggle out of its application blank and established \$1.00 a year membership? Yet four years later its membership was over 40,000 and some 3,000 members of the youth organization were beginning a rapid leftward evolution. It is true that the reformist Socialism of James O'neal's "New Leader" struck a more responsive cord among workers than Norman Thomas' liberal-pacifist twaddle does today. But this will not prevent

thousands of workers from turning to the SP as the traditional party of "protest".

Perhaps more important than the members of the SP will be the ex-members whom one runs across quite frequently in trade unions. Many of these it is true, have utilized their Socialist training to squeeze into minor posts in the union apparatus where they have become little distinguishable from the run of the mill union functionary. However, many others are workers who play an active and progressive role in their locals. Among them are serious people who will seek a place in a serious revolutionary party when the days of storm approach.

Our activities in the trade unions continually turn up ex-members of the various left parties. In various union situations we have found progressive co-workers in ex-Stalinists, ex-SPers, ex-Wobblies, ex-Lovestonites, and ex-members, of the numerous Trotskyite splinters. Many of these are valuable people with whom it is necessary to take special pains in integrating them in the revolutionary party. The revolutionary mass party of the future will not be a dogmatic sect. Workers with a political past will enter despite their views on this or that phase of theory or organizational procedure. Out of the hundreds of thousands of ex-radical members in this country, certainly some thousands will prove excellent material for the new cadres.

Comment on the prospects of the Socialist Workers Party (Cannon Group) is reserved for last, not because they represent the least important contribution to the revolutionary scene in this country, but because they, as distinct from the others enumerated, are an organized revolutionary Marxist tendency. Next to our Workers Party, the SWP should prove the most fruitful source of trained and educated revolutionary cadres. However, the last several years have shown that the process of intellectual decay and bureaucratic monolithism has made such strides in that party that it is quite likely that the organization as such will not escape becoming a hide-bound sect (like the SLF), with a completely negative attitude toward revolutionary tendencies that are unwilling to see in them the "only true church."

But there are too many first-rate revolutionary types in the SWP to envision the party travelling much further along its present course without violent internal eruptions. These types will insist upon their right to hold and voice opinions regardless of what the "boss" thinks. Nor will his threats to "ride roughshod" provoke results very different from those when they were aimed at us. Despite the growing sectarianism of the SWP and its insulation from reality, its best forces will be saved for the revolution in the process of being driven from their party as "independent thinkers", "petty bourgeois democrats", "adventurists", and other epithets conjured up by the "boss" in his wrath.

It is likely, however, that the path of these SWP militants to the mass revolutionary party will be via the Workers Party. It is difficult to conceive that groups breaking away from the SWP will form any independent organization. The issues upon which they will break will follow the pattern of our disputes in that party and will, therefore, logically lead to their entering our party.

It is not excluded that in addition to the already enumerated groups, workingclass political parties and currents will appear on the scene in the stormy post-war years of which we have no concept whatsoever at present.

They may be groups like the American Workers Party of A.J. Muste which gathered many fine trade union activists into a party that was groping for a revolutionary solution. Parties like the Michigan Commonwealth Federation and other labor party groupings will generate left wing groups within them that will seek solutions beyond the reformist and parliamentary framework of their organizations.

It is necessary that we see the coming period in terms of such party fluidity and adopt a flexible approach rather than the sterile concept that our Workers Party is the only possible instrument for revolutionary change.

However, such a re-groupment must take place around a program and a hardened organization core. This is the indispensable function of the Workers Party. Without it the re-groupment will either not take place or result in some formless type of an AWP on a vastly larger scale. The Workers Party will not, however, become the center of such a re-groupment of tens of thousands in its present role of a predominantly propaganda group. To become the attractive pole for groups and individuals moving leftward, we must first establish ourselves as a serious force in the class struggles of the American workingclass. It will be our role in the struggle and not our fine theoretical articles that will win for us the leading position in such a process of re-groupment. (Just as it was "Minneapolis", rather than the "New International", that impressed the worker-militants in the AWP and laid the basis for the merger.)

What kind of part must the Workers Party become to play this role? We must become a mass party, even if a numerically small one.

It is necessary here to explain that a mass party is so distinguished by its role, its activity, its composition, and its inner-organizational life rather than necessarily by its size. The opposite of a mass party is a cadre party. Lenin's "Iskra" organization was a cadre party, i.e. an organization made up of professional revolutionaries devoting their entire life to their activity. Its main activity was that of a propaganda group that waged a theoretical and programmatic struggle for the principles upon which a mass revolutionary party could be built. The Bolshevik Party of 1911-14 was such a mass revolutionary party. The period from the 1905 Revolution to around 1911 was spent in transition (though not in an uninterrupted course) from a cadre party to a mass party.

By their very nature cadre parties are inclined to be small and mass parties to be large. However, the matter of size is relative. For instance, we stand closer to our goal of a mass party today than did the united SWP with twice the membership we have today.

Though we have made significant steps toward becoming a mass party, above all in the character of our press, we remain today as a predominantly cadre party. We have a party composed in the main of people who are completely at the disposal of the organization, who act as disciplined political soldiers, who make the movement their first interest in life, above occupation, family, or other personal considerations. Without such a cadre as a backbone no revolutionary party can be built. Those who would take upon themselves the grave responsibility of leading the fight for a new society must forsake any stakes in the old.

It is only because such people composed our membership that a party as

numerically small as ours could achieve such remarkable gains in the field of mass agitation. The heavy financial sacrifices that made possible the mass circulation of "Labor Action", the distribution regularly of 25,000 to 40,000 copies weekly, the disciplined work in shops that brought us the hundreds of trade union militants who work with us in progressive groups, all this testifies to the kind of a party we had hammered out. Our party has made the maximum use of our human and material resources to conduct a mass agitation for our ideas. We have interested thousands of workers in our platform and slogans. Every one of our members in industry has stories to relate of the fellow-workers who consider themselves "red-hot" Labor Action partisans. But the type of party necessary to organize and carry out this activity has proven itself incapable of reaping the harvest of our work in terms of workers joining the party.

The main weakness has not been that the workers were impossible to bring in or that they were brought in and then dropped out. The problem begins with the reluctance of our members to even ask the average trade union militant to join. "He is a good union progressive, he sells subs to Labor Action, but he is not party material," is the way it most often is put.

Just what is "party material"? This depends upon what kind of a party we are. A cadre party devoted to propagating complex theoretical concepts would not, of course, be able to assimilate the type indicated above. But a mass party is impossible without him.

Why should not the average worker who supports us by agreeing with our platform, by talking "Labor Action" ideas, by following our policies in the union, by selling subscriptions to his fellow workers and neighbors, why should he not be a member of the party? What our member means, of course, by saying such a worker is not "party material" is that he is not prepared, like the Jesuits, to forsake all and follow the party. He has a family. He has economic responsibilities. He may have a wife who is hostile to our ideas. The union already takes up much of his time. He is not in the habit of doing "heavy" reading. He would not, in short, make the type of member we now have.

Yet it is exactly this type who has always composed the rank and file (and out of their ranks come leaders too) of mass revolutionary parties. They made up the ranks of the Bolshevik Party in 1911-14 and from 1917 onward. They made up the hundreds of thousand of members of the German Communist Party in its heyday. Without them there will be no mass party and no Socialism.

We have in the recent period, in various parts of the country, seen this type making its appearance in our branches. In most cases it has the effect of changing branch life and party habits to make such a worker militant feel "he belongs". But the dead weight of tradition in thinking and outlook resists such a transformation. Eventually, perhaps, enough of such workers will "force" their way into our ranks and, by their presence, gradually effect a change toward carrying out a role as a mass party. But achieving this by means of blundering and blind stumbling means a dangerously long delay in a historic period when months are as valuable as were years in the past. It is necessary that we consciously see where we are going and plan the steps, down to the smallest detail in bringing about a change.

If a thousand workers from the shops were to be brought into our party

in the next year its entire role and character would so change as to be, virtually, a different party. The ramifications of such a change would have their effect up and down the whole range of party life and activity. It is impossible to trace them all. The composition would be changed. It would be a party of workers by birth, not by chosen occupation. We would vastly alter the national and racial composition of the party. The character of meetings, both internal and public, would drastically change. Old habits would break down. The party would have an atmosphere which would make the transition from trade union progressive group to Workers Party branch an easy and natural one. The party's influence would penetrate among strata of unpoliticalized workers whom our present members are unable to reach and influence. No decisive events could take place in the workingclass without our party being an integral part of them. Nor could our party play a role of commentator upon the events. The burning problems of the workers would be the burning personal problems of the bulk of the party's own members. This is what is meant by the phrase "having roots in the workingclass," not the sending of college graduates to work in the factory, as necessary as the latter is. Discussions of "what the workers think" would be impossible in a party in which the workers made their home. Such a party, playing a role in every significant struggle of the workers, would establish its authority among all revolutionary-minded militants. It is in this sense, as a mass workers party, that we would become the attractive pole around which the revolutionary re-groupment would take place.

The first step toward this kind of a party is to understand the need of it, to understand how it will differ from what we have, and to understand that accepted paths of party life must be consciously altered. Without such a change in our attitude and thinking, there will be no change in the character of the party. One of the important aspects of changing our thinking on this question is to stop thinking of our Workers Party as a "Trotskyite" party. The Workers Party is not and should not be a "Trotskyite" party in the sense this is usually meant.

Our theoretical tradition bases itself on Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. We are a Trotskyite party only in the same sense that we are a Leninist party and only in the same sense that we are a Marxist party. If someone objects that the Stalinists also call themselves Leninist and that the reformists call themselves Marxist, let him remember that there are parties that label themselves "Trotskyite" with whom we have no desire to be confused. If some one holds to "Trotskyite" in the belief it aids in identifying us, then let him perceive that it would be an even more unique distinguishing sign if we called ourselves "Shachtmanites". Why is this so absurd and "Trotskyite" so allegedly logical? Isn't it sufficient to be known as the Workers Party, a party that believes in scientific socialism?

Earlier we spoke about the barriers erected by our movement in the fight against opportunism and against the prevailing current. We said that these barriers also separated us from the mass current of our class. Today we must begin to dismantle those barriers that prove artificial. Dogmatism and orthodoxy can spell our doom. Witness the tragic spectacle of the SWP.

We must carefully analyze the problem of what in our practice rests upon the traditions of revolutionary Socialism, including Bolshevik experience in the first place, and what is contraband carried over from the Zinoviev Comintern period via Cannon. We must recognize what we have salvaged whole and un sullied from the revolutionary past and which of our weapons have become

tainted with use against the enemy. Our break with the "Workers' Statism" of Trotsky and the "bureaucratic conservatism" of Cannon was the major surgical operation in cleansing our veins. What remains is residual matter, less important but more difficult to identify, segregate, and drive out.

