

B U L L E T I N

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POPULARIZING SOCIALISM ON THE AMERICAN SCENE

(A Supplement to the Report on the Press and Pamphlets)

by

E. LUND

1. The Art of Agitation:

Our traditions are those of a propaganda sect. It is only in the last two years that we have begun to break away from this tradition in practice and engage in effective elementary education of the mass of workers or, in the language of our movement, to engage in agitation.

But we must establish that our old sectarian tradition still weighs heavy upon our thinking when it comes to mass agitation. It is of the greatest importance that we take conscious measures to hasten the process of ridding ourselves of these old hang-overs which often prove to be such a negative influence in our work.

The Marxist movement has long ago established that there is a considerable difference between propaganda and agitation.* The old Russian Marxist Plekhanov once defined them by saying that

propaganda was the art of presenting a series of advanced ideas to a few people, while

agitation was the art of presenting a few simple ideas to a great number of people.

Though this distinction must be established and borne in mind, there are, of course, instances when propaganda and agitation sometimes merge (or more correctly, blend) into each other. The aim of our movement is to make the propaganda slogan of today, become the agitation slogan of tomorrow. Even such a propaganda slogan as "Workers Councils" must become an agitation slogan some day if it is to be realized in action.

There is, however, another important distinction between propaganda and agitation that must be borne in mind.

In formulating our propaganda we proceed from the objective situation and the objective needs of the workingclass.

In formulating our agitation we proceed from the subjective views or consciousness of the workingclass.

What does this mean? It means that we analyze the economic, social and political trends. From such an analysis we conclude that the way out for the workingclass requires the achievement of certain goals (examples: workers control of production, workers guards or militia, workers councils, workers government, and the socialization of industry.) In advancing these ideas we do not ask whether they are popular with the workers. The workers must be edu-

* The American Marxists would do well to drop the confusing terms of "agitation" and "propaganda." Our agitation is really popular education. Our propaganda is really advanced education.

cated to them. Since, today, they are not yet popular with the mass of workers, we seek to educate the more advanced and understanding workers who already are sympathetic to our movement and its ideas. This is propaganda in the accepted Marxist meaning of the terms.

But since the mass of the workers are not prepared and do not respond to slogans about workers control of production, workers guards, workers councils, etc. what are we to do? The sectarian stands aside from the living movement of the workers waiting for the day when they will suddenly realize (by magic it seems) that these slogans are right and then they will come directly to the sectarian brethren and say, "You were right, even if a voice shouting in the wilderness. We should have listened. Now we will follow your party." Of course, this will never happen in real life.

Then how do we address ourselves to the mass of the workers in order to gain their attention, to gain a sympathetic ear, to raise their understanding of the real way out? WE MUST BEGIN AT THE LEVEL WE FIND THE WORKERS THINKING ON.

This means that we must approach the mass of the workers by speaking and writing about those things they themselves are thinking about and offer such solutions as sound acceptable, just and progressive to them. Thus we call for higher wages, for a 100% tax on war profits, for the soldiers' right to vote, for effective price control, for repeal of the Smith-Connally Bill, etc. It is our aim to give voice and coherence to the ideas already in the mind of the workers, to the ideas already popular with the workers. The worker will then think: "This party is saying just what I have been thinking. They are on the right track. They have the interests of labor at heart." He will then listen to what else we have to say. He will then be prepared to listen even to that which he previously felt hostile and prejudiced against. This is the Art of Agitation.

2. Agitation and the Prejudices of American Workers:

From the above it is clear to see that if we were to conduct a mass agitation for ideas against which the mass of the workers have a deep prejudice or just merely lack any interest in, it would meet with no response. Even worse. It would so identify us in the minds of the workers with the unpopular ideas that they would turn their prejudice and hostility toward us. It is therefore necessary that we thoroughly understand the prejudices of the American workingclass in order to avoid a head-on collision with them.

The sectarian will say, "Just because the workers have prejudices we must concentrate our agitation against them."

No. This is a thousand times false. Prejudices are not beaten out of the minds of workers. They can be placed there by that method. That is just how the ruling class does it. Above all is it the tactic of the fascists. They keep repeating a lie until the masses believe it. But even such a lie usually seems to have a basis to the mass of people. For example: "Every Jew is in business and has money." But we could never counter such a prejudice by just repeating, "Every Jew is not in business and does not have money." Even less by just saying, "Right anti-semitism".

Prejudices cannot be bowled over. Above all not until we have established a workers' government and have the facilities of mass publicity now monopolized by the capitalist class. Prejudices must be out-flanked and undermined.

How can we do this?

By approaching the mass of workers, not on the basis of our disagreements, but on the basis of our agreements.

Let us illustrate with an example. The majority of workers have some degree of anti-semitism, either active or latent. We could print a 100 million stickers and say "Down with anti-semitism". Would it have any result? Only those already educated to understand the truth about anti-semitism would say, "Yes, that is right." But the mass would remain unmoved.

Therefore, we begin with a proposition that organized workers are already agreed upon: "Workers must stand together. Labor solidarity is the only answer to the employers." Agreed. Then we go further: "We must not permit racial, national or religious differences to divide us." Agreed. "Dividing workers along these lines is the employers' game." Agreed. "Then why are people stirring up sentiment against Jews and Negroes? Don't you see that this undermines labor unity?"

Will this convince everyone? Of course not. However, it is only along this line that the mass of workers can be approached. This is an agitational approach. It begins with that which is already popular, i. e., labor unity, and uses it against a prejudice, i. e. anti-semitism, or Jim Crow. This is how prejudices must be approached. This is what is meant by undermining and out-flanking them.

3. The Prejudice Against Socialism:

The field of investigating the notions and prejudices of American workers is an interesting one. It turns up the most peculiar concepts.

American workers (differently from European workers) have developed, as a result of capitalist mis-education in the press, school, etc., a prejudice against "Socialism". Upon investigation, however, one finds that the prejudice is directed not against an idea, but against a word. This word has only the most vague meaning for them. They simply associate it with something undesirable. (Add to this the confusion of "Russian Socialism", Hitler's "national socialism", etc.)

