

This amendment was withdrawn at the Convention; Draper spoke for Majority resolution.

AMENDMENT to the N.C. Resolution on the UNITED STATES

Submitted by Hal Draper

(The following amendment does the following:  
replaces the present "Introduction" with a new Introduction;  
the rest of the present resolution becomes Section I;  
adds a Section II, entitled, "The Perspectives of the Party and the Transitional Program.")

INTRODUCTION

The United States, having emerged from the Second World War as the outstanding victor among the capitalist powers, is now heading toward the continuation of the general and permanent social crisis of capitalist society which was overlaid and concealed, but not solved, by the war and the victory.

In 1938, a year before the outbreak of the war, our movement analyzed the state of American and world capitalism in these terms. The war was not an "interruption" or lifting of this permanent social crisis; rather it was this crisis itself in a different form. The return of peace does not mean a fresh start for capitalism; the system is heading toward the re-emergence of this social crisis in exacerbated degree. The contradictions of the system, having been temporarily suppressed by the wartime economy, can now only boil up again with redoubled fury. This social crisis cannot merely pick up again where it left off in 1938-39. Though the contradictions have been repressed by the hypodermic of the war-stimulated production, they have been meantime mounting. Their re-emergence is bound to be accompanied by an economic and social storm of unprecedented scope.

The next two, three or perhaps even more years will, in all probability, still see the gradual wearing-off of the wartime shot in the arm, or even an ephemeral boom. The onset of a thoroughgoing radicalization of the working class has still to go hand in hand with the development of the crisis itself. This time factor is not subject to short-range accurate prediction. But the fixed point of orientation for our Party is the fact that this is the road ahead of capitalism, in the proximate future, not merely in the ultimate distance.

The immediate present is a period of interlude -- between the end of the war and the precipitous return of the social crisis with increased virulence -- and it is this fact that determines our tactical line for the immediate period, within the framework of our basic orientation. At the same time it affords us a relatively brief span during which to prepare the cadres of the party and advanced workers for the tasks that will follow.

Such preparation must start with: (1) an analysis of the changes in the structure of American capitalism wrought by the war economy, and of concomitant changes in the international relations of American capitalism; (2) a realistic estimate of the present state of American capitalism and of class relations in the United States. And starting out from this basis in present reality, our Party maps its revolutionary perspective on the transition to the conquest of power by the American proletariat, and trains its cadres in the spirit of the Transitional Program laid down in its fundamentals

by the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in the theses on the Death Agency of Capitalism. These are the aims of this Resolution.

Above among the capitalist nations, the United States is today capable of continuing the wartime economic revival into the temporary period of peacetime "prosperity" we have mentioned. But the economic energies that were released by the war's termination are paralleled by the class energy of the American proletariat. Vigorous economic actions, as characteristic of the American working class as its political backwardness, will be particularly characteristic of the period ahead. The onset of unemployment after the relatively full employment of the war years; the return of servicemen into the ranks of the working class, from exhortations-to-sacrifice to the vicissitudes of job-hunting and insecurity; the loosening influence of Negro veterans in the struggle for Negro rights; the threat of native fascist movements like Gerald Smith's to the labor movement — these are some of the factors which will make for the raising of the class struggle to new heights on the basis of the re-emergence of the crisis.

To translate this class vigor into political independence and socialist consciousness is at once the great need of the American working class and the particular responsibility of revolutionists. Linked with this responsibility are opportunities of genuine dimension. The Party proved its revolutionary measure and its distinctive ability to convey the Transitional Program into the specific context of the American life during the war years. With a membership deeply rooted in the factories and unions, and armed with the Transitional Program, the Party has every reason to face the period ahead with confidence in its growth and the reception of its program.

---

SECTION I.

(The body of the N.C. resolution follows.)

---

SECTION II.

THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE PARTY AND THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

The coming period will be one of great preparation for the future. The Party must learn to understand and apply its transitional and reconversion programs in the light of the coming class battles, and learn how to link them to the immediate needs of the masses on the one hand as well as to our goal of the conquest of power on the other.