The years-long isolation from the mass of the workers was not merely ideological. The intellectual requirements for a study of our program and theory was such that few workers had the time or inclination to make the effort. The argument about "socialism in one country" sounded exceedingly esoteric to the average militant in the shop. As a result, we drew the main stream of our recruits from intellectual circles. The composition of our movement was predominantly professional and white collar. This gave rise to an outlook upon the workers which viewed it as "we" and "they". "Trotskyites" were always advising the workers from the outside. Our press always contained "you must do this" and "you must do that". Today, when 90% of our members work in shops and factories the basis for this should have disappeared. Yet the outlook remains. We still do not think of ourselves as a legitimate part of the labor movement. We still stumble over using "we must do this" as if it were from a strange language. This is still the badge of our sectarianism. It remains one of our serious ills.

We must learn to think and to speak as part of the workingclass. Instead of this, there is present in our approach too much of the attitude used in speaking to members of another race, like the Negroes. We discuss the Negroes race problems of necessity as outsiders. No one but a Negro can know what discrimination and segregation mean. We rightly take this into account and discuss it with due regard to this difference. Yet there is present the same regard in our approach to wage workers. We show a certain timidity that restrains frankness. We speak to the workers as outsiders giving the advice. The true proletarian shows no such inhibitions. He is not afraid that he might hurt his fellow-workers' feelings by telling them that they are ignorant about politics and economics and will continue to get "taken in" unless they do "wise up" and, what is more, deserve to be "taken in" unless "they do wise up". The party that expects to sink its roots into the workingclass and make the worker feel at home in its ranks will rid itself of any semblance of that sickening indulgence toward workers which is but the reverse side of the coin of petty bourgeois smugness, of the sort found among the white collar workers who populate the Socialist Party of Norman Thomas.

We must aim to re-capture that spirit of class-consciousness that once was the hallmark of the IWW. There is no really class conscious party in the United States today. Neither the CP, nor the SP, nor the comin Labor Party have even possibilities of appearing to the worker who, under pressure of the economic stress, begins to free himself of petty bourgeois prejudices as the party he instinctively greets with "this is my party, here I belong." No one could be an active member of the old IWW without having the feeling of class consciousness, class struggle, class hatred, and class solidarity penetrate to the very marrow of his bones. "Bobbies" lived with an intense patriotism for their class. They took pride in their proletarian status and fiercely defended it. Their very children were taught to repeat that "my daddy is a worker" and "the workers are the only useful class in the world." Such a class spirit will do more than help the party integrate workers into its ranks. It will help integrate its members who are new to industry into the ranks of the workingclass.

Our movement has rigidly adhered to a class line in its politics. In

the last twenty years, it was only our movement that adhered to a policy that represented the historic interests of the workingclass. Yet there is a difference between the theoretical expression of class viewpoint and the instinctive feeling of being part of the class and its struggles. The theoretical weakness and misconceptions of a Debs and a Haywood made it difficult for them to follow a line that represented the historic aims of the class. Yet we, with our better understanding, have never been able to recapture the workingclass spirit and the class struggle language of proletarian leaders like Debs and Haywood.

The Moscow Trials brought to the fore many people who occupied themselves with the problem of Socialist morality. Many of them, like Eastman, ended up by deserting Socialism entirely and embracing the worst moral practices of the bourgeoisie. Others, like Silone and Ciliga, found refuge in improvisations like "true Christian ethics" or a form of neo-anarchism. Yet it would be most childish on our part to point to their sad evolutions and conclude from them that it is safest to deny the existence of the problem at all. We, of the Workers Party, could not do this and remain consistent with our origins, for we were born in a struggle against the political morality practiced by the leadership of the S.W.P.

The task proved an insoluble one for the Silones and Ciligas, to speak only of those who maintained a personal integrity, because its magnitude was overwhelming to anyone who worked in isolation during the period of the stifling degeneracy. The morality of Stalinism and the reformist bureaucracies was not invented by evil people. Nor will the morality of the Socialist revolution be supplied as a finished code by "good" people.

We earlier mentioned that "Trotskyism" suffered least in the great retreat. We also suffered least in the moral decline. For morals, as we have always maintained, are generally inseparable from politics. Bad politics (class collaboration, opportunism, etc.) will lead to bad morale despite the most pious wishes to the contrary. Who makes a more unctious display of their "morality" than the Socialist Party? And yet their politics leads them to again and again practice the most disgusting duplicity.

We said that morals are generally linked to politics. To this extent we maintained our political morals in the twenty-year long struggle against the current of degeneration in the workingclass. However, it is also true that bad morals may exist in a movement despite its generally correct politics. To the extent that this developed, for various historical reasons previously indicated, in the "Trotskyite" movement, we waged a fight against it that resulted in our break with the "official" organization. Beyond this we can rely upon our vigilance and an uninhibited readiness to re-examine old practices and accepted customs in the light of new experiences and new criticisms. But the revolutionary code of morals of the new movement will really be hammered out in the coming revolutionary fires of the new epoch. We would be foolish to believe that it is possible to offer it a ready-made recipe, above all, when our class has yet to really rise to its feet once more and we have yet to once more make ourselves part and parcel of our class.

Our real contributions will become really meaningful only when we have once more drunk deeply of the rising revolutionary spirit of our class in its ascent. With anchors in our class, with new winds sweeping out the twenty-year accumulation of dust, we will be in a position to help hammer out concepts of morality where the "Socialist" moralizers floundered and were lost.

But like the morals of the Bolsheviks in 1917-20, our generation will be forced to hammer out its revolutionary morality in the ebb and flow of necessity in the revolutionary conflict. Far from the historical myth forged in the recent past by the anti-Bolshevik "moralizers", the Bolsheviks did not take power with any wickedly conceived plans for iron dictatorship and terror. Witness their naive generosity toward armed counter-revolutionaries in the first months, the so-called "honeymoon" period, of the Soviet power. The morals of the revolutionary class are the morals of an army in combat. Its own code of conduct is bound to be conditioned by the sort of an enemy it faces and the conditions under which it fights. It is very naive -- and most dangerous -- to believe that the revolutionary forces will place adherence to a pre-conceived code of conduct above the need of survival in battle when confronted with those alternatives. Yet within these historical limitations, we, as thinking and conscious fighters in the workingclass vanguard, can do much in minimizing the abuses and excesses that are an inevitable part of all mass movements and mass struggles, inevitable because they are composed of the human material developed by capitalist society. Much that we do even today in terms of relations within the party and in relations between the party and other organizations of the workingclass will have its influence in the future. In this sense no grouping other than our Workers Party has shown both the understanding and the determination to actually do something toward creating the kind of relations among revolutionists needed to establish a real esprit de corps and a rebirth of Socialist idealism. We took those steps in waging war upon the political morality passed off as "Bolshevism" by the Cannon regime in the S.W.P. In large measure the almost unanimous support of the youth organization is explained by the fact that the idealism and self-sacrifice of the youth drew them instinctively to our side in a struggle against "bureaucratic conservatism". They in turn re-inforced our own determination to see this fight through and found a different type of party relations in the Workers Party.

This matter deserves a far more adequate treatment than is possible here. If for no other reason, our party must be one in which the returning veteran will find a home. Accustomed to the comradeship of arms born in the face of common danger and difficulty the veteran will seek a movement that will afford the same atmosphere. The Nazis capitalized upon this longing of the veteran in Germany. Their movement, and let not our hatred of fascism blind us to it, create a high spirit of genuine comradeship within its ranks. Veterans were attracted because they once more found the brotherhood of the trenches in the early S.S. units. The veteran returning to our party will seek human relations that are in keeping with our high moral purpose and Socialist ideals. Nothing will more quickly kill his spirit than the sort of "big city" sophistication that borders upon cynicism and reduces revolutionary politics to its barest intellectual outlines.

It may be pointed out that in the last analysis all of the foregoing factors will be inconsequential if we do not have the correct political line. With this there can be no argument. However, this thought often conceals the approach that "if your politics are correct, nothing else really matters." This can be disastrous for us.

It is not our purpose to dwell upon our politics in length here for we assume by virtue of membership, that the politics of the Workers Party, i.e., its program and theories, are the correct answers to our problems today. But it is exactly because we have demonstrated our ability in

this basic sphere without showing any automatic results in organization growth or mass influence that the problems considered in this study become so critically important. From the standpoint of ability in political thought, the four years of the Workers Party have amply demonstrated our right to play the leading role in a revolutionary re-groupment. We began with our break with the theory of the "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" and through a refreshing independence of thought, above all rounded Marxist appraisal of the character of the present Soviet State in our theory of bureaucratic collectivism, with its attendant views on the nature of workers power and the difference between property forms and property relations. If some still fail to assay the full importance of this, let them witness the coming theoretical debacle of "Trotskyism" on the Russian question as the Red Army (Trotsky's liberating army!) defends the "nationalized property" by crushing the Polish and German revolutions.

These four short years saw our further contributions on the transitional program, on the national liberation movements in Europe, on the Labor Party, on the relationship of party and class in the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. Compare this with the musty odor of an old church that prevails in the S.U.P. where "independent thinkers" are frowned upon and Marxism is considered a closed book to be learned by rote.

Our experiences since 1938 in developing a program for the American scene to bridge the transition from capitalism to Socialism has given a great fund of both theoretical and practical knowledge that will be indispensable to the workingclass in the post-war years. If we had some doubts in 1938, the intervening war years have amply proven that history does not permit us the time to train a Socialist workingclass in the European sense. Socialism will be accepted by the American workingclass not as a well-rounded and integrated system of a future society but as the immediate, emergency measures called for in this and that branch of industry to stave off complete chaos. The "practical" minded American worker will yet surprise us with his most "practical" approach to realizing Socialism. Our transitional demands will give expression to these determinations of the class to break the capitalist bottle-necks upon an abundant life.

At present our platform is too long and variegated in its demands. This can be corrected with experience. However, what is more important than the formal platform is the current concentration upon the issue of the day. Beneath the harmless word of "reconversion" there is concealed in concentrated form all the decisive economic problems of our epoch. We must know how to exploit it to the full. As the war comes to an end, the all-pervading question in Europe is: "We must build a new Europe, but what kind of a Europe?" The problem of "re-conversion" in America is part of the same, even if on a less advanced plane. With a background of a depression and a war, we prepare to "re-convert" -- to what? Never in American history have Socialists had the opportunity to gain the ear of the workingclass at a time when the status quo was more in doubt than now. It becomes a real test of our political leadership to be able to find those demands that inject revolutionary solutions into the thinking of millions of workers.

The "practicality" of the American mind has always attracted it to "single plank" panaceas. These need not be planks that are simple to understand nor indicated merely by a short slogan, Bryan's "16 to 1" theory on silver was very complicated to the lay mind. Similarly with the Townsend

Plan with its various complicated provisions. Yet these plans found mass interest because they, rather than an attack upon all aspects of what exists, appeared as decisive cures. In this sense it may prove that one or two concepts of our transitional program will touch the heart of the problem. In this case we will be wise to concentrate upon such a "plan", become everywhere identified with it, and be known as the party of this "plan".

This approach should be but one aspect of our all-round emphasis upon "Americanizing" our approach. We must be as American in our approach as the Russians were Russian in theirs. The warnings of Lenin at the Third Congress of the C.I. against imitating, instead of learning from, the Bolsheviks are in the spirit that we want to speak about "Americanizing" our approach.

Our traditions are so heavily European that we must begin to consciously study the American labor background in order to make ourselves part of the tradition. We are familiar with the international holidays of labor and international heroes of the workingclass but far less so with those of native origin. Before we can make the American workingclass understand the significance of these international symbols and traditions, we must make him understand and appreciate his own native symbols and traditions of class struggle.