But on the other hand, the workers are also "prejudiced" against "capitalism". Decades of socialist agitation have created the vague impression among workers that capitalism is undesirable. But like "socialism" to them, "capitalism" has no definite meaning. They are most apt to think of it in terms of "Wall Street", "monopoly rule", "Big Business", etc. Capitalist publicity men, like the NAA, are smart enough to understand this. That is why they use a term like the "free enterprise system", in defending capitalism.

Yet our press constantly runs counter to what is indicated by the above. Instead of featuring the content or meaning of Socialism, we feature the word. The worker does not know exactly what Socialism is. But it is not popular with him. Then why blazon Socialism into the headline? Only someone totally unfamiliar with the thought-patterns of American workers would commit such a gross error.

On the other hand, our press shys away from the term "capitalism" and speaks of the "boss system", the "boss class", the "boss war", etc. The word "boss" usually means the managerial superior in the plant and not the owner.

No worker ever thinks of the stockholders, the board of directors, or even the president of the corporation as his "boss". The "boss" is usually the foreman or superintendent.

In writing "Plenty for All" the author gave it the sub title: "And How We Can Get It". Someone in the national office undertook an "improvement" by changing the sub-title to read: "The Meaning of Socialism". The change was not serious in its harm but was indicative of a loss of touch with how workers think. The pamphlet had been written specifically to avoid a head-on collision with the term "socialism". The word was therefore introduced only after the ideas of socialism had been thoroughly explained. Yet this effort on the part of the author was negated by placing the word on the cover.

Some people have often naively said that if we only dropped the term "socialism" and called it something else, it would be accepted. Such a substitution of terms will gain nothing. The capitalist press will just as quickly smear the new term by calling it "Socialism".

However, if it is a choice in our popular press between those who would drop the term "Socialism" and write about the ideas of Socialism and those who in our press constantly use the word "Socialism" without reference to the ideas, the party would be the gainer by choosing the former.

But there is no need to choose one or the other. The method should be to explain the ideas of Socialism and then say, "Such a system is Socialism."

(Until dissuaded, one sympathizer was in favor of distributing "Plenty for All" among his shop-mates with the outside cover torn off.)

4. Other Prejudices or Misconceptions of Workers:

Workers use words and phrases in their daily language with a meaning entirely different from that given it inside our movement. For instance the two terms defined in this article "propaganda" and "agitation". To the average worker, "propaganda" means a lot of lies about something. "Agitation" is malicious trouble making. "Radical" is just anything or anyone who is impossible and out of bounds. "Politics" is either the occupation of grafters or an underhanded and dishonest means of accomplishing something. The "state" is not thought of in Engel's sense but as one of the 48 sub-divisions of the USA. "Revolutionary" has somehow become identified in the worker's mind with "blood-thirsty". Then there are a series of words that are just plain bewildering to the worker: "plenum", "fraction", "nucleus", "cadre", "sympathizer", "militant", etc. Still at this late date jargon like this sometimes sneaks into our press. Let it be said, however, that in this respect we have made a vast improvement over several years ago. Just compare with the "Militant" and you will get the point.

One important question of terminology is the use of the word "Stalinist". A discussion at the last plenum seemed to unanimously agree that the term was to be dropped in favor of the use of "Communist Party" or at least "Stalinist Communist Party".

Let us face the facts and recognize that for the mass of the workers, the Communists are those identified with Moscow. Then why is it necessary to call them anything else but "communists"?

Our continued use of "Stalinists" is an out-lived hang-over from the days when we were a faction of the Communist movement. We are no longer that. Just as Lenin once deserted the word "Social Democrat" and "Socialism" to distinguish himself from the enemies of the 3rd International, so let us drop the term "Communist" as applied to ourselves and "Stalinists" as applied to the CP. In effect we have already accepted this point of view. We usually refer to ourselves as "socialists". Then why should we painstakingly refer to our worst enemies as "Stalinists" or "Stalinist Communists"? Does not this imply that they are still faction opponents of ours? That we are still part of the communist movement? That we are the real communists? Yes, theoretically, we are the real communists. The heirs of Lenin and his movement. In our propaganda articles that educate the advanced workers we will continue to make this point. But to continually inject it into our popular writing has a confusing and damaging effect.

There is one further argument. The word "Stalinist" as applied to Communists originated with us. Though it has to some extent gone beyond our circle in common usage, its use in conversation or on the union floor will always raise the suspicion that its user is a "Trotskyist". In this sense it needlessly reveals our people to our more astute and clever opponents.

5. The Scientific Terminology of Marxism:

Marxism is a science. Like any other science it has established a body of terms that have a specific and concrete definition. Nothing said in this report should be construed as an attempt to throw out of the window the scientific terminology of our movement. This must be precise and untampered with. For it stands for definite ideas.

But we must know when and where we use such terms. We must realize that they have meaning only in very limited circles. If it is necessary to use some such term in our popular press, we must immediately explain its meaning. But usually we can find ways of saying it in the daily language of the workers.

We can compare this approach with the science of medicine. This science has built up a very involved terminology, in large part based upon Latin words. If a doctor picks up a medical journal he expects to find it written in the terms of the field of medicine. The journal is written for doctors. But if the health department publishes a pamphlet on a certain medical subject or if a drug firm advertises one of its products in the daily press, we expect to find it written in language which the ordinary man can understand. We expect that such language will avoid phrases or terms not used by us in daily conversation, or if it does use them, it will tell us what is meant.

In this sense we have already established a procedure. But it is all too frequently violated. No one would write "dictatorship of the proletariat" in a popular paper. We give it its agitational equivalent, "Workers Government". Yet we still find use of "bourgeois parties", "Soviet", etc. which are meaningless to the mass of the workers.

6. The Use of "Trotskyist":

Are we a "Trotskyist" party? Yes and no. In a broad historical sense yes. We are the heirs of Marxism via Lenin and Trotsky. Do we want to be identified as the Trotskyist Party or a Trotskyist Party in the American workingclass. What have we to gain? Only more prejudices to overcome?

Yes, the American workingclass must be educated to understand the teachings of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky. We must someday raise the workingclass to the level where they will regard them as their teachers. But to emphasize Leon Trotsky and "Trotskyist" will not accomplish this. Building the press that carries Trotsky's ideas will do it.