Our Party was first systematically oriented toward this strategical task through Trotsky's great contribution on "The Death Agency of Capitalism and the Transitional Program". This program was first written and adopted while American and world capitalism still wallowed in the depths of the economic crisis. The Second World War, and the new tasks which the struggle against imperialist war imposed upon us as the overshadowing ones, demanded its adaptation to the conditions of revolutionary struggle in wartime.

This the Workers Party did, and this only the Workers Party did. As the only organization which sought to, and within the limits of its forces did, push for an unremitting prosecution of the class struggle not only against the bosses but also against the governmental war machine, the Party set in the forefront such slogans as "Abolish the no-strike pledge" and "Take labor off the War Labor Board," which added to the 1938 Program the indispensable slogans to set the masses in motion not only against capital, but in particular against the labor bureaucracy and the government. While these implicitly revolutionary demands struck a responsive chord in the consciousness of millions of workers whose militant aspirations were repressed and strangled by the bureaucratic labor lieutenants of capital, it was no accident that only the thorough-going revolutionary vanguard found it possible to organize a militant struggle for them in the labor movement.

During the war, our Party fulfilled its duty in translating the Transitional Program into terms of the struggle against imperialist war; at this, the first convention of the Party after the end of the war, our task is to orient our cadres anew toward the application of the Transitional Program in the period which is ahead. In this way, the Party demonstrates in practice the revolutionary utilization of the Transitional Program not as a lifeless formula but as a living guide to action -- in contrast to the characteristic course of the Cannonite SWP which combined an opportunistic abandonment of militancy and initiative in the trade-union movement with lip service to the Transitional Program as if it were a set of stone tablets. This approach was already anticipated in 1938 when the thesis itself warned that:

"In the very nature of a transitional program, of course, it cannot in advance be given final and finished form. With the changes in the mass movement and in the state of mind of the workers, the transitional program must correspondingly change, to advance or on occasion to retreat, altering the emphasis and utilization of slogans and shifting tactics through which the program is presented."

Just as the emphasis and utilization of slogans inevitably had to alter with the outbreak of the Second World War and especially with the involvement of the U.S. in the holocaust, just as the emphasis and utilization of slogans shifted with the adoption by the Party of its Reconversion Program in anticipation of the immediate post-war period in which we now find ourselves, so also it is necessary to indicate again for the guidance of the vanguard that understanding of the Transitional Program which becomes necessary as the coming social and economic storms draw nearer.

This is doubly necessary since our new members recruited during the war, as well as disoriented older comrades, face the danger of interpreting the Program in either a sectarian sense, or what is worse, in an opportunist sense -- or what is equally fatal, of reducing the whole concept to sterile radical phrase-mongering, as the Cannonites have already at least partially succeeded in doing.

The concept of the Transitional Program is based, first and above all, on our affirmation of the present epoch of society as the epoch of social revolution, as the era of "the death agony of capitalism," which nothing can long preserve. This affirmation is not based on faith or optimism; but rather

that faith and optimism are based upon the scientific Marxist analysis of the contradictions which are digging the grave of the old order.

The economic prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have already in general achieved the highest point of fruition that can be reached under capitalism. Mankind's forces of production stagnate. The tremendous wartime increase in the forces of destruction, far from raising the level of material wealth, have succeeded only in reducing the productive forces of most of the civilized world to a shambles; and even in the United States, where the destruction of the war not only left them physically intact but stimulated the gigantic growth of plant capacity, that very gigantism itself becomes a cancer which is inevitably leading to economic crisis and mass unemployment on the one hand, and to aggressive imperialism on the other -- i.e., precisely to the conditions which can't fail to lead to the round of wars and revolutions which is inherent in our epoch.