A.J. Muste was once the great exponent of "American" radicalism in this country. We have much to learn from the techniques of the Muste movement in speaking to American workers. What was wrong with Muste's party was its centrism, its formlessness in theory, its lack of a programmatic heritage and roots. He tried to create something artificially in an empirical manner. We have a firm foundation. For us it is a matter of adaptation.

More than the Muste experience, it is necessary that we study the experiences of the IWW, the old Socialist movement, and other aspects of the American labor tradition. We must learn to speak Socialism in American terms as Debs once did.

Whereas our transitional demands will be our avenue of approach to the mass movements of the workers, our means of wielding mass influence upon the course of the class struggle, it will still be necessary to continually speak Socialism as the way out. Among other reasons, it is necessary to give to the advanced worker a glimpse of the future we are fighting for and inspire him with that idealism necessary to decide to throw in his lot with the revolutionary party.

Such Socialist education must continually stress the newness of Socialism, the fact that it has never been really tried anywhere, that it is as stream-lined as plastics, sulfa drugs, the auto-gyro, television, the rocket plane, pre-fabricated houses and the photo-electric cell. Americans are mechanically-minded, above all the workers who daily handle the marvels of modern science in industrial production. We must constantly tie up "Plenty for All" and a "Socialist Plan" with the abundance made possible by modern industry.

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The perspective here indicated is offered for the serious thought and discussion by both the members of the Workers Party and the many unattached revolutionary Socialists who are seeking a political home. As stated at the outset, the development of a perspective cannot be the "plan" of one person. Many of the ideas here emphasized may be considered too extreme. Countless other details will be subjected to this or that criticism. It is to be remembered, however, that in a polemical document of this sort the points are scored without always being able to always make proper qualifications. It would be a misfortune if the discussion were to lose itself upon such narrow, even if important, details. What is important at the outset is an appraisal of the need for an embracing perspective, the directions here indicated, the possibilities of achieving them, etc. It is with this advice that I place the study before our party and the workingclass public.

July 23, 1944

Ernest Lund

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Aug. 1944

THE POLITICAL-ORGANIZATIONAL STEPS TOWARD A MASS PARTY

(Part III of "Toward a Party Perspective")

Organization has always been the weak side of "Trotskyism". We do not have a tradition or a body of experience in organization. Above all do we lack the organization experiences necessary for a mass party. We lack good organizers because they must come from a movement that has something to organize. Our pre-occupation with the field of ideas left little energy to devote to organization. We have always proved better at organizing factions than in organizing mass meetings. Our organizational life is generally dry, boring, unimaginative, colorless, and inefficient.

This is one of the prices which we have to pay for our long isolation from the main stream of our class. We were the purveyors of ideas. We organized mimeographing and distributions at meetings. Our realizable task for the last decade and a half was not to organize the masses but to reach the most advanced with our ideas.

In this sense the "conservatism" of Cannon was the typical expression of "Trotskyism" on the organizational side." Why bother about those secondary matters? The main thing is the attractive power of our ideas. Give them a leaflet. If it contains our ideas it will make an impression. If the mimeographing is bad, if the meeting is colorless, so what? The worker will come to hear what we have to say, not to be entertained." Innovations like the use of red ink masthead in the "Challenge of Youth" were considered a sheer waste of money by the party leadership. The use of cuts (pictures) in the paper was also considered thrown away money. "If the worker is serious he will read what we have to say." Cannon consistently opposed publication of cheap pamphlets because "pamphlets should make money for the party."

We have waged a war upon many of these concepts, beginning with the struggle against "bureaucratic conservatism" in the S.W.P. and continuing through the four years of development of the Workers Party. We have made considerable progress. Our outstanding achievement is, of course, "Labor Action", the first really readable and effective exponent of our ideas among the workers in the shops. But when we cast about beyond the paper, our progress is almost microscopic. The heavy hand of tradition still lies upon the movement. Our members in the shops, who directly bear the responsibility of bringing workers closer to the party, uncomfortably sense that we have little to offer beyond our paper. In this sense "Labor Action" represents the party of the future which we hope to become. But we remain the anomaly of a party organized as a propaganda sect but publishing a mass paper. The reader of the paper gains a false impression of our party, not only as to size (which is unavoidable) but as to spirit, method, activity, and atmosphere.

In the various parts of the country and in the different branches the rank and file members have acted as a pressure against our traditional party-life and party practices. This instinctive pressure has brought about innovations here and changes there. The conflict between the type of paper we publish and the type of supporters it gains us, on the one hand, and the kind of party we have on the other hand, results in intuitive changes from below. The party member in the shop has his nose up against the buzz saw and he begins to react in a progressive direction, getting a new outlook on our problems and stumblingly seeking organizational solutions.

But nowhere does the lack of boldness and imagination strike one so sharply as in our top-most circles. Routinism and tradition seem to seek their final refuge here. In a propaganda sect it is the theoretically and politically able who rise to the leadership. This is natural and necessary. Our organizational methods reflect it. The pressure of new problems created by our mass paper seems to reflect itself last of all in our party summits. As a result, our party changes from the bottom up. This leads to an uneven development and disjointed, planless tendencies. The leadership must become sensitive to changes in the basic units of our work and draw upon them to guide and direct the development of the party. Experiences must, of necessity, come from the ranks. But they must be interpreted into directives from on top. Our trouble is that the leading personnel seem to lack a "feel" for the experiences and problems of the field. Our National Office has, of course, generally approved the steps taken locally to meet our changing problems. But it is the task of a leadership not merely to approve but to lead.

Our organizational weakness is not an administrative matter. Without a well-run office, which requires a staff and money, a small party cannot avoid a certain amount of administrative inefficiency. But it is not that of which we speak here. It is our weakness in political-organizational leadership that is most telling. We are weak in this sense because such leadership means directing the party in the specific actions in the class struggle. This is just another way of saying; organizing the "party campaigns."

A propaganda group does not have the worry of "campaigns". Its campaigns are purely literary affairs. It plans to concentrate some articles upon a certain topic. That takes care of the "campaigns". And the articles are usually easy to write, if one is grounded in the Marxist fundamentals. But when it comes to taking responsibility for a progressive group in a union, or for a union local, when it involves the introduction of specific motions and resolutions, and concrete actions of various types, it becomes something quite different. The member of a propaganda group appears at a meeting and distributes a leaflet. If the workers remain unimpressed he just goes home and feels he has done his duty for political clarity. But the member of a mass party in a trade union who plays a prominent role occupies a responsible position in the eyes of his fellow workers. They look to him for a lead. The party's campaigns must be such that he can translate them into life in the arena of the labor movement. It is in this respect that we are weakest. Here we reveal our limited horizon, our propaganda group training, and our lack of mass movement experience.

Our members in the specific situations tend, as a result, to learn more quickly than the leading staff which is removed from the immediate problem. Yet it is the leading staff that must formulate our position and translate it into terms of a campaign. The usual tendency is to plan our campaign for the pages of "Labor Action" and let it go at that. The members in the shops and unions must work out their own answers on the spot. The center lacks an awareness that the bulk of our members are confronted with the problem of operating on the basis of a party campaign in far more difficult circumstances than an easily-written article in the press would lead one to believe.

Our "Cost-Plus" campaign had no meaning in the life of our trade union fractions. True, the slogan was regarded as experimental from the very outset. But there were no directives sent out to the branches on what was ex-

pected from them in this campaign, what our people in the unions were to do, etc. The point to be noted is that in conceiving of the campaign there was no thought or planning devoted to its place in the life of our party. It was thought of solely as a slogan for "Labor Action" and a pamphlet.

Our role in the ALP election campaign suffered from the same approach. During the whole first period of the primary fight we contented ourselves with our usual role of spectators and commentators. We incisively analyzed both camps and rendered our judgement upon them. As the campaign drew to a close we belatedly became aware of the need to give leadership in circles where "Labor Action" and our trade unionists exercised influence. This was progress. Five or six years ago we would have been satisfied to remain commentators throughout.

(Whether we could have intervened with one or two independent candidates of our own -- Coolidge or Shachtman -- would have depended upon what forces we had available. The position that we cannot run in the A.L.P. primaries because it is not a genuine labor party but that we can, however, endorse the Dubinsky ticket as the lesser evil seems untenable. Our candidate could have secured press notices, some radio time, and the right to speak to ALP clubs. A mailing of a special issue of "Labor Action" to ALP registered voters -- list can be secured from Board of Elections -- would have brought our views before many workers, including those under Stalinist influence, whom we never reach otherwise. This may have all proven to be impractical from the standpoint of our forces. What is significant, however, is that we did not seriously think of intervening other than through a belated and perfunctory statement in the press. The ALP fight was looked upon as a "dirty business" and, somehow, far from the life and activity of our party.)

In this election year of 1944 thousands of "Labor Action" readers will look to us for a lead on whom to vote for. We are, of course, in the unfortunate situation where our best answer will still seem quite unsatisfactory. However, if we could have run but one Workers Party candidate somewhere in the country it would have somewhat taken the edge off the feeling of futility experienced by the readers of our press. For instance, Shachtman campaigning for Congress in New York would still have had a symbolic importance to workers who read our press in every other part of the country. It would have put us into the campaign. We could have demonstrated in the campaign articles and speeches in our press what sort of campaign labor needs. As it is, we again are reduced to a commentators role. Perhaps the task of securing the necessary signatures to appear on the ballot would have been too much for us. This requires a study of what forces are available, members, sympathizers, subscribers, etc. However, we do not think in terms that impress the urgent need of such a campaign upon us. (If not New York, there may have been a possibility in our California concentration where 10,000 weekly copies of our paper should have built up a considerable voting support.)

We have, of course, carried on a consistent and effective propaganda campaign for the Labor Party. Yet here too the campaign is still too much in the spirit of a propaganda group. After last winter, when it became increasingly apparent to workers that there would not be a Labor Party in the 1944 elections, our propaganda appeared more and more abstract and detached from the problems facing the progressives in the unions. There was a need of a concentrated final campaign for a Labor Party in 1944 during the winter months. A detailed plan of action for such a campaign was submitted but received no consideration. (Appended). Even if this, that, or the other phase

of the campaign was unacceptable; yet with all necessary modifications and amplifications, such a planned campaign would have given the party something to shoot at and its educational effect upon the circles of workers we reach would have been far more substantial than that which we achieved. Such a concentrated education on the Labor Party question would have bolstered our supporters in the unions against the present pro-Roosevelt pressure. Feeling that the Labor Party propaganda is of no immediate importance and under the pressure of the "Roosevelt or Dewey" question, most of them accept Roosevelt as the only alternative.

As it became apparent during April and May that the workers were turning their interest toward the coming elections and regarded the creation of a Labor Party as an impossibility in 1944, we could have still continued for a long period to intervene in the actual union discussions on politics (by shifting the emphasis to a slogan for independent labor tickets as the nucleus for the coming Labor Party. This slogan was raised somewhere in our press upon occasion, coupled with the Labor Party demand. But it was never emphasized or concretized. We could have concentrated upon the argument; "All right, you think it is too late to form a national labor party and run a national ticket. But why do we have to elect a Democrat to Congress from our district? Why can't the president of our local, or the head of some other union become an independent labor candidate? We will organize a local political machine through the unions and get out the workers to vote for him."

