

Bulletin

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THE SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND
THE TASKS OF THE WORKING CLASS

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The Second Imperialist World War took place in a period of general capitalist decline. It was the war which changed the face of things and obscured the fact that the bourgeoisie and the government had been able to do nothing substantial to halt the downward trend of the capitalist economy. The decade-old depression with its broad lines, millions of unemployed and idle factories was routed only by the needs of war production. The problems of capitalist production and profits were solved for the time being. Every man and woman was called either to the military service, to the factory, the government or to a place in one of the numerous voluntary organizations formed to "aid in the war effort." This particular depression or "recession" was over; over by the grace of the German fascist bourgeoisie in pursuit of its imperialist interests and the need for the American bourgeoisie to be no less alert in the defense of its imperialist interests.

It is important to remember always that only by the resort to the war against German fascist capitalism was it possible for the ruling class in the United States to resume production, to solve the overwhelming problem of unemployment, to eliminate hunger, evictions and nakedness. It was only for war purposes that the factories resumed full time production of food, clothing and supplies of all kinds. Even after the resumption, priority in all lines was given to the military establishment. Civilian supplies were rationed while the military services were so well provided for that even now three years after the close of the war, piles of these supplies of all types remain. This phenomenon of the economy in the U.S. being given over as never before to the production of war supplies and the disappearance of many consumer items from the production lines for a period of years was a new experience for the U.S. which had not heretofore been a part of European militarism or in step with the constant military preparedness programs of the European nations.

Immediately following the close of hostilities the country began a period of "reconversion" and what has been called a "boom" began. These post-war years, however, have not been a boom period, at least in the past meaning of that term. The post war period of high production was occasioned only by the need for building up depleted inventory. The consumer market reappeared with nothing available to buy; not only had consumer inventory of durable and non-durable goods been exhausted but it was necessary for the whole of the economy to be restocked before consumer lines could be put into manufacture and distributed. The post war "boom" therefore was unique and does not necessarily give any indication of the general state of the economy. The "normal" phenomenon in the development of capitalism was the Great Depression. This was followed by what can now at least be called a "normal" situation on a world scale: the Second Imperialist World War. It was the conversion of the economy into one huge arsenal, the drastic lowering of consumer

production and the havoc of the war which created the basis of the post-war "boom."

This is one of the chief characteristics of the post-war period: the replacement of the pre-war peace time depression by the peace time post-war "boom," which was occasioned by the depletion of consumer inventory because for a period of four years the whole economy was devoted to war production. If this "boom" had not taken place we would have seen the most concrete evidence of the meaning of the concept of capitalist decline. A capitalism which did not experience a period of "boom" following such a concentration on war production as during the past war, would be a capitalism which had decided to pass quietly out of existence. It is clear now, if not before, that the bourgeoisie in the U. S. has no such intentions.

Following the war American capitalism was in a more favorable position for mass production than ever before. The tremendous profits of the war years, resulting in the piling up of reserves and other liquid resources in the variegated forms used by capitalist enterprise, the technological advances made during the war, the development of the productive forces - all these added to the economic needs of the country and of the world combined to create a situation which would push capitalist production and profits even higher than during the fabulous war years.

Monopoly capitalism was strengthened in the course of the war. This was due not only to design on the part of the big finance and industrial capitalists but also to the very nature of total war. Effective prosecution of modern global warfare favors the use of the largest plants and the business units with the greatest resources in capital, skill and labor force. Smaller enterprises were either squeezed out or permitted a bare existence. The larger units which were favored with the big orders grew fatter than ever before and piled up huge sums in profits. Not only was this true of the producing enterprises but of the banks and the insurance companies.

Although monopoly capitalism expanded during the war, the intervention of the government in the interests of war production, helped maintain a certain degree of competition. The demands of the situation were too great to permit complete monopolization by the big corporations or to permit complete dominance by a single corporation. This was particularly noticeable in the case of aluminum where the almost complete pre-war monopoly of the Mellon interests was broken by the government which financed a rival corporation in the production of aluminum because such a step was necessary for the successful prosecution of the war.

The war ended with tremendously expanded productive capacity, gigantic financial resources, the largest and most skilled labor force in the country's history, the highest rate of productivity, the largest accumulated savings and a potentially unlimited domestic market. This market existed not only because of the severe reduction of consumer production during the war but also because of the need for raising the standard of living of the masses of the people. Despite all this, many of the rules of capitalist society were dis-

trossed over the increase in plant and equipment. These bourgeois and their apologists among the economists were fearful that there was too much productive capacity and that there might be no market to sustain the increased capacity. These "experts" were proven completely wrong and were forced to resort to other means of accomplishing their aims. Not only was productive capacity not too much but in many lines has been demonstrated to be inadequate. Not only is this true but it is questionable that the available labor force is adequate to increase production substantially without an appreciable increase in mechanization and a higher technological level. This raises grave and important social and political questions revolving around wages, hours of work and productivity.