The advent of the atomic bomb, with its fantastic, yet soberly real threat of the annihilation of all vestiges of civilization, if not of the planet, has only added startling concreteness to the Marxist warning that the proletarian revolution is the only alternative to barbarism. The same soft-headed liberals who yesterday ridiculed the Marxists for their "alarmist" view of the road before society, today topple over backwards with wails about the unrelieved blackness of the future, lightened only by the beautiful ray of hope that the same imperialists who have loosed this destruction on the world will turn back before the final consummation of their horror.

The economy, the politics, the ideology of the capitalist class are completely blighted by a social crisis, characteristic of a pro-revolutionary state of society. Such an estimate of the epoch we live in does not depend on the current index of unemployment or other conjunctural factors but on the objective conditions of decaying capitalism; Revolutionists alter their emphases and utilization of slogans as imperialist peace succeeds imperialist war and as the state of mind of the workers change; the strategic orientation which gives our tactical line its context is fixed by the objective stage of decline of the capitalist system.

Nowhere in the world is there a greater gap than in the United States between the technical and material organization of economy, which have fully matured for the socialist revolution, and the backwardness of political consciousness of the masses which still revolves within bourgeois limits. At the same time nowhere is there a greater gap between political backwardness and implicitly revolutionary anti-capitalist action of the masses (such as the sit-down strikes of the 1930's or the implications of the G.M. union demands). In these circumstances, to which must be added the threat of a third world war, the prospect of long-drawn-out comparatively stable tendencies such as once characterized many of the older European countries must be ruled out.

This situation is fertile for the rapid and stormy political development of the masses. At the same time it provides the soil for radical and pseudo-radical middle-class movements, and an unprecedentedly rapid growth of an American fascist movement, a soil which such adventurers as Gerald Smith and the recently revived KKK are even now attempting to cultivate. To ward off the danger of fascism, the revolutionary party must find the way to actively intervene in order to direct the discontent of the masses into organized class action, draw into the struggle the lower middle classes, and carry through the

struggle to the workers' revolution which alone can solve the problems.

From these considerations follows the need of a transitional program to facilitate bridging the gap between the objectively-ripe revolutionary conditions and the lagging political consciousness of the masses. Such a bridge of transitional demands must stem from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably lead to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

The old-type socialist program used to consist of two parts: a program of immediate demands, consisting of reforms more or less realizable within the framework of capitalism; and, secondly, a statement of the aim of socialism, as an ultimate goal promised for some time in the future. No bridge existed between these two independent parts of the program; and for the reformist socialists it did not need to exist, because the "ultimate goal" was only a theme for holiday speechifying. Today, however, every serious demand of the proletariat inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state. Even the struggle for the so-called immediate demands for this reason is often compelled to go outside the confines of capitalist law-and-order. The revolutionary character of our times does not free the Party from the necessity of day-to-day work; on the contrary it cannot accomplish its tasks without the most considered attention to even small and partial questions of tactics and scrupulous care to base its tactics, emphases and utilization of slogans upon a realistic current analysis. Insofar as the old, partial "immediate" demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism -- and this occurs at each step -- we advance our system of transitional demands, the essence of which is the fact that they come into conflict with the very bases of the capitalist regime ever more openly and more decisively as the class struggle sharpens.

The adoption of the Transitional Program by the Party meant its entrance on a decisively new phase in the development of a revolutionary party in this country. It meant to concentrate attention and activity primarily on the mass movement. It meant seeking to make the entire work of the party revolve around the objective of making our program known to the American masses. It signaled the turn from the stage of a more enlarged propaganda group to that of a party of agitation, on the road to a genuine party of action in the class struggle. The Transitional Program lays the political basis for the objectives put forward in this convention's resolution on the Role of the Party.