As the plenum of the Communist Party met and decided upon the latest turn we greeted it as usual with an article in LABOR ACTION, maybe a dozen copies of which accidentally fell into the hands of Stalinist-influenced workers. Yet we should have known from past "turns" in the C.P. that confusion always prevails for a month or so after the turn, above all after one of such significance as the last, which, for the first time in many years, caused the expulsion of a member of the National Committee. If something was to be gained from the doubt and confusion in the C.P. ranks, we had to strike immediately. Information from within the C.P. ranks has since verified that the membership was overwhelmingly opposed to the turn. The bureaucratic machinery of the party and its efficiently conducted "Enlightenment" campaign overcame these doubts and suspicions by the time of the convention. Yet had we intervened immediately, we may have made our mark with any number of C.P. workers. Even if they would not have come over to us immediately, our name and our paper would have remained in their minds. Such a campaign (organized along lines of appended letter to Political Committee) would have certainly had some results. If thousands of workers leave the C.P. every year in disgust, where do they go? How are they supposed to find us if they do not even know we exist?

The essence of political-organizational direction of our campaigns requires a great sensitivity to what is going on. It is necessary to constantly try to foresee. This should be easier in the center where information of developments in the unions, in rival parties, and elsewhere is gathered and digested. We must be geared to act boldly and quickly. A party that cannot do that usually gains little when it does finally act. Most of these campaigns are only matters of weeks or months.

Our leadership is by and large the best we can produce. It is politically sound and able. It has an excellent record in the first and most important requirement of a leadership - taking the correct political position. This sufficed in a propaganda group. But a party with its members in class organizations, a party that seeks to act as a mass party and intervene in the daily

affairs of the workers, such a party must develop also the ability to give its political soldiers direction in the struggle. Our party is based upon the principles of democratic centralism. Yet the centralism is, in large measure, nominal. There is little centralized direction of party work. The organizer of a branch (at least, outside of New York City) can go on for months and not be "bothered" by the center to do this or concentrate upon that, providing he takes care of routine duties like dues, the paper, etc. A party that has central authority but little central direction is in danger of developing an arbitrary centralism. This results in a situation where locals are left to themselves and not directed until they get into a "situation", for which purpose the center reserves the authority to intervene and settle matters.

The average branch (again, more so outside of New York City) seems far removed from the problems of the national organization. These problems are not brought to them except in a highly theoretical form in pre-convention discussion. The older members of branches should not only be called upon to show branch initiative, but, since our problems are the same nationally, should bring advice and local experiences to the attention of the center. Such pressure from the branches in the direction of solving our organizational problems will greatly strengthen the weak side of the center. In this sense, the steps taken in the last two years toward a rotation of personnel between the center and the "field" are very valuable. Every possible step should be taken to facilitate such rotation.

The National Office should be moved out of New York City. As long as our leadership remains in the New York atmosphere it operates under a handicap in transforming the organization into a mass party. The party center should be located in some Mid-Western industrial city, preferably in Detroit. The traditionalism that seems to feel there can be no movement unless it is based on New York City must be examined in the light of new situations. All the precedents of the C.P. and the S.P. have no bearing on the situation. (At least, no more than the argument advanced in our leading committee at the founding of the Workers Party that LABOR ACTION must sell for 5¢ because the CALL and the NEW LEADER sell for that price and that furthermore 5¢ has traditionally been the price for radical papers.)

Detroit is a concentrated industrial center. It is the home of a basic industry, both in war and in peace. It has the most class conscious workers and the most progressive union movement. It is far more cosmopolitan than cities like Chicago or Cleveland. It promises to become the storm center of the class struggle in the post-war period. All the ills and ailments of capitalist industry find themselves expressed here in their sharpest forms. Reconversion will effect Detroit as no other city. The race problem is a pressing question there. Detroit is simultaneously the center of the most advanced labor party development and also of the most advanced fascist organizations. LABOR ACTION published in Detroit would have many times the effect upon the situation nationally than when published in New York City. Our national leadership on the spot would wield a greater influence on events in Detroit than is possible in New York City.

We have yet to learn the first strategic lesson of military science, the theory of specific concentration of forces. The only way a small army can lick a big army is to know how to concentrate its forces in the proper places at the proper time.

Moving the national center to Detroit requires also building up Detroit as a first rate party center. We should go over the party lists branch by branch

and make a selection of all able people not absolutely indispensable to their local situation. We should aim to have a local of 50 people in Detroit by this winter. This is certainly an adequate base for the national center of our party. It should be likewise a standing rule that all of our boys returning in the coming period should be directed to Detroit with few exceptions. (When large numbers begin returning after the war we must have specific plans for building a second and a third Mid-Western concentration. It should be an entirely realistic perspective to set January 1st as the "moving date" upon which to establish our center in Detroit.

If we were to sit down and analyze what constitutes our main problem in most of our branches we would conclude that it is the difficulty of integrating the new members. Despite our inadequacies, our party does gain new members from the shops. Most of our branches can report one, two, or three workers who have joined as a result of our mass paper. They are different kinds of members. They constitute a problem in finding a place in our average branch. Though there are other necessary measures that must be taken by way of changing the branch to make them fit in, 50% of the problem of the branch is that of educating the new members. If education constitutes 50% of the problem in the branch, it should constitute at least something near that percent of the problem in our center. In a sense, the educational process for the new member in our party is the one field upon which a fairly uniform, national guidance can be given. Circulars cannot tell us much about what to do in the field of union strategy and tactics or by way of recruiting. They can outline a step by step procedure in educating the new member.

Yet we proceed most haphazardly. There is no semblance of planning in education. No series of adequate introductory outlines for new members. No reading lists. Yet it were not as though we begin from scratch in this field. This is the one field where we should have a body of experience to draw upon. More than that, we do have the materials to begin with. All they need is to re-convert them for use by new members. Reference here is to Temple's outline on the "A.B.C. of Marxism" and on the basic outlines from the party summer school of two years ago.

Where we have capable and experienced teachers, we overcome this lack of study material by improvisations of one sort or another. Where the teachers do not exist, our education suffers badly.

It were not as if this required assigning several valuable people to three or four months work. It is not the sheer lack of time that is at stake. It is the lack of urgency, the lack of importance attached to the problem, that permits a certain lethargy to bog down its accomplishment.

The traditions of our movement are highly international. As a result our reading material and discussion material follows the same pattern; The Paris Commune, Russian Revolution, Spain, France, Germany, India, etc. If we are to play our role in an American revolutionary re-groupment and become leaders of a mass party, we must begin to temper our concentration upon international questions with studies of the American labor background. This appears dull to most of our people. The question of the revolutions and counter-revolutions in Europe seem much more attractive than an attempt to understand why a workingclass political party never appeared in America. Yet this is primarily a dullness born out of ignorance of the subject. As one begins wrestling with the historical problems of American labor, as one begins to delve beneath the surface and discover answers to questions about the course of labor history in this country,

the problem becomes just as lively and interesting as that of any other country. The Marxist who is at home with the problems of every other country but his own will never qualify for mass leadership. Here is a field of educational work in our party which we can no longer afford to neglect. If we do, we will pay a price for it in terms of our understanding and authority as the mass revolutionary party takes shape.

We must begin to learn practical techniques in educating the new worker members. It is exceedingly difficult to toss a new worker member a book and say "read it". Aside from difficulty in concentrating upon an unfamiliar subject written in unfamiliar terminology, the people who now come to us are active union men and have little time between party and union work for reading. Yet the very same reason usually precludes their regular attendance at study classes. Much of their initial education must come from outlines prepared with their special problem in mind. (See outline on "What is a Program of Transitional Demands?"). These must be followed with discussion by individual members assigned to assist them. Often one must arrange to visit their homes regularly once a week (usually the night they take care of the children while the wife goes to a movie,) or by meeting them for an hour before branch meetings. If we do not adopt such practical techniques in getting our ideas over to them, the best reading lists and outlines will do no good.

Pre-convention discussions were always a fruitful source of education in the past. With the old politicalized type of cadre membership this was always a period of real "hot house" education. One learned more in two months of pre-convention discussion than in a year of routine education. Yet the presence of large numbers of workers in our party will create difficulties in this respect. How they will be resolved in detail is difficult to estimate. But one thing is certain. The traditional habit of introducing articles (misnamed "resolutions") and asking a vote upon them must be ended. Both the Shachtman and the Johnson documents on the "national question" (above all the latter) were of intolerable length and by no stretch of the definition were they resolutions. The one worker recruit I observed during the discussion read about 50% of the former and 20% of the latter position, and this with conscientious and serious effort. And he was in the party some seven months at the time and had already read several Marxist works. There should be a maximum length to all resolutions submitted for voting purposes (two or three pages). Beyond that the proponent of a resolution can write all the articles and of what length he desires. (The same should apply to "plenum" reports. The written report can be as long as time allows. But the resolution for voting purposes should be a bald outline of the salient points.)

Another pre-convention discussion like the last one and another "theoretical" convention like the last one will have a terribly demoralizing effect upon our party. Few of the new worker members will survive it, and many of the "old-timers" who have seen new hope in our mass paper and beginnings of a mass influence will experience a demoralizing disillusionment. The last convention already threatened to cause the latter in those people who were active in new and promising situations and came fresh from the "field" to see the "old party" with the "old discussion" and the "old type of convention". Following the exceedingly useful and promising active workers conference in Cleveland the drop back to this type of convention discussion was definitely a step backward in the development of our party. Instead of what we had, the problems raised in this document should have occupied the center of attention. Of course the "national question" is important and the political training of people in this problem is important. But it is very narrow-minded to think that only

a discussion of European revolutionary perspectives can afford material for the education of Marxists. Such a convention must not be repeated. It is no answer to state that it is a minority that determines the course of such a discussion. If this is true then we are doomed to a vicious circle of such discussions. For there will always be the minority, even if only of one, who will raise the roof about this that or the other question which those involved think is of "burning importance" and means the "life or death" of our party, or as they are wont to say "Go wrong here, and etc...".

In the field of our propaganda and agitation (outside of "Labor Action") one becomes quickly aware of a certain lack of "feel" on the part of the center for the needs of the "field". Since "Labor Action" appears weekly, it is commented upon frequently enough from various sources to afford the center a possibility of testing "what goes over" and what does not. However, the great need for other literature, mainly pamphlets, felt everywhere by party activists in the lower units of the organization impresses itself ineffectively upon the center. Yet this one field of activity where the wishes of members in the shops, who daily face the difficulties workers experience in trying to understand our ideas should be given great weight.

In one sense, our propaganda pamphlets must be planned in the same systematic method as our internal education of new members. We begin, of course, with LABOR ACTION. Then we follow with PLENTY FOR ALL. But then what? We have nothing to fill the gap between this and the Marxist classics. Temple's "A.B.C. of Marxism" in a revised form for more popular consumption should be issued as a printed pamphlet. This would help considerably. It would serve as a link in the educational process to carry the thinking of the workers beyond the level of PLENTY FOR ALL.