The long run ad for the "New Course" by Leon Trotsky created difficulties for some of our unionists in getting subscriptions. Even before knowing what the paper had to say workers would glance through it and see the prominent ad and say, "Is this a Trotsky paper?" In the midst of a story on the strike at Cramps shipyard appeared a box with the story about the "Ceylon Trotskyists" being arrested. The issue was distributed to the Cramps Workers and the strike article was the one to be read by the greatest number. Why run "Trotskyist" in the headline? The Ceylon party does not so call itself. Nor are they so called in the body of the article. Was it merely to facilitate headline writing?

We must recognize "Trotskyist" as one of the terms that throws up a barrier in the mind of the worker against our ideas. Give him the ideas first and then, having undermined the prejudice, tell him that these ideas were developed by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky.

7. "Americanizing" Our Approach:

The term "Americanizing" is placed in quotation marks, not because one needs to apologize for it, but because it has been much abused and misused by people who used it as a cover for opportunism. We must be as American in our approach as the Bolsheviks 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 completely European that we must begin to consciously study the American labor background in order to make ourselves part of that tradition. Some of our people can recite the names of all the members of Lenin's Central Committee but appear baffled when you mention Debs, Haywood, Gompers, Mother Jones, Joe Hill, and other figures from the past of American labor. Some of our people know the details of the Paris Commune, the 1905 Revolution, the Canton Commune, and the mutiny on the "Potemkin" but appear puzzled when you mention the Seattle General Strike, the Haymarket Riot, Ludlow, Cripple Creek, Lawrence, the Pettibone-Moyer case, the Canton speech, the St. Louis Declaration, the trial of the 100 IWW leaders, etc.

Muste was once the great apostle of "American" radicalism in this country. We have much to learn from the techniques of the Muste movement in speaking to the American workers. That 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.

But more than the Muste experiences is it necessary to 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. (Let me tell a little secret. "Plenty for All" is far from an original venture in Socialist writing, as many of those who congratulated the author have thought. It bases itself, in many sections quite directly,

upon the language and approach of the old-time Socialist speakers and writers - who, differently from many of our people, believed that Socialism was something that had to be argued for and not merely proclaimed.)

We celebrate the Russian Revolution, the anniversary of Lenin, Liebknecht, and Luxemburg, the memory of Trotsky, the commemoration of the Paris Commune, and other dates that have meaning in the international tradition of the workingclass. This is good. The American workingclass must be educated in an internationalist spirit. But before our press can make these events mean something real we must make the worker aware of his own native labor tradition.

Only by such an approach in our popular press will we interest our own writers in the necessary research to produce Marxist studies of the American background. It is one of the indices of the poverty of the American Marxists that there is such a woefully small literature on America. However, what does exist is not even used by our movement. O'Neal's "Workers in American History" is an excellent pamphlet for workers despite the politics of its author.

8. Need for a "Positive" Approach:

One of the frequent complaints heard from workers who read our press is that they know what we are against but not what we are for. It is true that in the struggle against capitalist reaction we are forced to raise many slogans "against" this and "against" that. But this does not explain fully the failure to play up our alternative proposals, above all, in the main headlines.

Example: Workers are discussing the "labor draft". We can raise slogans in opposition to it. Most advanced union men will be sympathetic to them. But we would be far more successful agitators if we used the opportunity to raise our transitional slogan of "Draft Capital! Nationalize the War Industries under Workers Control!" We must continually appear before the workingclass as, above all, the proponents of a program, of a way out.

American political movements have always gathered great support around a "proposed solution"; greenbackism, silver money, Townsend pension, "ham and eggs", etc. (Trotsky attributes this to the very pronounced empiricism of the Anglo-Saxons, above all, the Americans, who think more in terms of concrete solutions than in terms of theoretical generalizations.) We must make ourselves thought of as advocates of a plan.

In this connection, the author sought to popularize the use of the term "plenty for all". Movements have grown popular in this country with far more vague slogans than this. (Is this any more vague than land, peace and bread? Outside of the extreme right wing, every party in Russia could be said to have been for "land, peace, and bread". But the Bolsheviks linked these concepts with a definite way out.) We are for "Plenty for All" and we have a definite plan with which to achieve it.

Such "Plenty for All" propaganda must sell Socialism to the American workers by constantly stressing the newness of Socialism, the fact that it has never been really tried anywhere, that it is as streamlined as plastics, sulfa drugs, the auto-gyro, television, the rocket-plane, pre-fabricated houses, and the photo-electric eye. 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 of modern industry. Roosevelt and Wallace advocate stabilizing post-war economy at \$125 billions a year national income. The reactionary columnists say this is a pipe dream and advocate only \$100 billion a year. Why can't we set some of our competent statisticians to work and approximate, as the Brookings study and Technocrats once did, what planned production under Socialism would mean in terms of a yearly national income? Is there anything wrong with becoming the advocates of a 500 billion a year economy and distributing the increase at the bottom, among the workers and farmers?

This cannot be answered with the smug and bureaucratic assertion, that if one feels that way, no one is preventing this from being written. This cannot become successful as a one-man approach. It must be consciously inaugurated from the top. Articles must be planned for, articles must be slanted, and the leading by-lines of the paper must show the way.

9. The Difference Between Militancy and Harshness in Tone:

Workers admire a forthright and fighting tone. A lot of the success of our paper is due to the aggressive and belligerent tone we have used. However, our tone often become harsh in a vulgar and amatarish way. This appears undignified to workers and one often hears remarks about it. Time and again one notes language reminiscent of the 3rd Period "Daily Worker". Given the fact that we must rely upon many young and inexperienced contributors, this is understandable. But all the more need to correct it and train our writers.

10. Doesn't this all Smack of Reformism?

Many people in our ranks will feel uneasy about the proposals made here. It seems to smack of reformism to them. But dear friends, I am afraid that your fears smack of sectarianism. We must learn that what is vital is the content and not the shell. The S. R.s long outdid the Bolsheviki in the radicalism and extremism of their language and tactics. By comparison the Bolsheviki sounded dry and humdrum. Or use another example; Both Bolsheviki and Mensheviki published a legal daily in St. Petersburg from 1911 to 1914. Both were subject to the Czarist censorship. And both had many issues confiscated. They were both pretty much limited as to the type of language they could use and how far they could go. Yet the Bolsheviki's "Pravda" trained thousands of workers in revolutionary thought and action while the Menshevik "Luch" trained the workers in typical reformist manner.