This is an era in which the bourgeoisie is forced, far beyond its desires, to tolerate and often to demand or request the intervention of the government or financial aid from the government. This custom developed most clearly for the first time in the U.S. with the coming of the Great Depression. Here it was demonstrated for all to see that the sickness of capitalism and of capitalist society was of such a malignant nature that even in the opinion of its most ardent defenders, it could not heal itself. The war intensified and heightened the role of government in the management of the affairs of the ruling class and of society as a whole in all its aspects.

There was great uncertainty among the bourgeoisie at the close of the war. This uncertainty had been slowly developing since the close of the First Imperialist War. The very fact that the isolation of the U.S. had ended and that this country was launched on a career of participation in world affairs was itself upsetting to a bourgeoisie which had not bothered itself even to know the geography of the world. The first successful proletarian revolution also added to the discomfiture. Then came the threat of Hitler and the Second Imperialist War. The world market was disrupted and the U. S. was called upon to establish a world-wide relief station.

At home the bourgeoisie knew that it was confronted with two problems: "government planning" and organized labor. Government had been steadily moving in on the "prerogatives of business" since the beginning of the New Deal and an untamed labor movement had given its no-strike pledge only for the duration of the war. The bourgeoisie was faced with the difficult problem of holding labor in check and yet not yielding its revered rights and privileges to a government which it felt also to be encroaching on its hallowed preserves.

While the struggle which was taking place was interpreted by labor and the liberals as a struggle between "reactionary forces" and the "forces of progress" as represented by Roosevelt and his "New Deal," it was in fact only a conflict within the ranks of the capitalist ruling class over the most efficient and effective means of shoring up the tottering capitalist social order. One side wanted to be "tough" with labor while the other side agreed with the philosophy that "one can catch more flies with molasses than with vinegar." The labor bureaucracy and others who have failed to

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grasp this have added to the difficulties of the working class by making it appear that since "the reactionaries" plan to "enslave" labor it is the duty of the trade unions to support the "friends of labor" as represented at first by Roosevelt and later by Truman.

The bourgeoisie decided to strengthen its position at the close of the war. The future of the country, of its class dominance and of capitalist itself was not certain. The leadership of the ruling class determined first of all to check any plans of the working class for "a finger in the pie." This was to be the first step by the ruling class in reasserting its dominance after the war. It proceeded with complete arrogance to gear the economy to high production, high profits and dividends; but at the same time to fix the highest possible prices and the lowest possible wages. Added to this was the demand of the bourgeoisie that all government controls be eliminated and that labor increase its productivity if it wanted more wages. The claim was made that all the ills of the economy were due to two causes: government controls and high wages coupled with low productivity by labor. The slogan of all business and its apologists was that business should run its own affairs, that the "laws" of the "market" should be allowed to prevail, that traditional "supply and demand" procedure would take care of prices and that higher wages could only come from increased production.

This post-war program of the bourgeoisie conflicted not only with the interests of the working class but also, according to the bourgeois liberals, with the genuine interests of bourgeois society itself. The bourgeois "radicals" were joined by the labor bureaucracy in a protest movement for government intervention in the manner of the Roosevelt New Deal intervention of the early '30's. This was no new role for the government. These seemingly sporadic interventions were and are really a part of the general latter-day anatomy of capitalist society. This changed structure of the bourgeois world has its foundations in the decadence of bourgeois society. The only body which can conceivably adjudicate the differences among the conflicting groups, according to the "liberal" bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie is a "New Deal" or "Fair Deal" government. The state must be a "welfare state," dealing equitably with all classes in society. Whereas in the bourgeois world justice has been represented as blind and therefore impartial, the new welfare state is all-seeing; it is a paternal state, seeing and taking care of the interests of all conflicting groups.

A part of the bourgeoisie, viz, a section of the consumer goods manufacturers consents to some sort of block with the liberals and the labor bureaucracy in support of the role of the government. It is only the most irreconcilable and reactionary of the bourgeoisie who reject completely the notion that the government should take the initiative in regulating the affairs of business or in establishing any general plans for the operation of bourgeoisie society as a whole.

The bourgeoisie, however, cannot escape from government intervention and regulation of its affairs. Due to the inability of the bourgeoisie to unravel the tangled skein of capitalist contradiction

and to rescue itself from the dual dangers of working class attack at home and assault from the outside by a foreign bourgeoisie, it is forced to depend more and more on the capitalist state for success. This takes the form of tolerating a degree of social and economic planning by the government: government financing of production, control of exports and imports, allocation of materials and resources, influencing the distribution of wealth through taxation and public spending, preservation of natural resources through government ownership and the retardation in monopoly control through the allocation of government expenditure to enterprises not a part of the monopoly.