Next we need a series of more or less "standard" pamphlets, written less from a current standpoint and more from a basic approach. In this category we need pamphlets on (1) the nature of the present war, (2) Fascism, its roots and how to fight it, (3) Why Russia is not a Socialist country, and (4) Our "Plan" for Post-War America.

Is it utopian to expect that we can get them written and published by next winter if we really set out to do it? Maximum writing time on any of them should be one week. The pamphlets will pay for themselves. Certainly it would have been far better had the time and money expended on a "Cost-plus Wage" and "Incentive Pay" been used to turn out "standard" explanations of our basic position.

Two pamphlets of an agitational type that would find real use for the coming period would be one devoted to the question of "What shall be done with Germany" and another to the problem of race prejudice and hatred. The former would be at least one serious step toward implementing our "national" resolution in the direction of creating a bond of international solidarity with German labor. The latter would give our people a great weapon in a field where they now must rely upon the distribution of material like the "Races of Man" pamphlet. It is about time that we discovered the truth we have been all but stumbling over in several years of work among Negroes, i.e. that it is more important for us to combat white chauvinism than to tell the Negro how badly he is being treated.

In popular agitation we must develop the technique of reprints of LABOR ACTION stories that prove a great hit. There must have been at least a dozen

in the last year or so that proved exceptionally popular. These can easily be printed in large editions for promotional purposes. It is one of the disgraces of our party that the "Seaman Walsh" article was never issued as a leaflet. And why was it not? If that question is honestly answered we have the key to what is wrong with our center in the field of propoganda and agitation. We felt obliged to distribute a hackneyed leaflet to the Stalinists' Madison Square Garden meeting (at a time and at a place where it could do little good) but "never got around" to ordering the printer to reprint the "Seaman Walsh" piece.

We need a good piece of literature for distribution among workers influenced by the Stalinists. But this should not be first printed and then means sought to distribute it. In this case we must first decide what chances we have of reaching any number of people in the Stalinist circles and how. Then we can write the literature to suit this purpose.

In the field of the revolutionary movement (i.e. S.W.P. members, ex-members, and sympathizers of "Trotskyism" in general) we need a large-sized pamphlet in reply to both Cannon and Trotsky as presented by the two recent volumes of the S.W.P. This has been long overdue. Both of the above circles (S.W.P. and Stalinists) must be reached if we are to strengthen our position in the coming several years of re-groupment on the American left.

As we develop our activity as a mass party we must learn new techniques of agitation. There must be great attention paid to this aspect of our work for here our traditions are very restricted. Our techniques in mass agitation have not kept up with the times. We are not a single inch beyond the techniques of the days of Debs. We need imagination, new ideas, and a sensitivity to adapting the advertising techniques of capitalism. One of our projects should be an illustrated edition of the case for Socialism with a text adapted from PLENTY FOR ALL. With time and both professional and amateur assistance we can produce such a booklet in the style of "Life" magazine. It can put across our ideas and arguments with punch and vigor in one quarter the time needed to read something like PLENTY FOR ALL. A mass party must think in these terms. Similarly, we can, with less outlay than most think, produce movie shorts that hammer home one or another of our ideas. We have connections, both professional and amateur, that would be glad to assist. The radio is, of course, practically a monopoly for capitalist views. But we have never seriously attempted to "break in". If we can get one of our leading spokesman, particularly Shachtman, on the ballot, it would be far easier to get on the air. But even as it is, censorship of speeches and all, it would pay to investigate the possibility of using the radio. A radio fund drive through LABOR ACTION would produce funds we have never tapped before. Speeches devoted to immediate problems can conceivably get by. If not, we have at least explored its possibilities to the end. Modern recording methods are fairly cheap. A mass party will find great use for recorded lectures for study techniques, agitational speeches, etc. (Already used in Debs' time.) Why cannot we modestly begin with an educational recording on "What is the Workers Party and what it Aims to do." The great number of LABOR ACTION subscribers in small towns and hamlets and farms who never get to hear one of our speakers would find great use for such recordings. But more than that, it would prove a great asset in explaining our ideas to contacts.

Are such techniques unimportant? Yes, without a doubt the main thing is what we have to "sell", that is, our ideas. These must be correct and attuned to the needs of our epoch. But the difference between success and failure can

also be our techniques of putting our message across. The Nazi movement success was sweeping and swift because the Nazi leaders proved masters in mass propaganda. Why should Socialists console themselves with the fatalistic thought that "history" will bring the masses to us when the time is ripe? Does this sound impatient? Yes. But without an intelligent impatience with inertia and lethargy we will continue to be satisfied with crumbs when loaves are available. We need not only what is usually called "boldness" in our circles, but also what is called "brass" in the American vernacular. A membership that has sacrificed so much out of sheer intellectual conviction in the rightness of its ideas, will give examples of really outstanding self-sacrifices in time, money, and effort once it sees results.

We must look ahead. Our party needs its own "post-war planning." We speak much about "re-conversion" and the economic chaos and unemployment that will result. We write an article about it in the paper. But are we really girding ourselves to intervene in this situation? We continue to live on as if the war economy will continue indefinitely. This is in keeping with our tradition. We never seek the organizational conclusions of our correct political predictions. We print a manifesto from Italy and stir up the party about our connections. But we make no effort to distribute the manifesto in Italian labor circles and establish connections with the thousands of Italian-American workers who will again spring into Socialist activity with the rise of the Italian revolution. We write an excellent article in the N.I. analysing the coming debacle of Trotsky's line on Russia ("It is Time to Think" by M.S.) but we make no plans to place the issue into the hands of S.W.P. members and sympathizers. We must learn that politics yields no results unless aimed at specific targets.

In this sense our party must try to perceive what will be required of us in the immediate post-war period. Most certainly there will once more be the rise of a mass unemployed movement. What do our members know about the unemployed movement of 1930-38? Here are rich lessons for revolutionists. Why cannot the party prepare a study of the unemployed movement, its weaknesses and failures and the weaknesses and failures of our own political approach to the organized unemployed. This should become subject matter for branch discussions to acquaint our new membership (probably 85% have come in since the depression ended) about the mass unemployed organizations, their structure, their tactics, etc. New phenomena like the role of the veterans among the unemployed, the relationship between the C.I.O. and the organized unemployed, etc. Both the rise of the unemployed movements in 1930-32 and the rise of the C.I.O. in 1935 proved that small groups can play important roles in mass movements if they are alert enough to get in on the ground floor. The "Trotskyites" missed out on both of these for varying reasons. We must be prepared this time. We must plunge in with an understanding of what we want and where we are going.

We must look ahead to a period of turbulence and violence in post-war America. Certainly if the Coughlinites and others assumed threatening proportions in 1938 we will see organized fascist activity springing up everywhere immediately after the war. The guerilla war between the native fascists and our own forces that began in the pre-war years will immediately be intensified against the chaotic background of mass unemployment and mass discontent. America will surely drift into a political situation as prevailed in Germany in 1930-33 when only that party could meet and conduct its activity that was prepared to defend itself against violence. We must begin thinking in terms of a party guard as a nucleus for larger anti-fascist detachments

of workers. We will have plenty of trained people at our disposal (so will the fascists). If nothing practical can be done about this for some time, we are at least advanced by merely thinking and planning in these terms.

It is necessary that we review the step we took in liquidating the youth organization. Whether this proved correct or not, it must certainly be viewed as a temporary expedient to meet an emergency. The absence of a youth movement will prove a terrific handicap in the post-war period. No one seems to appreciate this as fully as those who themselves have gone through the youth movement. We are already beginning to suffer terribly from the absence of a youth movement for the last few years. We are suffering from the absence of a supply of secondary leaders (branch officers, etc.) who in the past came to us from the youth organization with a thorough training in theory and action. Witness who made up our party after the split with the S.W.P. Witness who makes up the leading cadres today. Without a youth movement we will not receive such material for leadership.

Today, the basis for a youth movement is limited. Yet practical experience has shown that a youth group can be built despite the absence of males of military age. Aside from the girls, there are those under 18 and those rejected for service. The Socialist Party is the only organization making headway in this field (aside of course, from the liquidated Y.C.L.).

The first step toward the reconstitution of the youth movement has been taken in Philadelphia. The group was not particularly an accidental development nor was it a project that involved the time and efforts of the branch. It involved a few of our younger members, who, left pretty much to themselves, have made remarkable progress.

It is necessary that we begin immediately to undertake such steps locally wherever practical. For the youth movement is a peculiar type of organization with problems quite different from a party organization. It requires a leading staff of its own intimately acquainted with and trained in the special problems of a youth movement. Such a staff cannot be conjured from nowhere when we decide (no doubt, due to success shown by political rivals in this field) at some future time to begin a youth organization. We must begin to train youth leaders locally so that the post-war movement will take shape rapidly as a national organization equipped to appeal to the mass of discontented and disillusioned post-war youth. The latter will prove one of the powder-kegs in post-war America. Hitler got them in Germany. The hope to win them for the Socialist cause will only be realized if we have the means of appealing to them -- a Socialist youth movement.

The art of political leadership is something more than just understanding theory and being able to give the "correct" answer to events. It means being able to see ahead, to anticipate the turns in the economic and political situation and their effects upon the workingclass and the various tendencies and developments within the class. This means learning the art of knowing (1) when to strike out toward a specific goal in a campaign and (2) how to bring the maximum forces at our disposal to bear in concentrated form upon a single objective.

This is the weak side of our party. And since a leadership more or less reflects its party, this is the weak side of our leading staff.

However, the very nature of the problems confronting us, indicates that our party has already undergone a significant alteration in its role since our members are in industry. Four or five years ago we would not have been troubled by problems of this sort and proposals along the lines indicated could not possibly have emerged. As a propaganda group it was sufficient for us to be theoretically correct and conduct propaganda for our programmatic position. However, as we now set our feet upon the road to a mass party it becomes increasingly evident that we will become the rallying center in a revolutionary re-groupment only if we demonstrate in action our ability to provide political leadership.

The views expressed in this document will find ready acceptance in our ranks, if not in details, most certainly in spirit and approach. This is indicated by the many evidences of members in branches and shops attempting to wrestle with our problems and seeking a solution along the lines here dealt with. However, some will see in it something impossible, quite "fantastic for our handful". Countless arguments will be presented that we don't have sufficient trained cadres, that our best people have everywhere been called away, that our people work long hours and are tired, that the objective situation is not ripe yet, etc. These will be answered orally and in writing when they arise. But let it suffice to make these comments. What perspective do those who think this to be "fantastic" propose? Do they think they can indefinitely lull the party to sleep with the song, that "we need but keep our powder dry and when the time comes the masses will come to us?" This is the argument of tired people, of those in whom past habits have become most deeply ingrained, of those who have drawn nothing more from the Russian Revolution than some sort of mystic faith in the final justice of the workings of history and the "inevitable" victory of our ideas.