We must learn to speak Socialism in American language just as the Bolsheviki did in the Russian language. Again let us heed Lenin's advice: "Don't imitate the Bolsheviki, but learn from them".

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ON THE CHARACTER OF LABOR ACTION

During the past year or more, there has been considerable dissatisfaction in the party with the contents and emphasis in LABOR ACTION. There has been a general feeling that something was missing in the paper. Yet very little has been done toward making the necessary change. Since LABOR ACTION is our chief voice to the workers, this matter merits serious consideration.

The purpose of the party's agitation is to raise the political level of the working class to the height necessary for carrying out its historic tasks. To accomplish this purpose most effectively, our agitation, by both voice and printed word, must start with today's conditions and thinking of the workers, and help them draw the conclusion of the necessity for workers' rule as the only way to achieve a lasting satisfaction of their immediate demands. In the course of reaching this conclusion, our agitation will show the workers the concrete steps to be taken in the struggle; it will stimulate their independent class action. To link up, in the minds of the workers, today's struggles and ideas with those of tomorrow is the purpose of the transitional program. This program must not be merely a dry list of slogans in a box in a corner of the paper; its ideas should permeate everything in the paper.

AMERICAN WORKERS THINKING OF THE POST WAR WORLD

As a result of the war, millions of workers who formerly thought only of wages, cost of living, and immediate shop and union problems are now thinking also of government affairs, politics, international issues, and the future. They have been taught that the individual must subordinate himself, even sacrifice life if need be, for society. In a world of violent change, they are no longer so sure of the stability of the status quo. At the same time the workers show a growing suspicion of the ruling class and skepticism as to its war aims.

One need not be a Marxist to foresee devastating unemployment in the post-war America. The average worker fears such a development. Anyone in contact with American workers and soldiers knows that millions of them are now asking the question: What kind of America after the war? Will there be a return to the mass unemployment and miserly relief of pre-war times? Millions are thinking that if it is possible to plan for full production and employment for war, it should be possible to plan for full production and employment for peace, to create a higher standard of living, better housing, more consumers goods, etc., in other words, plenty for all. With the realization that plenty for all is possible, goes the fear that the powers that be in the country, out of concern for profits, will bungle the situation the way they did in 1929-41. And there is a growing, if not yet completely conscious, determination on the part of millions to realize this plenty for themselves regardless of the wishes of the big-shots in industry and government. (They think in concrete terms. The condition of plenty for all is thought of in terms of the individual standard of living, a better home, car, etc., and not the generalization of workers' power or the still greater abstraction, socialism.)

Here, in embryo, is the post-war class struggle, on a higher level of working-class consciousness than ever before in America.

There are many signs of this advance in the thinking of the American masses, signs which should be seized upon in our press and developed. Stuart Chase returns from a tour of Army camps and reports that the soldiers are determined not to sell apples in the streets, but will demand decent jobs at decent pay regardless of consequences. The National Commander of the American Legion announces that if the returning soldiers don't get their just deserts, he will "build a bonfire that will burn down the Washington squirrel cage." The bourgeoisie prints ads showing pictures of apple sellers in 194X, and, whistling in the dark, announces an essay contest on how to maintain employment after the war.

Many unions are now raising the demand for a guaranteed annual wage. Such a demand says that, work or no work, the wages of the workers must continue. This means that in the post-war unemployment crisis it would be the capitalists who would bear the burden, instead of the workers suffering. By a guaranteed annual wage the workers would be able to maintain their standard of living. This implies production of consumers goods for the use of the people, instead of production or non-production as suits the profit of the capitalists. That this will require a change in the "American way of life" is sensed by labor leaders like William Green, who have urged that a board similar to WPB guide the post-war reconversion program, with the aim of obtaining shorter hours at the same pay for the workers, and that this board consist of representatives of labor, farmers, management and Congress. The implication of all this is: government planning of production for the use of the people, not for the profits of capital.

These items are indications of the new ideas among the workers. It is with such thoughts of the workers that LABOR ACTION must deal.

The political resolution of the NC sees great social turbulence after the war, and the capitalist attempt to fight the workers by creating a mass fascist movement, which would demagogically promise a New Order. The polarization of American society will in all likelihood pit this fascist movement against a growing movement of independent labor action, represented politically in an independent labor party. It is for such a future that LABOR ACTION must prepare the workers who read it.

THE CONTENTS OF LABOR ACTION TODAY

How does LABOR ACTION meet this situation? The "ad" which appears in LA reads:

LABOR ACTION

turns the spotlight on

wage freezing	rising living costs
incentive pay	"phony friends" of labor
war profits	native fascists
Jim Crow	workers politics

An examination of recent issues shows that LA also discusses strikes and general union news; taxes; scandals (Elk Hills, Shipshaw, Brewster, Canol, etc.); subsidies; manpower bungling; a little on foreign events (almost totally divorced from the American workers).

All or most of these things are of interest to the workers who read LA. It may give them a few facts they didn't have before, and it may express their ideas on these things more clearly, but this type of paper does very little to raise their consciousness above its present level. By and large, the workers already know of the rising cost of living, and of the inequality between frozen wages and soaring boss profits. But they are also looking for a way out of the whole mess. They are thinking in terms of a post-war world which will be different from the past and present. They don't find clear answers to these questions in LA today. LA stops where it should really begin.

Many of the workers getting LA at factory gates have relatives in the service. Many expect to be drafted themselves. These workers are less concerned about wages, prices, profits and union affairs; they are concerned a whole lot about getting the war over with as soon as possible, and they are concerned about the kind of America they will come back to after the war. LA with its present contents has little attraction for them.

Not only does LA fail to lead the workers who read it, by properly linking the present struggles and thinking of the workers with the tasks of tomorrow; it is not even a mere barometer, recording the present thoughts of workers. That half of their thinking which deals with the questions of the post-war period finds hardly any reflection in LA. (Even PM shows more awareness of these problems than LA does.) LA, in many important respects, lags behind the workers, instead of leading and teaching. It is a good militant trade union paper; but it is insufficiently a revolutionary socialist paper.