An outstanding feature of the reliance of the bourgeoisie on the state is the role of the government as customer. The continued armed state of the world, the "preparedness" program of the U.S. creates a vast internal market. This is augmented by purchases connected with the rehabilitation of the world for which the U.S. has or is in process of committing itself.

The real rulers of capitalist society do not take kindly to this new form of state intervention - intervention which expresses itself in an effort to "plan" society for the "welfare of all." They look upon the state, the government as the servant of the ruling class, to come when called to perform a specific task and to retreat when the task has been performed. They are against a "planned society," and all "socialistic" measures. They would have the politics of the National Association of Manufacturers prevail as the politics of the government. These are forthright reactionary bourgeois. There are however the "constitutional" bourgeois, the defenders of the way of the Fathers. This is the type represented by Taft. For them the government should play an increased role in the affairs of business but not to the extent of becoming "socialistic." Also, the procedure must always accord with their conception of what the "powers of the central government" and what the powers "reserved to the states" are.

The whole of the bourgeoisie, however, is impaled on the horns of a dilemma. It must submit to the intervention of the state and to financial aid from the state. They demand, however, the right to call the tune while the state pays the bill. A conflict ensues. The conflict is a sort of three-cornered affair between the dominant bourgeoisie, the government bureaucracy and the labor-liberal bloc. While its primary role remains that of the defender and protector of the interests of the bourgeoisie, it develops its own notions as to how this can and should be done. What is more significant for today is that the government bureaucracy develops its own bureaucratic interests, seeks to perpetuate itself, to make itself secure and to assume the role of arbiter for the whole social order.

This state bureaucracy of the type we are discussing has its source in the increased demands made on government, in the inability of bourgeois society to operate safely on a laissez-faire foundation and in the ever-increasing size of the bureaucracy necessitated by the rapid proliferation of governmental functions. The very expansion of the administrative role of the state with the multitudinous boards, commissions and administrators promotes the formation of a

bureaucracy and increases enormously the number of "decrees" issued by the government.

The existence of this state bureaucracy with its great size, expanded power and larger authority over life and property, particularly in the period of the emergence of fascism and totalitarianism, presents a difficult and troublesome problem. It is not difficult to see the germs of totalitarianism in the organization of the capitalist state in the U. S. today. It does not require enormous perspicacity to detect analogous phenomena here to the happenings which transpired before the advent of fascism in Italy and Germany. Also, if fascism is properly understood as the last frantic effort of the bourgeoisie, at a given time, to consolidate its class position and prevent its defeat by the proletariat, it can be freely admitted and emphasized that the bourgeoisie in the U.S. is prepared and will resort to fascism if and whenever the time is adjudged correct. But there is not such thing as the automatic or inevitable coming of fascism, just as there is no such thing as the inevitable downfall of capitalism or coming of socialism. All social phenomena are the result of causative factors which may vary or be varied from time to time and which depend for existence or development on numerous components in any total situation.

In the U.S. today it is not only the working class and its allies which holds back reactionary trends of a prefascist sort. The bourgeoisie, except for a small number of wealthy but discarded members, is against "regimentation" in a very strong way. This bourgeoisie is a bulwark against any usurpations on the part of the state bureaucracy. Also when discussing totalitarianism or a police state in the U.S. it has to be emphasized that politically and socially there is no such thing as "the United States." There are several United States. Furthermore the very size of the country presents a problem which no fascist group has yet had to face. It is not in point to counter with the contention that Russia is larger than the U.S. physically and in population and yet she is a totalitarian country. In Russia a bureaucracy imposed itself on a country in which the economy had already been collectivised and pretended that it was carrying on the program of the October Revolution.

Any discussion of the nature of present political tendencies in the U.S. must of course be kept in relation to the question of the "death agony of capitalism", of the imperialist aspirations and programs of the U.S. and the preparations for the Third Imperialist war. First of all it is imperative that the Marxists stand ready always to revise any estimates or predictions they have made. This is particularly important in connection with the content which is given the phrase "the death agony of capitalism." Trotsky wrote the thesis embodying this idea more than a decade ago. It is true however that history has not proceeded according to his predictions. Capitalist decline is marked by a rising and falling tempo. The bourgeoisie is able to devise ways and means of prolonging its existence. Healing medicaments can be applied which restore the patient to renewed health. In the absence of revolutionary upsurge by the working class capitalism will always find a way out of its dilemmas and difficulties.

The U.S. is the biggest and the most powerful of the nations. It

is the master imperialist. On the western side of the world divide all roads lead to Washington. America is banker, money-lender, pawn-broker, merchant, and granary for the whole world. Any imperialist nation which achieves or has thrust upon it such a role must also be or aim to be policeman over the whole world. We approach the day when it can be said: "the sun never sets on the American flag."