Of course, we lack "sufficient" trained cadres. But "sufficient" for what? If we had more trained and politically educated people the transformation would be easier and swifter. In their absence, it will be more difficult and slower. But is this an argument against striking out along a certain road? What is the alternative? To drift? To continue the hybrid existence of a mass paper and a cadre party? This discussion is already a year too late. It should have begun in the National Committee last summer. But only two members showed an interest in it, despite their divergent views. Today the contradictions have already begun to effect the morale of the party in different parts of the country. The people who have maintained a terrific pace of activity in the unions, in the tens of thousands of papers distributed, in the sub drives, are suddenly beginning to ask themselves: "Where are the results? What is the purpose of this grind?" Neither locally nor nationally are they given a perspective. They become a trifle hysterical over failure, impatient with this or that individual procedure or individual organizer. Morale and activity begin to suffer. This is the price for waiting too long. This is what a party pays when it does not keep sensitive fingers on the pulse of events. In short, it is the failure of not knowing when to strike.

Those who speak about the absence of "sufficient" cadres must examine another side of the question. It is not only a question of amount of political experience and training, but the kind of experience and training. Our party suffers from sectarianism in the field of mass organization and party building. This is the result of our whole tradition. It is not a problem solely of the weakness of our experienced forces, but also a problem of their type of training and experience in our propaganda group past. In some places we have had great opportunities to grow and we have had a party made up of experienced

people (West Coast). Yet there were no results. This can only indicate that the perspective and approach based itself upon old concepts of our organizational life and did not capitalize upon opportunities to build a mass party. Is it not likely that this wrong approach to our experienced people, rather than their limited numbers, is what is at fault throughout the country?

Undoubtedly, if we had the people who had been called away our party would be far stronger in the type of responsible local leaders and activists who shoulder the burdens of the organization. But even were they present, would it not be necessary to write a document like this to give us a perspective? Would it not be necessary to undertake to educate the trained and experienced people in a party discussion of these problems to overcome our sectarian past and profit from our recent experiences in the mass movement? Will it not be necessary for these people, when they do come back, to learn from us the new techniques and approaches which we already have adopted over old methods of work they were accustomed to?

Our people are tired from long hours of work? True. But what makes them tired in the sense of affecting activity is the psychological let-down that follows intensive activity without results. They begin to feel that they are on a treadmill without end or purpose. There is as yet little evidence of this. But we must look ahead and foresee such trends rather than hysterically react to them when they strike us in the face. Long hours of work will not cause demoralization where people see progress and hope.

We are all, from the P.C. to the weakest branch, still very immature in the problems of political leadership in a mass party. The first step toward learning is to realize what we do know and what we don't. The greatest danger to our development is to strike false poses. Our leading staff is cloaked with the authority that the politically experienced and educated leaders of a revolutionary party deserve. They are, by and large, the ablest people our movement can produce at present. Yet they, as with the party as a whole, must approach our new tasks with modesty. We must all seek to learn. The new problems and the innumerable new questions that confront us must be more frequently and more speedily made the concern of the whole organization. We must loosen up on our methods of internal discussion and exchange of views. The ranks must be drawn in more frequently on the discussion and solution of the new type of problems presented by a mass paper, trade union influence, and integrating workers into our party. In this sense the Cleveland conference was a long step ahead. But this can also be achieved in many different ways. Bulletins, meetings between the P.C. and fractions, branches, or the N.Y. City Committee, letters to people in key situations soliciting advice, etc. Drawing upon the experiences of the basic units and re-interpreting them for the party as a whole will overcome the situation that causes party changes to reflect themselves last of all in the upper circle.

Our experiences in the last few years have taught us much about mass work in the unions. Among other things it has taught us that people who were never particularly regarded as exceptionally capable in the party organization revealed exceptional ability as leaders in the trade union work of the party. On the other hand, experienced people in party work, among them some who served on the National Committee, showed no commensurate ability in mass activities in the unions. It will most likely be true that in like measure, as we begin building a different type of party, many people long in the ranks will demonstrate little expected abilities for leadership. Likewise, most of our new members will prove themselves more self-confident and aggressive in assuming leading roles in a party that draws in larger numbers of workers from the shops.

We have what we have. We cannot go back to live over our experience since the C.L.A. and resolve to develop better cadres. We must begin with what we have. Upon that there should not possibly be a difference. How far we will go is a question only practical experience will solve. But the job must be undertaken with zest and enthusiasm. Otherwise we can be sure it will not progress far.

This document sets itself the task of attacking the first obstacle in our path -- confusion as to the nature of our problems and how to proceed. It seeks to indicate a perspective and says, "Along this line lies the solution". The line may have many twists and turns and back-tracks. But the writer is firmly convinced of its general direction and as firmly convinced that we must start moving more swiftly and more purposefully. If the party discussion over the ideas set forth here crystallizes a perspective toward a mass party, this document will have served its purpose.

Ernest Lund

July 28, 1944

SOME PROPOSALS ON PARTY LEADERSHIP

Toward A Party Perspective

Discussions on perspective and projected goals always raise the question of our resources. Without a doubt, much that is advanced in this document will find general agreement. But the practicality of trying to achieve this or that will be questioned on grounds of insufficient numbers of trained people. It is apparent without much investigation that we are beset by many insufficiencies -- not the least of which is the shortage of experienced people. But there is also a danger that our obvious handicaps can easily become an excuse for not attempting much that is attainable. Worse, it can become a state of mind which obviates the need of examining our own role as a party leadership and critically inquiring whether we are measuring up to what is required of us. Failures are often explained by pointing to a series of objective factors inside and around the party organization without subjecting our own role to serious questioning. Admittedly, our local leaderships are weak. But what about ourselves as a national leadership. Have we inquired into what we would do if we had stronger local leaderships at our disposal? Have we inquired into whether we have made maximum use of what resources we do have? It is necessary for us to attempt to strike a balance for ourselves and, ultimately, for the party membership as to the strengths and weaknesses of our own role in the party.

The leadership of the "Minority" looked very imposing during the fight in the S.W.P. We had the real intellects, the thinkers, the innovators. Cannon had his stooges. But four years of the Workers Party have been an adequate test. Many reputations have settled to their level. The circle of our leadership has considerably shrunk (despite a few excellent acquisitions.) This process is, in a general sense, not unlike what happens in trade unions where oppositions become leaderships. The tests of quality in an opposition leader prove to be different than the tests of capable administration leaders. Our leadership had more shining lights as critics of "bureaucratic conservatism" than in a leadership determined to build a different kind of regime.

Our document on "Bureaucratic Conservatism" (and even more, Shachtman's convention speech on the subject) remain as lasting contributions on the question. They were thorough, they were studied, and they dealt with a problem often lost in intangibles. But a re-reading of the document today will show one glaring omission -- a program or perspective that indicated what we would do when we were the regime. Such a document was promised by the Minority but never delivered. Experience now reveals that this was not an oversight. Such a program required talents of a different order. This has remained the weakness of our leadership until today.

Cannon (and Trotsky) sought to make great capital out of designating Burnham as the ideological leader of our faction and relegating Shachtman to the role of "lawyer". Even many of the followers of the Minority had this view. Never did a political strategy shoot wider of the mark. Shachtman was the ideological leader of the fight and he has emerged as the political leader of the new party. More, the Workers Party has been built around Shachtman.

Movements not only produce leaders who best express its aims but they also most often tend to reflect these leaders. This is all the more likely when the movement is small. Our movement is a reflection of Shachtman, both his strengths and his weaknesses.

Our party has survived its first four crucial years because we stood upon a bedrock program that was, in the main, verified by events. More than that, we have pioneered in Marxist interpretations that have added significant contributions to the body of Marxist thought. Our views on the Russian invasions that precipitated the struggle in the S.P., our theory of bureaucratic collectivism which ironed out the old problems that had puzzled the anti-workers statist, our estimate of the national liberation movements in Europe, our enrichment of the transitional demands for the American scene; these have all fortified our standing and our authority as a Marxist current. But actually, these contributions have been in the first instance the work of Shachtman. It is true that they were fashioned in the milieu of our party, that we formulate them, etc. But the fact remains that our party was theoretically able in this period because it had in its leadership the only Marxist mind that produced ideas of major significance in a world otherwise barren and sterile of Marxist thinking.

Shachtman grew mightily during the struggle in the SWP. Feeling full responsibility thrust upon him for the theoretical guidance of our current, he rose to adequately meet the occasion. What this has meant to our movement, above all in the absence of the creative mind of Trotsky, we will only appreciate fully when history has afforded us a richer experience to look back over.

This attempt to estimate the role of Shachtman is neither calculated to be cheap praise or to serve as butter to take the sting out of burns that may come later. It is set forth in an attempt to understand the unique character of our leadership and our party in the past period. Whereas the SWP leaders have vied with each other in squeezing drops of wisdom out of an "unfinished article" or a reported conversation of Trotsky's, we have had the advantage of original and creative contributions from within our party. It is sufficient to witness the situation in the other sections of the international movement which have lacked a first rate theoretician.

But this great source of strength has also a negative side to it. Because of Shachtman's stature in our leadership, the entire organization, with its multiplicity of problems and varying fields of activity, has come to rest, like an inverted pyramid, upon its outstanding leader. As a result, Shachtman is looked to for leadership with equal expectations in fields where he is first rate, where he is second rate, and where he is third rate. His authority as a theoretician is leaned upon to solve problems in matters where he has shown little competence.

Despite Shachtman's personal qualities of honesty and modesty, despite his antipathy to all false poses and pretense, he has always been placed in positions where he was to "do a job" regardless of the roles he was asked to assume or the problems he was given to solve. Yet, whereas he deserves the distinction of being the only first rate theoretician to emerge in the international movement since the death of Trotsky, it is necessary for us to realize that Shachtman is second rate as

a politician and third rate as an organizer. (By this it is not meant that our party also possesses first rate politicians and first rate organizers. The crux of our problem is that we lack both. Its solution must begin with an understanding of this.)

Shachtman is keenly sensitive to trends, thoughts, and possibilities in the realm of theory. And this realm, of course, takes precedence over day to day politics and over organization. It is basic. A serious error here and a catastrophe can ensue. But Shachtman shows less ability in the field of politics; the field of generalship in the mass struggle. It would be little less than amazing were his pre-eminence on the same level in both fields. The Marxist movement has seen few such individuals. Nor has our movement ever afforded the opportunity to develop first rate political generals. Our tradition of isolation has placed the emphasis upon theory, upon program, upon principle. It is only since 1938, with the transitional program, that we have even begun to think seriously in terms of our generalship in the political struggle. Since then we have had little opportunity to test out our ideas in practice. Only in the last year or so, with a mass paper and with dozens of people in key trade union positions, have we achieved the possibility of such practical tests.

As a theoretician, Shachtman is more than just the first among equals in our leadership. In this respect he stands alone. But in political guidance of our party, its demands, its campaigns, its tactics, its slogans, Shachtman suffers the handicaps that beset all of us. Here, at best, he is only the first among equals.

In the field of party organization, Shachtman is poorly equipped. Not only is this comprehended by the leading comrades, but continually insisted upon by Shachtman. Were it not that the leading people continually force upon Shachtman work in this field, it need not even be mentioned here. Yet somehow, an attitude has developed that Shachtman has a dislike for organization and that if only he were sufficiently immersed in it, he would perform wonders.