We have said that the imperialists and reformists cannot arouse the enthusiasm of the masses by a merely defensive ideology, which speaks of defending democracy or the status quo. To arouse the masses requires a positive goal, a statement of war aims which the masses feel are worth fighting for. The same principle is true of our own agitation and propaganda. We must not keep harping merely on the immediate defensive struggles of the working class, as LA is doing. We must tie up these defensive struggles with the offensives of tomorrow; we must put before the workers a program of action to solve the crisis, a way out, our war aims. If we do not, how can we expect to arouse the fighting spirit required for the bigger struggles to come? How can we expect to arouse the enthusiasm of workers to the point where they would make the sacrifices and undertake the risks involved in party membership? It might help our recruiting considerably if we could show our prospects that we take our war aims seriously enough to boost them in our paper read by thousands of workers.

The SLP sectarians go to one extreme, talking exclusively of socialism and ignoring the immediate struggles of the workers. LA goes to the opposite extreme, concentrating almost exclusively on the present struggles. What is needed is a proper combination of the immediate problems and the ultimate solution, not in isolated compartments but closely linked together in ordinary every-day workers' language.

Our party leadership has long recognized the need for such a change in LA. Whenever the question was raised, as at the NY City Convention a year ago, and at the Active Workers' Conference, the NC representatives have agreed to the idea. However, the turn was not made. The leadership seems to be finding it extremely difficult to make this necessary change in our press. This is borne out by the failure to mention the character of LA in the political resolution and in the draft on the tasks of the party, although the spaces between the lines of the political resolution cry out for such a change in the orientation of our paper.

SOME SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are not intended to be complete or perfect in every detail, but are offered to illustrate the kind of paper we need.

First, a word about the general "tone" of the paper. It seems to me desirable to replace, where possible, dry, "objective" headlines and subject matter with something dramatic, something infused with a lively, fighting spirit. A good example is the headline which appeared about six months ago (if I remember correctly), "Workers Must Control Food Production!" Such a headline serves to arouse curiosity and thought on the part of a worker, while a headline reading "Govt Index Shows Cost of Living Rising" would probably evoke the thought, "That's old stuff. My wife tells me that story every pay day."

ON AMERICAN AFFAIRS

The paper should be centered about the necessity for and practicability of an independent Labor Party and a Workers' Government.

It should be pointed out on every suitable occasion that the nation's industry, centrally controlled and planned by the government, did a tremendous production job for war. It can produce plenty for all in peace-time, if production is planned for the use of the people and not for the profit of a minority. If this minority, in control of the government, refuses to plan production for the use of the people, then the workers must take over control of industry and government. For this we need an independent Labor Party. And this Party must fight for such a program: (then give, and illustrate the principal transitional demands).

The danger of fascism and its meaning to the workers can be illustrated by the growing government actions against labor in the present period, such as wage and job freezing, labor conscription, violations of civil liberties, etc. We must make use of the various rehearsals for a fascist movement, such as the Detroit events, to warn of the possibility of a post-war fascist mass movement, which, by terror and race hatred, will try to prevent the workers and veterans from getting the decent living they will be fighting for. In all these events we can show concretely the reactionary role of the government and liberals. We can then draw the conclusion that fascism can be fought only by independent workers' action, through a fighting Labor Party, Workers' Defense Guards, etc. A Labor Party, standing on a militant positive program, and fighting for a New Workers' Order, will fight the source of fascism, and prevent the middle classes from falling prey to the fascist demagogy; and Workers' Defense Guards will protect the workers against the attacks of the fascist storm troopers. In this connection we should emphasize the need for unity between labor and the Negro people, both the victims of fascism.

These ideas should not be confined to a sentence or paragraph tagged on to the end of an article. Nor should they appear as an occasional article or series of articles, divorced from the main content of the paper. They must be developed in detail and flow necessarily from present reality. For example, in discussing the guaranteed annual wage being demanded by many unions, it can be shown how this means that the bosses and not the workers will bear the burden in the post-war crisis. This means keeping the production of consumers goods for the workers regardless of the profits or losses of the bosses. The bosses, now in control of the government, will refuse

to carry the burden, and will try to put it on the workers' backs. In the ensuing struggle, to obtain a really secure decent standard of living, the workers will find it necessary to overcome the bosses in industry and government by workers' control in the factories through factory committees and in the government through a labor party. Then a detailed description can be given of how the factory will be managed by the workers; how production will be planned nationally and how unemployment will be abolished. Workers' democracy can be described and contrasted to the present bourgeois democracy.

Events such as the NAM congress (where post-war employment is a prominent topic), statements by prominent businessmen, politicians and labor leaders, can be used to develop similar ideas.

We should restore the type of dialogs between workers that Paul Temple used to write. Such a form is highly effective in putting across transitional slogans in ordinary every-day workers' language.

The paper should be recruiting-conscious. It should frequently carry material describing the Workers Party and its role today and tomorrow, and inviting workers who agree with the ideas expressed in the paper to join the party, in order to help push this program in the labor movement.*

In discussions of prices, subsidies and rationing prominence should be given to the slogan of price-fixing and rationing by committees of workers, working farmers and housewives.

Items on scandals and graft should bring in the idea of factory committees to examine the books of the corporations; the workers have a right to know these things; this can also be tied in with wages and profits.

With regard to the general situation of manpower bungling, we must raise the idea of workers' control of industry as the only way to abolish waste of labor and yet avoid labor conscription.

In items on coal miners and other workers killed or injured in industrial accidents, we must develop the demand that workers' committees inspect the plants for safety facilities and compel the bosses to install all features the workers find necessary.

In news of union affairs and bureaucratic behavior by the labor skates, the idea of progressive groups and shop committees controlled by the rank and file can be introduced.

In news of Negro struggles we should point out the need for a March on Washington and similar demonstrations, as well as the need for an alliance with labor, as against Randolph's hat-in-hand method of pleading with FDR.

Thus, wherever the occasion permits, we emphasize the idea of independent action by the workers themselves, through their own democratically controlled organizations, not only today but in the next period when the workers will be playing a bigger role in society. In each concrete case, we accustom the readers of LA to the idea of the workers themselves running things.

ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

News of foreign happenings should be closely linked with America, and
*With due consideration to the legal position.

point toward the conclusion for the American workers: a labor party and a Workers' Government. Past and present events in other countries should not be treated in the manner of the liberals, but should be used to draw for the American workers lessons of revolutionary action and international solidarity.

Diplomatic confabs like Cairo and Teheran should not merely be given an objective analysis, but should also be the occasion for a campaign around the slogan "No Secret Diplomacy!" The people are entitled to know what fate is being decided for them behind closed doors. The Teheran 3-power declaration and similar imperialist pronouncements must be prominently exposed by contrasting, point by point, the promises of the imperialists with their deeds at home and abroad.

Close attention should be given to Canada, where the Labor Party (CCF) is getting the support of increasing numbers of workers and soldiers. This should be presented as a preview of events likely to occur in the USA.

We use the events in Lebanon to expose the war aims of the imperialists and the character of the war. In addition, these events should be used to show how important sections of the colonial world, in ferment today, will rise tomorrow to throw out the imperialists. We must point out how in their struggle the colonial masses are the allies of the American workers, fighting the same trusts (Oil, etc.) that sit on the workers here. We must show how colonial success in kicking out the imperialists would weaken our bosses here at home, and thus make it easier for the struggles of the American workers.

The workers should be put on guard against any attempt to use American troops abroad to put down the people fighting for freedom. A continuous campaign should be waged in LA around the fact that in South Italy, American and British troops are suppressing civil liberties, prohibiting all unions except those whose officials are appointed by the Amot-Badoglio regime, and enforcing the "labor contracts" established under Mussolini. American troops in Italy are being used to support the moronic little king against the people. Because Sforza was heckled at a meeting by people shouting for a Republic, the Allied authorities have suppressed the right of assembly in Naples. Is it for this that American workers are sweating and soldiers dying?

Roosevelt is reported to have been in or near Italy on his return from Cairo. We should seize this opportunity for a banner headline, "How About the Four Freedoms in Italy, Mr. President?" On the basis of a campaign as outlined above, we can point out that successful suppression of the workers abroad will be followed by the use of the military against workers' rights in this country. In this concrete way, LA can teach the lesson of international working-class solidarity.

To illustrate how workers have taken independent action to stop imperialist war and set up their own rule, the paper should carry detailed material from historical events such as these:

Revolution in Russia, Germany and elsewhere following World War I

Shop Stewards' movements in Britain

Irish revolutionary struggles

Serial publication of "Ten Days That Shook the World" or similar literature

Spanish revolution of 1936-7

Workers' actions in Italy when Mussolini fell

Past and present underground movements in Europe

ON THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY PAST

We can make use of the American revolutionary heritage, and show that militant struggle is not a foreign importation, by printing material from the following:

American revolution

Slave revolts

Civil War and Reconstruction period

Strike movement in 1886

Etc.

LA needs more of the spirit of the pamphlet "Plenty for All", and less harping on the subject of wages, prices, profits and taxes. By following along the lines of the above concrete suggestions, and not by abstract talk about socialism, our press can help prepare the workers for the tasks awaiting them, give them a program worth fighting for, and at the same time recruit to the party.

December 11, 1943

George W. TOBIN

DISCUSSION ARTICLE ON THE NEGRO QUESTION

by

Joe Leonard

The position Coolidge sets forth, it seems to me, is clear and straightforward.

A. The American Negroes are not a separate nation.

1. socially--they have no separate language. What culture and literature exist is largely either protest, or else like the spirituals and the tendency to religion, resignation and despair. The Negroes in Georgia show no desire to go to the Negro Republic of Liberia, or the Negro kingdom of Ethiopia. There is far more justice in the term "Irish-American" than "Afro-American" (or "Jewish-American").

2. politically--there is no mass Negro party. The Republican Party, the New Deal, dozens of white political groups have attracted the Negroes. Garvey came the closest to a Negro nationalist party, and he transported not a single Negro, and lost his influence as fast as he had gotten it.

3. economically--both in the South and North the Negroes are indistinguishable economically from millions of whites, e.g., sharecroppers, "poor white trash", steel workers, Italian and Polish immigrants, etc.

B. The Negro question is not, properly speaking, a race question. It is a special problem of democratic rights.

1. The Negro is distinguished by his racial characteristics, but there is nothing in these racial characteristics that causes whites to discriminate against him.

2. The most important root of the caste system is to be found in the labor policy of the white bourgeoisie, although the bosses themselves are often unaware of it. The disability of the Negro cannot be explained by the color of his skin, any more than semitic noses have anything to do with anti-Semitism.

3. Jim Crow is a nationwide policy; economically it is the same in the North and in the South. The South exceeds the North in the brutality and extent of political and social discrimination, however.

4. This difference between North and South is tending to break down; Detroit and Newark have "race" riots similar to Beaumont, Texas; segregation on streetcars and buses is breaking down in parts of the South, notably Richmond; Tennessee repealed its own poll-tax law; a railroad system has proposed instituting Jim Crow cars on all its trains going into the South from the North; housing project disputes have revealed striking similarities between Detroit (or Buffalo) and Birmingham (or Atlanta).

C. The Negro community, not being part of a separate nation, shows (a) a reproduction in blackface of the white capitalist community, and (b) a bourgeoisie element whose strength, prestige, and influence derive largely, not from within the Negro community, but their status as hangers-on, entertainers of, and lieutenants for the white bourgeoisie.

1. Bourgeois Negroes are not treated the same as proletarian Negroes. Spalding, Negro president of the North Carolina Life Insurance Co., is a

member of the Chamber of Commerce of New York State.

2. In a strike situation, can anyone imagine Negro capitalists being shown discourtesy by the white bosses?

3. The first evening of the great sit-down strike in General Motors, the workers decided that a Negro who had struck with them should eat and sleep with them on the same basis as everyone else. When the strike was won, the Negro was given the place of honor at the head of the victory parade. It must be remembered that many of these workers were hill-billies, from Kentucky or Tennessee, who took in anti-Negro prejudice with their mother's milk. Most of these had been industrial workers only a few years.

D. Negro nationalism (whether one calls it black chauvinism, race consciousness, separtism, racial sufficiency, or Negro particularism) is not progressive. It is one thing to sympathize with the feelings of the Negroes, and quite another to support the reactionary manifestations.