The revolutionary character of the Transitional Program is determined by three considerations:

(1) The specific transitional demands which are formulated at any time to implement it are selected not merely because they sound "reasonable" to wide layers of the working class -- that is, are not separated by a wide gap from their present state of consciousness; and not merely (on the other hand) because the full realization of these demands is incompatible with the bases of capitalist relations; but rather they are selected precisely because, starting from the workers' actual level of consciousness today, their full realization demands a break-out of the framework of capitalism. Insofar therefore as workers are mobilized in consistent militant class struggle in this direction, they are inexorably drawn into conflict with capitalism, with a corresponding advance from social consciousness on one level or another to full socialist consciousness.

(2) Our propaganda for such transitional demands does not limit itself to making them "palatable" to backward workers, but rather seizes every opportunity to expound their full revolutionary implications, and to lead the militants who wish to struggle for them to understand those implications. The propaganda articles in Labor Action and in the New International around the meaning of the G.M. program are examples of how this can and must be done by a revolutionary organ.

(3) Finally, the problem of the revolutionary party, in applying the Transitional Program, is not only to help the advanced workers to understand the general character and tempo of our epoch, but also to fructify in time the struggle of the masses with ever more resolute and militant organizational measures.

Just as our transitional demands from the most elementary to the most advanced are selected and put forward in such a way as to lead the consciousness of the masses in a certain direction --- namely, from immediate and transitional demands to directly revolutionary socialist demands --- so also the organizational measures we advocate are selected, emphasized and utilized in such a way as to lead in a certain direction, namely, to the organizational form which crowns the revolutionary development of the masses --- soviets, or rank-and-file councils of the working people, or whatever other name the American revolution will call them.

Soviets, or rank-and-file councils, can arise only at the time when the mass movement enters into an openly revolutionary stage. Agitation for soviets in the abstract --- that is, not linked with the real stage of development of the workers' consciousness and action --- expresses only adventurism or a literary parlor exercise. The continuing task of the revolutionary party is to educate the advanced workers in and around it with regard to the revolutionary role of soviets, their process of development, and through such education to link them up as the "crown" of the transitional program with the current tasks and revolutionary potentialities.

As in the case of economic and political transitional demands, so in the sphere of organizational measures --- the central problem is to bridge the gap between the realities of today and the revolutionary aim of tomorrow, to lead the masses from one to the other not merely by propagandistic pronouncements but through their experience in the class struggle, from more elementary to more advanced forms, in correspondence with the changes in the mass movement and in the state of mind of the workers.

Throughout this whole process --- which is the process of organizing the masses for social revolution --- the fixed point of departure of the Marxists is the aim of stimulating the mobilization of the masses from below, from the grass roots, in rank-and-file formations of all kinds, against the bureaucratic tops of the traditional workers' organizations, in order that this mobilization may be directed against the capitalists and their government without the straitjacket which the labor lieutenants of capital seek to impose. Soviets can arise only as the end result of this process.

The traditional mass organizations of the American proletariat are the trade unions. In the very first place the struggle from below against the labor bureaucracy is a struggle within the trade unions. We reject the pronouncements of ultra-left doctrinaires who teach that trade unions have "cultivated

their usefulness," or of any who do emphasize the decisive importance of the participation by revolutionists in the front-line trenches of all kinds of trade union struggles, in favor of the concept that the mobilization of the masses can be substantially effected from the outside, perhaps by merely hurling manifestos and pamphlets at them. The revolutionist fights actively in the mass trade unions to strengthen them, to raise their spirit of militancy, to combat their subordination to the bourgeois state, and only on the basis of such work is successful struggle possible against the bureaucracy. This is the context in which such slogans as "Abolish the no-strike pledge" had revolutionary significance during the war.

At the same time we resolutely reject and condemn trade union fetishism, which is characteristic of opportunists of all sorts. Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution. They cannot offer a finished revolutionary program; they cannot replace the revolutionary party. Our perspective points rather to the coming period of stormy upsurge in the labor movement, when the most oppressed majority of the working class, organized and unorganized, is drawn into the struggle. During such moments it is necessary to create organizations ad hoc, fitted to the purpose, embracing the whole fighting mass: strike committees, factory committees, and finally Soviets. Therefore we strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerists; but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organizations corresponding more closely to the problems of the mass struggle bourgeois society; not stopping, if necessary, even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions. It would be criminal to passively tolerate subordination of a revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative ("progressive") bureaucratic cliques.