The bourgeoisie in the U.S. desire this class hegemony if it can be profitably exercised. They want to profit from international economic operations but at the same time they desire that the nations of the world be "self-supporting." That is, each nation should support itself and at the same time be dependent on the U.S. They proclaim the aim of the ERP to be that of making Europe "self-supporting by 1952." However, it is demanded that Europe rebuild its economy, join the U.S. in a "defense pact," contribute to the stability of American business and be on its feet by 1952.

Formally it is agreed that Europe should be politically independent but in a reasonable sort of way. Reasonableness means that Europe should prepare to follow the U.S. into war against Russia, hold its working class in check and at least moderate all "socialistic" tendencies in government. There are no official declarations to this effect but leading citizens express themselves in this manner. And, of course, there is always the possibility that this way of thinking might crop out in high places in Europe.

The organizational center around which U.S. imperialism revolves now is the "Atlantic Defense Pact". This is the western counterpart to the Russian "defense" organization behind the "iron curtain". Thus each side is preparing to "defend" itself against "the aggressor." Each side is all ready to proclaim itself the champion of democracy and the other a pit of blackest reaction.

While the U.S. and Russian blocs are the chief and important alignments, neither is a solid group in a voluntary way. Smaller countries and lesser nations in both camps are under pressure and are forced by economic conditions to answer the call of the master nation. This is true of Norway no less than it was true of Rumania. Norway chose the U.S. apparently for the reason that although she knows she will be a battleground, and will probably be invaded by Russia, in the long run the U.S. will prevail and be the winning country.

We take this position without at the same time taking the position that there is no difference between Russian totalitarianism and American bourgeois-democracy; or in general between totalitarianism and bourgeois-democracy. We say this in order to silence all demagogues who charge Marxists with desiring defeat of their own countries, or who proclaim that workers should support the war because "there are more workers in the country than corporation presidents." We also state this position against the labor bureaucrats who will be pushing labor into the trenches in defense of "our free labor movement." There is a difference and we urge workers always to seize on this difference, to exploit this difference to the end that all imperialism and all capitalism in every country may be destroyed. This must be done before war comes and while bourgeois-democracy remains.

Capitalist tendencies in the U.S. and in the world, for that

matter, are revealed in constant and ubiquitous war preparations. This means that the economy is more and more given over to the production of war materials and supplies. Not only is this true of the economy but of all sectors of bourgeois society. Instead of the small "standing army" of some years back there is now a peacetime draft and an army of over one million. The navy and the air force have been expanded correspondingly. Huge government stocks of war materials are maintained. Giant laboratories and factories for the production of atomic weapons and controlled missiles are erected, by the Government. The government takes over the control of industries working on war materials in connection with hiring policy. These industries are part of a giant blue print for immediate changeover to war production. The government invades the field of education and takes control of university laboratories and university teachers. The government establishes certain mathematical formulae and theorems as "government secrets" and determines the time when these formulae and theorems can be made public. Certain inventions become the property of the government and their existence is kept secret until the government is ready to release the information.

The whole of bourgeois society therefore is being conditioned for war and the making of war. All of human life is being moulded into a bourgeois war machine. Every human being becomes a combatant and every foot of earth becomes a part of "the front."

This is capitalism in decline. A system in which the frontiers already gained in the centuries-old struggle against starvation and for human welfare and material security are pushed back by the advancing and ravenous Behemoth of imperialist war.

This is the natural end of a society which can no longer create but only destroy. A society which corrals every bit and shred of creative ability to use in the devising of engines of destruction. A society which concerns itself with the health of the people in order that they may be strong enough to overpower and destroy other human beings. A society which concerns itself with illiteracy when illiteracy is a deterrent to profit production or the operation of imperialist instruments of destruction.

This unquestioned tendency of bourgeois society to plunge headlong to self-destruction is moderated by the fact that the bourgeoisie is not "one reactionary mass." There are forces within the bourgeoisie which for one reason or another oppose the progressive assault on bourgeois democracy by the more reactionary capitalist protagonists, that is the proto-totalitarians, in the government and outside. The "new" bourgeois-democrats are a variegated lot, with varying reasons for their fervent espousal of "democracy". The fact that there are big bourgeois who are opposed to anti-democratic trends for reasons solely of bourgeois safety as they see it is of no particular consequence. The fact that a big conservative bourgeois of the type of Taft fights for an orderly constitutional "democratic" procedure in order to protect capitalism and the class interests of the bourgeoisie is a demonstration that we are far away from the "police state."