1. It promotes acceptance of Jim Crow; is often a symptom of hopelessness and despair.

2. It promotes acceptance of capitalism and bourgeoisie democracy. In teaching "isolationism" it teaches Negro capitalism.

3. Logically, it leads to advocating self-determination. If Negroes should be sufficient unto themselves (Ludwig Lewisohn advocates the same policy for the Jews), then they can best function in organizations of their own, and in a state of their own. Garvey (and the Jewish Zionists) understood this.

4. It disregards "class lines, class distinctions and class struggle. With the Negro today, this provides a base for the perpetuation of the present Negro leadership, making more difficult the integration of the Negro proletarians into the labor movement and thus leaving them the private prey of the bourgeoisie".

E. The stake of the unions in the struggle for Negro rights is often only vaguely understood; even some of our own members feel that the general union principle, "An injury to one worker is an injury to all", is about all the unions and the Negroes have in common. There are at least eight other, and more concrete, ties:

1. Many Negroes are union members. No union can allow a group of its members to be molested, if it wants to stay in one piece.

2. The Negro-baiters of today are the labor-baiters of tomorrow. Hitler began as a Jew-baiter, but when he got stronger, he broke up the unions. The Klan in Detroit...

3. Unless the white unionists accept the Negroes into their unions with equal rights, the Negroes will tend to be scabs. Organized labor has had such experiences, especially before the CIO was formed.

4. The Negroes have shown, in the UMW and in the CIO, that they are first class unionists. The victory over Ford Motor Co., (or in steel), could never have been won if the union had been neutral about the way Ford

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treated the Negroes. Let no unionist tolerate the efforts of race-haters to take away the basis on which that victory was won.

5. A union that allows itself to be disrupted by the theory or the practice of the race-haters cannot put up a very good fight against the company. Disputes as to whether one race is "inferior" obscure and confuse the real disputes between the company and the union. Every smart company personnel manager knows this.

6. If the unions discriminate against Negroes, or against the upgrading of Negroes, the enemies of labor will utilize the opportunity to attack the unions. There is now (see Labor Action - 2/28/44) a bill before Congress which while continuing the FEPC after the war, gives the government the power to interfere with the hiring practices of the unions in closed shops.

7. The great bulwark of the open shop and the starvation wage is the South. The unions cannot organize Southern industry if they practice Jim Crow policies themselves. The KKK understands the close connection between the Negro question and the union question: they lynch white organizers, too.

8. If the unions fail to fight openly and actively for Negro rights, the Negroes will be voting for hypocritical candidates of big business when labor is seeking votes for independent labor candidates. The unions and the Negroes have a sound basis for a political alliance, as well as in the factories and in the fields.

F. Negro organizations that are not closely connected to the unions (e.g. NAACP, NOW, Urban League) can play a progressive role in the struggle for Negro rights only if the rank and file are broken away from the reformist policies of petty-bourgeois leadership. (Irving Berg does not seem to understand this. Note his paragraph #13).

1. Teaching Negro chauvinism is reactionary.

2. Teaching Negro workers to look to the government, or its helpless FEPC, for re-dress of their grievances is reactionary. (This does not mean, however, that Negroes should ignore the FEPC.)

3. The Negroes must learn to look to organized labor for leadership, or at the very least, for support. The Buffalo Workingmen's Welfare Committee functions as an auxiliary to the unions; it could be called a Joint Council of Negro Unionists. The BWWC members are active in their unions. Where there is discrimination in a factory, the BWWC works with and through the union that has a contract signed in that factory. When a tense racial situation developed, the BWWC members acted as representatives of unions.

4. Negro struggles today that ignore the class struggle will not lead the Negro masses from reform to revolution, but from reform to reaction. The Lynn Committee led by Marxists was one thing; led by the NOW (if it does anything at all) it will probably confine itself to snivelling in front of bourgeois officials.

G. The position we adopted in the SWP on self-determination for Negroes was incorrect. The SWP must not only discourage separatist tendencies in a group that is not a nation, it must oppose such tendencies outright. The Negroes have shown in the Knights of Labor, in the Populist movement, in the IWW, and

in the CIO that whenever and wherever they are able, they integrate into American society, and that it is this integrating tendency that has carried with it the current of struggle. To be for self-determination is to be for disintegration, to separate the struggle of the Negroes from that of the working class in general. Garvey's movement, with its chauvinism, its anti-unionism, and its complete lack of achievements for the Negro is the outstanding example of self-determinationism in practice. The WP must today oppose such a slogan. What we will say after the revolution is an entirely different question.

What is Johnson's position in his resolution? On page 6 he writes: "The Negroes do not constitute a nation, but, owing to their...difference in color...their problem becomes the problem of a national minority. The Negro question is a part of the national and not of the "national" question... the Negro question is a question of race and not of "race." If this means anything, it means that Johnson is going to apply the Marxist formulae on the national question to the Negro problem in America today, although it is not really a national question that is involved. Johnson substitutes formulas, and quotations from Lenin and Trotsky, for an analysis of the present-day problem on its own merits.

On page 8 there is a Lenin quotation concerning the Russian Revolution of 1905. Also one concerning the prospects for revolution in Europe during World War I. And, lastly, a Lenin quotation in which Ireland is mentioned in passing. On page 10 Johnson writes: "Trotsky believed that the differences between the West Indies, Catalonia, Poland, etc., and the situation of the Negroes in the United States were not decisive".

Johnson's references are beside the point. (a) The Negroes are not a nation, as he himself states. (b) Why must regard the Negro question as a national question anyway, in spite of their not being a nation, is nowhere stated. (c) Johnson does not go into any one of the national problems he claims are analogous in any detail. To do so would reveal, among other things, that Marxists' support of national movements which are dominated by bourgeois elements varies, so to speak, in proportion to the compradors' independence of the oppressing bourgeoisie. As Johnson himself points out: (p. 17): "Such influence, as for instance, the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie has exercised over the Indian masses, the Negro petty-bourgeoisie can never exercise over the Negroes. The Party observes that the instinct for direct action of the Negro masses ignored the NAACP or the League." Why support the reformist policies of the Negro petty-bourgeois when we can better win the Negro proletarians to the class struggle by sharply opposing separatist and nationalist tendencies? In this case, neither the Negro capitalist nor the Negro worker wants self-determination. The Negro capitalists use Garvey's propaganda to fool the Negro worker, to offset class propaganda.