When the workers took the initiative in such movements as the sit-down strikes, they established de facto an element of dual power inside the factory. Factory committees are the organized expression of this level of the class struggle. Consequently, their existence is possible only under condition of increasing pressure of the masses, symptomatic of the fact that the class struggle is overflowing the limits of the traditional organizations of the proletariat.

While this establishes the conditions under which agitation for the setting up of factory committees will become realistic in the period to come, the propagation of the factory committee idea and the education of the advanced workers along these lines is one of the responsibilities of revolutionists in order that they not be caught unaware by the coming class battles. The period ahead is one of preparation in this sense also. The degree to which the revolutionists can shift gears from educational propaganda to agitation depends decisively not on our still small movement but on the initiative of the masses in breaking out of the traditional organizational limits in response to the objective pressures of capitalism.

The important thing is to learn to respond sensitively to the initiative of the masses. This means for the press to seize upon, play up and comment on every real indication or impulse among the masses in this direction, as well as for our comrades in the trade unions to raise it agitatorially wherever an approach to it flows from the real situation as a practicable solution. To impart it into the mass movement mechanically because it appears

in a resolution is sectarian stupidity, just as to ignore it in the opposite case is routinism.

For the sectarian, the factory committee is a finished formula; to the Marxist revolutionary it is a process. Today we may fight for broadening strike committees, democratizing shop steward councils or organizing progressive groups on a shop basis, in order that tomorrow the basis may be laid for factory committees as the pressure of the masses increases and as the class struggle spills over into new forms. The important thing is to learn to respond sensitively to the initiative of the masses, not to counterpose a programmatic formula to the real movement of the workers.

Exactly the same considerations hold for every other form of special rank-and-file organization from below which gives rise to new centers of the mass movement.

Thus the Party seizes every opportunity to propagandize for the necessity of workers' defense groups in the fight against fascism, against strike breaking by private scabs or governmental forces, against Jim Crow terror. Our campaigns against Fascist Gerald Smith were given their revolutionary character precisely because the Party utilized them, not only to expose a Machor and analyze fascism, but to point the road of workers' defense, of political action and Socialism, as the road of revolutionary anti-fascist action. Committees on prices, made up of representatives from the trade unions, factories, cooperatives, housewives, etc.; committees of small farmers to fight their exploitation by monopoly capital; committees of veterans and workers to enforce their demands to open up the boarded-up mansions and provide adequate low-cost housing --- these, and other forms which periods of class upsurge will throw up in varieties greater than can be envisaged, show the direction along which we seek to steer our propaganda in order to channelize the movement of the masses into new rank-and-file centers of resistance which open up the road to Soviet power.

The most general form of the campaign of agitation for the program of transitional demands is the propaganda for the slogan of the Workers Government, a slogan dictated by the catastrophic character of the whole political development of our epoch. The aim of the transitional program is to break the masses away from support of the traditional parties of capitalism, to lead them to independent class politics and the conquest of power. The slogan of the Workers Government summarizes the goal of the transitional program, the objective of independent class political action. We always stress our basic position of principle that only the power of a Soviet government can abolish capitalism and initiate planned Socialist economy. We never fail to point to the calamitous failure of the Labor, Social-Democratic and Popular Front governments as merely forms for the administration of the capitalist state. We raise the slogan of the Workers Government, in the sense given it by the Bolsheviks in 1917, as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan to assist the experience of the masses.

Our Party alone fully comprehends the depth and scope of the crisis and its revolutionary implications. Our Party alone proposes a revolutionary solution of the crisis by our generation. All other political parties either support capitalism, postpone its end to the distant future, or are incapable of the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. Our Party is fully aware that on the action of the American working class may rest the whole fate of world civilization.

#####