It is important to deal with what is, and to be able always to keep things in correct proportion in any analysis. As early as 1930 the Communist Party announced in a convention resolution that "the AFL

is outright fascist." This is a very easy form of polemic often invoked when one's predictions have really not been vindicated; that is, one can say that what was predicted did not come to pass, the prediction can be quietly forgotten or one can brazen it out by making new predictions more sensational than those formerly made and which have been demonstrated to be incorrect.

The U. S. is not threatened by internal totalitarianism or the coming of the police state. The government bureaucracy is not in process of sprouting totalitarian wings. No amount of fancy theorizing or deep speculation will help one produce more than a germ of totalitarianism. It is well-known, however, that the germ is there. This is no secret known only to a few. Even Philip Murray has some primitive understanding of this question. That is what he means when he calls the Taft-Hartley Law a "slave labor act." A microscopic fertilized egg cell may some day become a 300 pound man. It certainly is the beginnings of a man. But it is a long, long way from being a man. It may never reach manhood. There are dozens and dozens of factors which are necessary to produce a man, even from a fertilized egg. There are dozens of factors which may retard the growth of the egg and dozens which may destroy its growth completely. These are the most important considerations today when dealing with the serious problems connected with capitalist decline.

Above all, Marxists will be careful to reject all mechanistic and purely deductive analyses of the stage of capitalist decline. Marxists will base their premises on what they see at a given time and not on what they predicted they would see or on what they believe they ought to see, or on what they wrote would come to pass.

We hold that within the general framework of capitalist decline, which is a long-term phenomenon, there are periods of bloom similar to the blossoming of the flowers or fruit trees prematurely or out of time due to unforeseen and unpredicted warmth. Or better still, capitalism is like a tree approaching the end of its fruit-bearing days: the yield drops and the quality deteriorates. By methods known to horticulturists, the yield may be increased for a period. It is known, however, that the tree is in decline and that decay has set in.

Capitalist society in the U. S. is passing through just such a period now. It is a period of high production, capitalist prosperity and a comparatively high standard of living for the masses. This on the material side. Politically and socially this period is marked by a resurgence of bourgeois-democracy; a renewed struggle for the sustenance and maintenance of bourgeois-democracy. Marxists who do not understand this are false prophets and dangerous guides. They will have no appreciable influence among the masses. They will be like the doctors of the church who refused to look into Galileo's telescope, fearing what they saw might be a repudiation of Aristotle.

This resurgence of bourgeois-democracy is illustrated in many ways. Most notable of all is the successes which have been registered in the Negro's struggle for democratic rights. Here real gains have been made and the process goes on, knocking pre-

dictions over and making a wasteland of numerous speculations - both reactionary and pseudo-Marxist speculations. Despite the increase in anti-Semitism in the country there is a planned and determined struggle against this monstrous national blot. We can mention also the new but modest democratization measures in the army.

The best and most concrete expression of what we are talking about is the Truman political economic program. Here is a program put forward by the titular head of the bourgeois party in control of the government. Its aim is to rehabilitate bourgeois-democracy and make it respectable again. This program is the program of one part of the capitalist ruling class. They have their own reasons, passing all the way from individual bourgeois with progressive ideas to the plain reactionaries. They all however know that capitalism is sick, that it is embattled, that the capitalist ruling class must seek to improve its relations with the people or the people will take matters into their own hands. They know that democracy at home or something which resembles democracy at least is a powerful force against Russian propaganda. Some of them at least know that bread lines and closed factories do not pay dividends. They also know that one section of the country, the North, cannot for long remain prosperous while another section, the South, wallows in poverty and ignorance.

The Truman program for a "Fair Deal" state is one more proposition dedicated to the planning of capitalism for permanent prosperity. It has its roots in the Roosevelt New Deal but it is an advance over the New Deal. The Truman program makes a more direct appeal to the masses as a concrete thing to be espoused by them and theoretically at least demands the participation of the masses in its application. It is the Truman program which will appeal to the masses and not Harry Truman, the little man from a small town in Missouri.

This in part was exactly what was revealed by the November elections and the Truman victory. Here was a program which the masses believed would benefit them more than it would benefit the capitalist ruling class. The little man from Missouri went straight "to the people." The masses: farmers, workers, Negroes, small businessmen, small professional people, looked at Harry Truman as one of themselves, as one who himself would be benefitted by a "Fair Deal."

This was one aspect of the Truman victory. Not the most important factor but one of tremendous significance for Marxists who are really serious about the problem of how to get to the masses in the U.S.

A factor of far deeper significance in accounting for the victory of Truman and the Democratic Party is the clearly demonstrated determination of the masses to turn back the tide of reaction which they sensed creeping upon them and restore what to them are the guarantees of freedom and liberty. The masses had slept or been beguiled at the Fall elections of 1946. They had heard of totalitarianism and what they saw between 1946 and 1949

reminded them of what they had heard.