It was evidently in line with this attitude that, for example, Shachtman was given the organization report at the pre-convention plenum last summer. As those present will recall, my remarks upon Shachtman's report were in the nature of an outburst. Among other things, I vowed never to again vote for Shachtman as reporter on organization, regardless of the circumstances. My feelings were the outgrowth of a series of impressions. My experience in the "field" had made me exceedingly aware of what our organizational problem was. I saw both the possibilities and the nature of the steps needed. I wrote to the center demanding that the plenum be almost entirely confined to organization. I even stated that it would be a test as to whether we had grown out of our sectarian diapers. I sensed that personality problems in the PC might play a big role in the plenum and obscure the organization question. I was highly elated when Shachtman mimeographed excerpts from my letter and approvingly sent it out to the National Committee. I thought this indicated that the leadership also knew what kind of a plenum was needed (coming, as it did, after the successful active workers' conference and the inspiring subscription campaign). I had prepared my document on the "mass party" and it had been sent out to the NC. Blake Lear undertook a reply to it which took a sharply opposing view. I naively believed that the

members of the NC had studied both viewpoints and would, in view of Shachtman's implied agreement on the need of an "organizational plenum", make the problem of the approaching organizational crisis the center of the discussion. This enthused me considerably, since such a controversy in a pre-convention plenum would forecast the kind of a convention we would have, i.e. a convention that would do a job on overhauling our thinking on the kind of party we want and a program of action on how to achieve it. When I discovered that Shachtman was to make the report on organization, I was further impressed with what appeared as an attempt to emphasize the importance of the question.

Shachtman's report proved terribly disappointing. That it was hastily and poorly prepared was indicative of Shachtman's own lack of seriousness about it. Had he made a political report (a field in which he does well even without much preparation), he would no doubt have taken it seriously enough to make preparations. The report revealed a complete ignorance of what was happening in the lower units of the organization, what the problems were, etc. He disposed of the two documents before the plenum which did seek to answer this problem with the remark that, "Between Lund's position and Lear's position, I favor Lund." There were a few remarks about the need to recruit and then the bulk was taken up with what I had feared, the role of Johnson, the role of Carter, etc. Granted that these questions were important and deserved the time given to them. But were they to take precedence over an approaching organizational crisis in the party? Does the heading "organization" refer primarily to personnel and tasks in the leading committee? Why could not the latter have been a special point?

Shachtman answered my attack by saying that he did not believe in Cannon's technique of making agitational speeches about recruiting at a party plenum, that he would do this at the convention where it had a place, and that Lund was a little naive to think we could undertake to build a mass party without first solving the problem in the leading staff. As a result of both the report and the reply, I became firmly convinced that Shachtman's understanding of the party is confined entirely to the theory of party organization. His report (and the entire plenum and, later, the convention) contributed exactly zero to the solution of the organizational questions of the party.

This is not written with a hope to either "punish" Shachtman for a failing or to "educate" him. It is written with the purpose of demonstrating to the national leadership of our party the sore lack of leadership on the organizational field. What is the remedy? Who is to be proposed to take the lead in organization questions? Unfortunately, there is no easy and embracing remedy for this question. Yet if we are to begin solving it, the first step is a recognition of the nature of the problem as has been sought to do here. But there is more we can do. This involves larger questions of the functioning of our leading committee.

The only person in our leading staff who has past experiences that help equip him for political and organizational leadership in a mass party is Coolidge. It is, therefore, not a coincidence that Coolidge's prominence and authority in our ranks has risen with the beginning of our transition to a mass party. As a "practical" he did not share the center of the stage in the ideological struggle in the SWP. But the party, and above all those closest to him in the leadership, have come to learn his true worth in the past four years of the party's existence.

It is, in one sense, unfortunate that Coolidge has come to be regarded so much as a "trade union specialist" in the narrow sense. He is today the person best prepared to give organizational leadership to the party in carrying through the turn to a mass party. His work in Buffalo, his recruitment of new members in New York, his "leg-work" on out-of-New York trips, are in reality part of this role today, though done in connection with his special function. It is necessary for us to examine the nature of Coolidge's duties and activities. It is quite likely, that if Coolidge were to limit himself strictly to directing national trade union fractions and attending union conventions he would in reality not have very much to do. His time is so occupied because he is our "unofficial" national organizer. "Send Coolidge" is the first thought when a problem arises somewhere involving the recruitment of workers, connections with a workers group, etc. Let us recognize what has become an improvisation and organize it systematically. The task of carrying through the turn falls most logically to Coolidge. What we designate his post is of less importance. Whether he is "organizational secretary" or "national organizer" or a third title, what is important is that his job be outlined as directing the party organizational changes necessary to becoming a mass party.

These proposals are made with an adequate knowledge of Coolidge's shortcomings. That is often impossibly dogmatic, that he is given to an exaggerated firmness in holding to his views, etc. This is known to the leading people and, in large measure, to the party as a whole. In a sense these are personal traits that would tend toward a certain stiffness or orthodoxy. But Coolidge has shown that his past experience and "practicality" more than overcome his personal traits in this respect. He, more than any other person in the center, shows a knowledge of what the party is experiencing and, consequently, likewise shows an understanding of the attitude and steps necessary to become a mass workers party.

I, personally, will, without a doubt, find many disagreements with Coolidge on what to do and how to do it. He will, doubtless, reciprocate in his views on my proposals. But far and away, he remains the only person in the national staff with both the understanding and the drive necessary to complete our transition.

Trade union work may suffer to some extent without having Coolidge to give it his first and full attention. It may be necessary to find a make-shift arrangement in handling certain aspects of it. But for the next period it is far more important that we improvise ^{direction} of trade union work specifically than that we continue to neglect serious direction of the party toward the completion of our turn to a mass party.

For a long time most proposals for action along the lines indicated in this document have been answered with a complaint about the overworked nature of the center and the lack of functionaries. It should be possible to now take steps to remedy this. It became necessary for certain "professionals" to work in industry (Lund, Temple, Nevins, Hall, and Stevens.). These should not remain there a day longer than necessary. Every aspect should be immediately explored for securing their release. It is extremely puzzling to hear this question discussed in the first place in terms of money. We have carried much larger staffs in the past with less possibility of raising the money. What is the perspective on functionaries? If an increased staff is financially impossible today,

what will it be within six months when cut-backs really begin to hit us? What will it be after the war? Won't it be necessary to discharge some of our meagre, short-handed staff? Have these questions been investigated? Have we made plans for their solution?

Neither Lund nor Nevins have any business in a plant today. (The situation of the others referred to as "professionals" is not so well known to me). Both are needed in the organization. Both could have the proper arrangements made to be available. Nevins would fill a real hole in the center. He adequately proved in the youth movement that he is an imaginative and efficient administrator who has a reputation for "getting things done." Placed in charge of our tax system and publications, Nevins would probably raise more additional money than the salary paid him. As it is we are not staffed to handle this work properly and we permit Nevins to grind out his life and enthusiasm in "leg work" in the local organization, in addition to long hours on the job.

Our thinking on the financial set-up of the party requires some re-examination. Without a doubt this is one of the serious questions that must be taken up in connection with our turn toward a mass party. (However, it would be most unfortunate if the discussion turned around this point as it did at the plenum.) But aside from this aspect of the financial question, there is a more immediate one. This comes to the fore with the question, that must strike one; what causes our financial crisis today? We have been without a serious financial crisis for almost three years. We began with what appeared a "revolutionary" (some thought Utopian) system of 10% tax on wages. The youth organization had already shown that it was practical, given a critical situation and a certain type of membership. Since then we have stepped it up to what would have appeared as phenomenal some years ago. The success of our tax system has wiped out all the scepticism once voiced about it. But it has replaced it with an equally dangerous frame of mind. We have come to regard this as a normal method of financing the party. It is no longer regarded as a war-time emergency, a crisis measure. The concept has developed that we can just go on month after month and year after year and determine the party income by vote of the PC. Even a government body, with courts and police to collect with, has to take into account the matter of "collectibility". After a period, a situation can develop where all the tax schedules, all the provisos for showing wage stubs, all the "tightening up" on shirkers, will not produce the money. We have forgotten that finances, too, is a political question. In place of this solid and old truth, we have come to regard it as an administrative matter. Our people felt the pressure of the war crisis upon our movement. They responded to our tax proposals. Then we developed our first successes with Labor Action and the enthusiasm generated made possible further stepping up the schedule. But we are now in a stretch where it is no longer considered as a heroic measure in a crisis. Our people see it going on and on. On the other hand, they see the movement marking time. We hold a rip-snorting discussion on the national question and adopt a position at a convention. Yet the people go back to their machines and work benches and grind out the weary hours without seeing any immediate effects in the life of the organization. The proud feeling generated by 40,000 LA circulation begins to sag as the party shows no commensurate gains. Where is it heading? thinks the average party member. Without giving it too much conscious thought, he begins to think this, that and the other personal need he has postponed during his enthusiasm for the movement.

He begins paying less on one or another pretext. The center begins experiencing a financial crisis. It responds with letters to the branches, with mechanical motions on wage stubs, etc. But the crisis persists. Like the peasants during War Communism, our people begin to lose their fear of administrative measures. The system begins to degenerate. We must face the facts. Let us not delude ourselves. If we continue to drift as at present, we will be forced to declare a NEP in our finances. Our only hope of increased income is boldly striking out on new paths. Our members will respond, but they must be shown results. A larger staff is not a strain. It is an investment with quick returns.

Our staff, in reality, consists of Gates plus more or less purely technical assistants. No one at all acquainted with the trying period of the last several years will forget the services rendered by Gates. He became our "man Friday" who was shoved into every breach. He was called upon to do diverse tasks, from keeping books to writing the theoretical journal. In addition we burdened him with the title of "organization secretary", a post he was not given the time to really fulfill nor one in which his past experience and inclination suited him. Worst of all, he was deprived of the opportunity accorded most of the other of us in going into the shop, or at least, into the "field" to develop a "feel" for the new problems of the party. It is necessary that we stop thinking of Gates as the last stop-gap. We have other resources if we free our thinking of hum-drum routines. We must develop a more adequate staff and find a place for Gates where he can devote himself to some more confined field where he can function to the best of his ability.

In fighting Cannon, we counterposed to his regime of cliquism and "leader-principle", the alternative of what we called a "collective leadership." It is necessary to frankly state that the Workers Party has not produced a "collective leadership". Our fight against "cliquism" in the SWP has had a healthy effect upon our own development. Our leadership has been little troubled by cliquism. (Except for a time when there was unhealthy talk about certain members forming a "Marxist core" in the leadership.)

Far from suffering from "clique control", our leadership has suffered from a lack of inner cohesiveness of any sort. Our weakness is the individualized, atomized, and uncoordinated character of our leading staff. Instead of a "collective leadership" we have a collection of individual egos. This may be a considerable improvement over the Cannon-type of a regime. But it has most harmful effects upon the course of the party.

The most glaring example of this, of course, is the role of Carter, Johnson, and Allen. Each of these constitute different problems. Carter, whose talents as a theoretician and teacher are second only to Shachtman, has been outside of the leadership for some three years. It long ago became apparent that his self-imposed isolation was based upon a feeling of basic disagreement with the nature of the "regime". Yet his real views on this question, aside from hints or surmises, has remained a dark secret. His demotion has only been a gesture. It in no way affected his role. He still maintains his connections with the Workers Party via the political committee. Nor will his status change until he is either forced to accept a post or removed from the national committee. Until then the "Carter case" will continue.