Johnson (p. 14) "sharply condemns that distortion of Marxist truth which states or implies that the Negroes by their independent struggles cannot get to first base without the leadership of organized labor". This idea recurs again and again in his resolution. In his preamble to Part II (p. 12) Johnson divides the Negro problem into (1) the relationship between the workers' struggle for socialism and the Negro struggle for democratic rights and (2) "the independent struggles of the Negroes for democratic rights and its relation to the proletarian struggle for socialism". But Johnson never discusses this second part, except by the analogies mentioned above. It is in-

cumbent upon him to prove his assertion, to show precisely where, and to what extent, the independent struggle (independent, that is, of organized labor or of Marxists) is progressive.

No one is claiming that the two struggles are identical, or that the struggle for Negro democratic rights is not progressive. Coolidge agrees with Johnson on both these points. But Johnson, who differs from Coolidge in asserting a third proposition says: the struggle for Negro democratic rights, independently of organized labor (or Marxists), is progressive.

Johnson gives a short (and not too accurate) summary (p. 9) of how the Marxist movement dealt with the Negro question from about 1917 to 1938. Johnson assumes that when no large-scale Negro work is planned, the Negro question is being incorrectly ignored.

It is not always possible to do mass work when you want to. Even today it is impossible to do Negro work in a Southern community that has not yet been touched by the union movement. The only road to the Southern Negro today is the union road. Where it is impossible to come in and organize a union, it is impossible to do Negro work.

Johnson underestimates, too, the importance of the CIO to the problem of Negro work. Before the CIO, Negro work in the North had to be carried on, in general, on an individual, purely political, basis, not on the basis of 'an approach to the American Negro proletarian masses'.

Johnson's Method

Johnson's resolution as a whole is, again, a grab-bag -- you can pull out almost anything you want. I, for one, am sick of cluttering up the Party, not only with wrong doctrines (from which it is sometimes impossible to learn a great deal), but with doctrines that are (a) presented in such a manner that one has to guess at his position and (b) most disloyally "developed" in the course of the dispute. Johnson's method, as well as his conclusions, should be disposed of in the discussion on the Negro question.

I venture to predict, if Johnson is preparing to repeat previous performances, that:

1. we are in for more demagogic begging of the question of the motivation of Trotsky's ideas, by polishing a halo for Trotsky, let these disagree with him who dare.

2. we are going to be treated to another deluge of Marxian economics, this time "proving" that the Negroes' disability is rooted in his status as a sharecropper. (Johnson stated this at the convention, and his political body-guard, F. Forest, has already developed it to formidable proportions.) It is not only incorrect, but it is irrelevant to the points in dispute between Coolidge's resolution and Johnson's resolution, first edition. There is no mention of this anywhere in Johnson's resolution, which is plenty long, but this will not prevent him from solemnly stating that the "crux" of the Negro question is the Negroes' special economic relations in the South; Johnson will not show a trace of a smile as he says that 'one cannot begin to understand the errors of Coolidge's position until one grasps this fundamental fact'.

3. we are going to have more arduous excursions into Lenin's theses on the national question. Johnson will again charge into large volumes and emerge with tattered quotations on his spear.

4. we are going to have more historical boners and inexcusable mistakes of fact. In the discussion so far we already have from him:

(a) Referring to the role of the Negroes in the 1776 revolution, Johnson says (p. 1): "The Negroes compelled the revolutionary bourgeoisie to include the rights of Negroes among the rights of man". A large portion of the leaders of the American revolution were slave-owners themselves. The Declaration of Independence, does not mention Negro slavery; the Continental Congress struck out Jefferson's references to it. The Constitution mentions slavery, but only to provide for it.

(b) Referring to the Civil War, Johnson says (p. 1): "The revolutionary actions of the masses of the Negroes in the South played a decisive role in the winning of the Northern victory". Decisive? That's a strong word--a wrong word. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, after the war was half over, freed only the slaves in that portion of the nation over which Lincoln had no control. It would appear from Johnson's version of the Civil War that the North won despite Lincoln's opposition to the decisive factor.

(c) On page 2: "The exclusion of Negroes from the AFL corresponded to a period of class collaboration practised by the AFL leadership". The AFL still practises class collaboration. And so does the CIO, although thousands of Negroes are in the CIO. Johnson does not seem to understand that the AFL's attitude toward the Negroes is rooted in its craft structure. The attitude of a conservative craft unionist toward a white steel worker, or other unskilled manual laborer, is very little different from his attitude toward Negroes.

(d) "He (Trotsky--JL) recommended that under certain circumstances the revolutionary party could withdraw its own candidate for election to Congress and support a Negro democrat". (p. 11). Under what conditions? This is Negro chauvinism, with a vengeance. A democrat or Democrat, e. g. Cotton Ed Smith in blackface?

(e) page 15: "The link in the struggle for Negro democratic rights is between the Negro community as a whole and organized labor and not between the Negro proletariat alone and the white proletariat." This comes mighty close to a plea for "national unity" among the Negroes, who are not a nation.

(f) page 15: "The experience of the Party with its agitation on the Harlem demonstration has already shown how receptive the Negro masses and Negro proletarian elements would be to agitation of this kind". What experience of the Party? The only experience, or agitation, the Party had was Johnson's article in Labor Action, and that was bad. When you are sweeping history, you do not stop to pick up such trifles.

Johnson says, I believe, that he is defending our old 1939 line. Good. Let him buttress it. Let him explain how it is that we (and Trotsky) were correct then. Let him explain wherein Coolidge's position is wrong. Let him counter-pose his practical program of action to Coolidge's or to what he thinks Coolidge should, if he is consistent, advocate.

If Johnson is still Johnson, he will do none of these things. I propose to the comrades that they ignore, and refrain from answering, those parts of the editions of Johnson's position that are yet to come that are not relevant to the points that are in dispute now. Let us avoid again filling stacks of internal bulletins chasing Johnson all over the political map.

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