To call the November 1948 action of the masses a "left turn" is too stilted and superficial. It was not a left turn but something far more meaningful at this stage of the political development of the masses. It was a demonstration, in a primitive sort of way, that the masses, in a very fundamental way, are thinking politically, thinking in terms of having a government of, for and by the masses of the people. The real significance was not the question of "turn" at all but of the fact mentioned above that the masses began to understand the real meaning of fascism and inequality. The vote for Truman was a demonstration that the masses do not and cannot base themselves on theoretical considerations but on an intuitive grasp of what is good for them.

The vote for Truman revealed this in a significant way. While some Marxists, liberals and the Republicans were freely predicting that the Democratic Party was falling to pieces, the voters took things into their own hands and put it together again. They were not seduced by the charge that the Democratic Party was the party of "the Southern bourbons." The reason for this was their attitude toward the program put forward by Truman and the party liberals. They did not allow themselves to be trapped into support of the Stalinist fraud headed by Henry Wallace, no matter how often this aggregation paraded forth in the habiliments of native American radicalism.

It is necessary to emphasize over and over that the simple faith of the masses in the will and the power of the Democratic Party to carry through an efficient and lasting security program for all the people is illusory. It is not exactly accurate to say that the Truman victory has "spread democratic illusions among the masses." It is not so much that the masses who supported Truman have illusions about bourgeois-democracy, but rather that they have mistaken ideas that the "Fair Deal for all" can be a corrective for the ills of capitalist society. Furthermore, for the masses to make the attempt to make bourgeois-democracy work, when it is under attack, even if they do suffer a few illusions, is a salutary experience for the masses as well as a progressive venture in the field of politics.

The real and most distressing problem to be faced is not the "democratic illusions" of the masses but the fact that there is no revolutionary leadership which can mobilize the democratic sentiments of the masses. About the only contribution the Marxists seem able to make today is to announce that the victory of Truman has "increased the democratic illusions of the masses." This is not a very virile contribution to the political education of the illusioned people.

It is false to say that the victory of Truman has retarded the possibilities of getting a labor party started. Implicit in this proposition is the further proposition that if Dewey had been elected, labor party sentiment would have been enhanced; that is, if the masses had voted in a Republican Congress in 1946 which subsequently passed the Taft-Hartley Law, had in 1948 increased the power of that party by turning over the whole government to it,

then we could have said, "Now the masses have learned something. Their refusal to vote for Truman shows they do not have 'democratic illusions.'" "

If we are correct in saying that the support of Truman, in the circumstances, was a progressive step by the masses, at their present political level, then we can draw the conclusion that the slogan for a labor party is a more realistic one than before the elections. It is fallacious to contend that the direct call by Marxists for the formation of a labor party is not realistic, and at the same time have the position that the masses moved left last November. It is complete folly to retreat from direct propaganda for the labor party because of any post-election negative attitude by the labor bureaucrats, even the most progressive, such as Reuther. The reason for this ought to be plain: the labor bureaucracy has repeatedly made it clear that they are not for a labor party or a third party "at this time." The position of Reuther, Murray, Whitney, Lewis and Co. is the same today as it was before November 1948. What is important is that the masses are ready to be led into independent political action. The tragedy lies in the fact that there is no such leader. This is not the fault of the working class or the mass of the people.

The solution to the difficult problems faced by the masses lies with the working class and its organizations: economic and political. The proletariat in the U.S. has reached the most advanced position politically, culturally and economically ever attained before. It is organized by the millions and there are millions more waiting and anxious to be organized. Finishing the task of economic organization is going ahead just a little bit faster than political organization. This is in part due to the fact that the CIO leadership has discovered that economic organization today, to be effective, must be accompanied by political organization. The labor bureaucracy is faced with the dilemma of trying to win a political struggle with a workers' economic organization. The situation demands a class party of the toilers to lead a struggle for a workers government and the labor bureaucracy fritters away the strength of labor on a PAC formed solely for the purpose of Franklin Roosevelt in the White House. Now this same labor bureaucracy, sensing the smouldering and inchoate demand of the masses for their own party, decide to ape the bourgeois politicians by resorting to state, county and ward organization and by keeping in politics "the year 'round." That is the labor bureaucrats' plan to organize political machines in the manner of the capitalist politicians.

There could be no objection to this procedure if the organizational form or the structure were subordinated to program. This is not the case, however, in both the AFL and CIO the policy is basically the old Gompers policy of "reward your friends and punish your enemies." The tendency among the "advanced" workers at least is to get away from this conception but the bureaucracy is sworn to dam this tide. To the degree that they have a program it calls only for superior organizational efficiency, not for programmatic differentiation from the bourgeois practices. The PAC went into every ward and precinct for the 1948 elections in order to assure

the election of Truman. The PAC'ers took the position that they could do the job better than the regular Democratic organization.