Johnson has emerged as the leader of a vaguely definable ideological current in the party, perhaps best defined as a species of inconsistent sectarianism. Due to his own conduct on the committee he has niched out for himself a special role as the leader of the "official" opposition. His attitude and activity (added to the problem of his special status) would create a difficult problem in integrating him under the best of circumstances. As a result the question of "What to do with Johnson?" continues to keep the leading staff in a state of instability.

The prolongation of the problem of Johnson's role in the leadership is one of the prices which we pay for marking time in the party turn. Shachtman spends much time at plenums in attacking Johnson's irresponsibility", his refusal to heed committee procedure and discipline, his connections with co-thinkers in the ranks, etc. Yet despite Johnson's personal idiosyncracies, his problem is primarily a political one and it will only be resolved politically. Defeating Johnson on Russia or the national question, etc., will not solve it. Johnson will always find some other theoretical problem (Dialectics, economic theory, colonial question, Negro in the U.S., agriculture, etc.) upon which, if he is taken seriously, he will open a new fight.

The Johnson current in our party and Johnson's role in our leadership must be tackled as one of the problems of the party itself, i.e. the political and organizational questions that confront us rather than the theoretical ones. This is, in the final analysis, the only field in which either a sectarian or an opportunist current can be put to the test. We will never resolve the problem of Johnson's "irresponsibility", etc. as organizational problems of the leading committee. The problem cannot be solved within the ranks of the leading staff. It must be resolved in the life of the party. Today, Johnson's views play little role in the actual life of the party. The longer we postpone the discussion of a real turn toward a mass party, the longer will Johnson be afforded the opportunity to exist as a current quite at home in a propaganda group. Had the plenum of a year ago seriously taken up the organizational crisis facing the party and given the convention a bold lead and a perspective, the ranks would have eagerly snapped it up and it, rather than Johnson's preoccupation with the national question, would have held the center of the stage. A sectarian current never finds a more unfavorable milieu than a party that is getting down to some practical work.

As for Johnson's own future in our movement, his special talents would land themselves far more fruitfully to a mass party. As a speaker, an agitator, a public figure, he has already given examples of his ability. His work in southeast outweighs, in the life of the party, his combined writings on theoretical problems. (How a sectarian can be a successful mass figure need not be expounded in a document for the N.C. The two problems have a relationship of their own.)

(Comment on Allen will be omitted because of the predominantly personal character of the problem).

Granting all the difficulties created by the special cases of Carter, Johnson, and Allen, there is exhibited on the part of the rest of the committee an attitude that serves to sharpen rather than reduce these difficulties. This is an attitude of impatience with criticism and with critics which often suggests itself of a certain smugness. While still in the center, my criticism of varying phases of our work at meetings of the P.C. produced a highly irritated air on the part of those immediately concerned (in this case, Shachtman

and Gates) and brought forth the remark, "What in the hell is getting into Lund?" (Not made in the meeting but in the corridor.) What concerned the committee, evidently, was not so much my criticism as what my motivations were in making criticisms.

There is evidence of a certain spirit of "proprietaryship" on the part of the leading comrades which makes them extremely sensitive to criticism of the departments under their jurisdiction. One sometimes hesitates to deal critically with some phase of our activity for fear that the person concerned will immediately start to bristle. When I presented my document on "The Transitional Program and Socialist Agitation" two years ago, I intended it as a political problem that required discussion to indicate our attitude and orientation. Yet the people immediately concerned with "Labor Action" viewed it as a criticism of how the paper was being written! As a result, Shachtman's proposal that the document be sent to the branches for discussion was defeated on the grounds that the branches could contribute nothing to what was an editorial problem of the paper's staff! The hostility or disinterest, whichever is a more correct description, resulted in the document lying in committee from June 1942 to the Active Workers Conference in February 1943.

Our leadership has too much of a defense-reaction to criticism. We have to learn how to think of our tasks and our activities separately from our own egos. There must be much more of an open-minded and unruffled air in meeting the critic. After all, aside from the occasional malignant schemer, the average critic is a loyal party man who is in disagreement about something or the other and feels it is his party and his concern. He must be met in the same spirit. "You think it's not so hot? Well, let's sit down and see what you propose. Let's see what we can work out. Etc." In many cases the critic has little or nothing to offer. But he will feel satisfied that his concerns are understood and taken into account. He will develop a feeling of responsibility. Only out of such an attitude will he be able to reinforce the people directly in charge with ideas, suggestions, and proposals.

This attitude toward the ranks cannot possibly develop if we do not begin with fostering it in the leading committee itself. Here it will do much to overcome old antagonisms and suspicions. Perhaps Comrade X on the committee is making his criticism or his specific proposal with no other motivation than that he is firmly convinced that he is right, that the question is important, and that he is on the committee for precisely that purpose.

We must create a "collective leadership". Without it Shachtman will still make excellent contributions in theory and convince the majority of the committee and of the party. But without it we will not begin to make up for our lack of capable political generals and, above all, party organization leaders.

It is necessary, to put it bluntly, to quit thinking of ourselves as being "quite hot" on all questions that come up. In the field of political guidance (campaigns, slogans, etc.) and, above all, in organization, we have much to learn. We must learn about the political questions because they assume a different character now that we are in the labor movement and have a paper that yields influence. We must learn about organization because the problems of transition from propaganda group to mass party assume a character for which history gives little precedent. It is, therefore, most harmful to strike a pose that all we need do is get together in a room for a few hours and then inform the party what to do about this, that, and the other problem

about which the people in the ranks may know much more than we.

Isn't this liquidating the concept of leadership, some alarmist will ask. No. This is being realistic about where we can give one type of leadership and where we can give another. We have the general training and experience. The ranks have the specific familiarity and understanding of a problem. What this does propose is that we institute a far more frequent and systematic consultation between the leadership and the ranks.

I sought to bring this concept before the committee two years ago with a motion for a meeting between the trade union fractions and the editorial staff of the paper. This was rejected as a "waste of time", as a proposal for a lot of "gassing", etc. This really indicated a smug and bureaucratic attitude toward the ranks who were alleged to be unable to contribute on this "specialized" problem.

Not long ago our center sent out one of its very few specific directives on how to proceed. It dealt with our tactics in the unions on the matter of the PAC. It proposed that when the PAC came before the meeting and requested funds we were to move that it be tabled on the ground that the PAC had not yet decided whom to support (this being before they came out officially for Roosevelt.) Without exception, every one of our trade union people here in Philadelphia thought this to be the most hare-brained of the possible alternative tactics on this question. Perhaps they were incorrect in this appraisal. Yet without a doubt, no member of the PC could feel so certain about the correctness of this tactic as to justify dispatching it to the party branches as a directive for action without consulting first with the responsible people in the various situations. Why was it not possible to call a meeting of the fraction chairmen in N.Y.C. in which it could be jointly worked out? The P.C. could propose the main line, the political objectives, etc. Our activists could propose the specific tactics which they knew from experience would achieve our purpose most adequately. Would this perhaps lower the prestige of the leadership in the eyes of the ranks? No. On the contrary, such procedure would greatly impress the ranks with our responsibility toward the party activists. With a year in a union, Shachtman would perhaps be our most expert tactician. But without it, it is possible to find a dozen people in the membership whose contributions on this phase would be superior.

Such a systematic consultation with the ranks must begin with a more frequent consultation with the N.C. It has become imperative that PC minutes be kept and provided for the N.C. members. Without them the out-of-town N.C. members are in the dark. When an occasional circular comes asking for a vote on this or that question, it is extremely difficult to know what to do without having some previous knowledge of the development of the question in the committee. After long discussions over several weeks, the P.C. takes a vote. Then it is challenged and sent out to the N.C. It is extremely difficult to open an envelope containing a statement of position and sit down and send a reply.

At present, membership on the N.C. means very little for those outside of New York, with the exception of attending plenums. I sought for a period to make N.C. membership mean more than an honorary title. I wrote regularly and at great length about party problems as I saw them. I tried my best to make myself a part of the machinery of leadership in the party. After a while I wearied of what I came to consider a fruitless activity. Not that some of the letters weren't occasionally answered. But they seemed to have no connec-

tion with the life of the P.C. Whether they were read there, even, I wasn't always sure. (Some I headed "To be read at P.C.") Many contained specific motions to be placed before the committee and voted. Whether they were or not I don't know. I never discovered how they fared. In all likelihood, the extremely informal procedure within the PC did not prove conducive to decisive action like a definitive vote in which I would know how many and who voted for and against.

I have come to believe that the failure to make my letters mean anything in the life of the PC was the result of two factors: (1) the center usually did not know what I was talking about because it was too far removed from the problems of the "field" and (2) the center became annoyed with such "presumptuous", "horning-in" on so many problems I needn't bother myself about. This was indicated by the attitude of those who thought it was a "crushing" reply to me to say that "if Lund wrote fewer letters he would have more time to write for L.A.". We must develop a new relationship between the center and the "field" so that out-of-town N.C. members assume a real role in the actual life of the center.

There has grown up in our leading circles a somewhat cynical attitude towards plenums of the N.C. It is thought that they are a matter of custom and formality but supply little concretely. They talk a lot and pass along resolutions on something like the "role of American imperialism for the last six months" and go home. In large measure much of what is indicated in such cynical criticism is based on truth. But the answer is not avoiding frequent plenums. It is more frequent meetings of the N.C. that we need. If the N.C. met regularly four times a year, we would begin to play a role in the life of the party. It is now seven months since the convention and no official date for the next plenum has yet been announced. What is even more hair-raising is that some members of the P.C. feel that even now a plenum is unnecessary on the grounds that "it would have nothing to do." People who express such views may be members of the same party I belong to but they certainly don't live in the same party I do.

There is a need not only of a plenum, but one that is reinforced by a selection of party activists from key situations who are outside of the N.C. The plenum must meet to do the job that should have been done a year ago. Open up the discussion on a party perspective and outline concrete steps along which to proceed. This plenum should be the first step toward an active workers conference held late in fall or early in winter. It should provide an orientation for a pre-conference discussion on organizational problems. It has recently come to my attention that beside my document there is one being prepared by Coolidge and one by Johnson. I do not know the nature of these documents except that they are supposed to deal with party organization problems. This in itself is evidence that the problems I raised a year ago cannot be postponed any longer. They are forcing themselves upon our leading people and demanding an answer.

But the plenum must be well prepared if we are to profit by it. Please, let us omit the usual analysis of American imperialism this time. Also a few of the routine reports. This plenum should set itself a target and not be diverted. Let us discuss some of the problems, for a change, that people in our branches are talking about. Let our plenum resolutions be short summations of positions that our new worker members will have time to read and let us draw them into a solution of our problems. And let the organization report be the most important on the agenda. We usually write and re-write several drafts of a plenum political resolution. Let us be as painstaking with the organization report.

The forthcoming plenum may well prove the turning point in a forward march to our goal of a mass party. It will prove such if we are determined to make it such.