Inherent in this situation is an important lesson for labor. Labor has already demonstrated that it can be more efficient in getting out the vote than the leaders of the two bourgeois parties. Why is this? Why is it so necessary today that two old capitalist parties call on the labor bureaucracy to "get out the vote?" The reason is that the political understanding of the masses has been heightened, "the people" are not so gullible as in former years; they have lived through two world wars, the worst depression in history, the rise of fascism and the most recent capitalist inflationary orgy of the post-war years. The masses in the U.S. have tasted the fruits of struggle; they show today the results of their struggles against oppression. Despite the assault of the bourgeoisie, the masses through their struggles have wrested from this bourgeoisie in the U.S. the highest standard of living ever attained by the toilers at any time in the world's history. The working class and its allies look upon this as a victory which they stand ready to enlarge and expand.

The labor bureaucracy takes as its major assignment the holding of the trade union movement safely within the boundaries of class collaboration. They bind labor to capitalism and the wage system. The more reactionary of the labor bureaucracy still talk of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay." They are for "our system of free enterprise," the same system which inflicted the Taft-Hartley Law on labor.

All of the labor bureaucrats support the "foreign policy" of the imperialist government at Washington. They collaborate with the government in the administration of the ERP in the same manner that they collaborate here at home to keep labor tied to the bourgeois political parties. They appoint labor's representatives to serve on the State Department's "American Mission for the Marshall Plan." They do not send an independent mission of labor to Europe to collaborate with European labor and protect the European workers from any designs of U. S. imperialism. They go to Europe under the State Department to smooth the way for the men of real power, the bourgeois diplomats.

These labor leaders flirted with and tolerated the Stalinists, bureaucrats as well as the ranks, in wartime when the bourgeoisie and the Russian bureaucrats were on their honeymoon. When the break came and the government began to round up the Stalinist bureaucrats, the labor leadership began a round up of all "Communist Party" members in the unions. In this field too the labor bureaucracy becomes the defender of the interests of the bourgeoisie and of U. S. imperialism. They do not vote to expel or abridge the privileges of Stalinists in the unions in the name of trade union democracy, working class militancy or political education, but as stooges of the government and as a safety measure against any and all who may seek to dispossess the reactionary union leadership.

The trade union bureaucracy is ready and prepared to recruit labor for support of the next imperialist war. This time they will be no less brazen in their war-mongering than during the Second

World Imperialist War. It is probable that these bureaucrats will be far more venomous, craven and stupid as they sell themselves to the bourgeoisie and its government. They have already joined the government's "Communist" hunt.

On their part the Stalinists in the labor movement are in a very vulnerable position. The honeymoon is over. They are being hounded out of office and in numerous instances out of the union. This union wrecking gang, functioning always under orders from the anti-labor Kremlin criminals, have experienced a severe setback in the labor movement in the U.S. The workers are aroused against them. The workers should be aroused against the Stalinists. Their revolt against the Stalinists is ten years late. Not only this, but in numerous instances the reaction of the workers is reactionary. This is particularly true of the Catholic workers and of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. It is the case with many workers in the AFL unions lead by outstanding reactionary and fossilized bureaucrats.

The task before the labor movement is to put the anti-Stalinist campaign on the proper basis, on the correct foundation of opposition to Stalinism, not because it is "red" but because it is not red, that is, not dedicated to class struggle, the destruction of exploitation and the establishment of a workers government. Labor should fight against Stalinism and destroy it for the same reason that we fight against capitalism: to drive exploitation, oppression and enslavement from the earth. To support Stalinism because it is against capitalism is merely to substitute totalitarian oppression for bourgeois-democratic exploitation and oppression.

On the other hand, while labor should distinguish between the Stalinists and our native bourgeois-democratic union bureaucracy, it must be clearly grasped by workers that it is incorrect to support the principles upon which the Murrays, Reuthers, Lewises and Greens operate. They are primarily against the Stalinists not because the Stalinists are bureaucrats but because these leaders call what the Stalinists represent "socialism" and because the capitalist government is in a campaign against Russia. The labor bureaucracy would be even more violently opposed to real socialism and real Marxian socialists. A labor leadership which fears even such a mild form of independent politics as would be practiced by a labor party will certainly resort to the most reactionary measures against the "Communist Party" which this stupid labor bureaucracy consider a real expression of Marxian revolutionary rectitude and program.

The ranks of labor should adopt a correct pro-labor and class struggle attitude toward the dispute which is taking place in its ranks between the Stalinists and the trade union officialdom. We support the bourgeois-democratic trade union bureaucracy in all cases where there is danger of their defeat by the Stalinists. We do this in the union because we prefer bourgeois-democratic unions to the totalitarian monstrosities called unions in Russia but which are nearer to the Nazi "Labor Front" than to genuine unions. This does not mean that we withdraw our struggle against the bureau-

cracy or that we come to terms with the trade union leadership. We say, in the union and for the union, that the bourgeois-democratic bureaucracy as against the Stalinist totalitarian bureaucracy is the lesser evil. Both bureaucracies are evils to be fought and destroyed but one is the greater evil.

It will undoubtedly be argued by some that the reasons given for supporting the trade union bureaucracy against the Stalinists hold for supporting bourgeois-democratic U.S. against totalitarian Russia. This is to misunderstand the nature of the trade union and the government. The union is a class organization of the working class. Both from a theoretical and practical standpoint they can control the union and use it in the interests of the working class. The trade union bureaucracy is part of the working class and has no other roots. The government, on the other hand, is the class instrument of the capitalist ruling class and imperialists. The working class cannot even theoretically or abstractly control the capitalist government and make this government execute its will. The leaders of the government come from the bourgeoisie and there they have their roots.

The urgent and imperative demand which comes to the labor movement, as the most progressive section of the masses, is to break with the bourgeoisie and at the same time repudiate the Stalinists. To break with the bourgeoisie and at the same time to reject the Stalinists means to establish the political party of labor, of the working class. The road to the establishment of the independent party of labor is not through efforts to capture the Democratic Party, nor through selecting "labor's friends" out of the two capitalist parties, nor in forming a "progressive party" nor a "peoples' front" party, nor the kind of two class party which Reuther has mentioned occasionally.

The objective situation demands that labor form its own party at once. The fact that this will not be done at once does not relieve the most advanced and most militant of the trade unionists from accepting the responsibility for organizing the beginnings of a well-planned propaganda campaign in the CIO, AFL, railway unions, miners and other organizations, for a labor party. This can be done if only some of the militants who hold a labor party position will take the first steps and lead the way.

The committee for a labor party must cut across the boundaries of the several internationals and bridge the divide between the AFL, CIO, UMWA and the railway unions. Neither the PAC nor the LEPL can be relied on for anything more independent than voting against Dewey or against some outstanding anti-labor Congressman of the moment. The Committee for a Labor Party should be a group of trade union progressives and militants who seek office, who refuse appointive posts from the bureaucracy and who therefore are independent of the union leadership. They should keep out of all posts of leadership in the two "political arms of labor", the PAC and the LEPL.

Not only does the situation in the U.S. as we have outlined it establish the road ahead for the more advanced trade unionists

but this analysis determines the tasks of the Marxists, their responsibilities, the nature of their program and the type of organization necessary to function effectively in the concrete situation. The situation demands the concentration by the small band of Marxists on the building of a group of sincere, devoted and active Marxian revolutionaries. While we hold to no rigid and unbending notions as to the proper method, we know that our procedure must be of such nature as to be clear to all, from year to year, what we stand for, what our aims are and how we expect to realize them. We insist that there must be some plan which is adhered to and given enough time to be tested out in practice.

There is no Marxian party in the U. S. today. To say that there is no Marxian party is only to realize and admit that there is no party or organization with influence and prestige among the masses. It means that there is no political organization which can organize the masses or any appreciable section of them for economic and political action. In this basic and important sense the WP is not a party. Two years ago the WP announced that it was an agitational-propaganda group. We said that our aim was to become a real Marxian cadre, an educated and disciplined core which would be the nucleus of a future revolutionary party or, prior to that, a faction in some mass labor party. In the period between the 1946 convention and the present convention we made no progress toward achieving this goal. In fact, the party lost ground and today is in a less favorable position to go forward than in 1946. This is the real problem which faces the Party and the convention.

To discuss whether or not the WP is an agitational group or a propaganda group is only to conceal the real issue. It is possible to be ineffective, obscure and without influence, no matter what the Party calls itself. The WP can be just as isolated after we decide that we are not a party as when we were functioning actively with the belief that we were a small party but a party. The brutal fact is that no small group in the U.S. will have influence or prestige of any magnitude.

The objective situation as we have outlined it is favorable for the development of class consciousness in the working class and a more definite political development of the masses. This was demonstrated by the action of the masses in their support of the "Truman Program." Any realistic analysis of the political scene in the U.S. reveals clearly that the working class is ready for political action. A small section is ready for active steps toward political organization. What is absent is the leadership. It is only Marxists who can provide this leadership and the correct program.

The tactical approach of Marxists today in the U.S. must be through propaganda for a labor party. This means that the most likely way in which the mass revolutionary party will come is out of a mass labor party. But the only center of agitation and propaganda for the labor party is the WP. At the same time the WP is the only center of agitation and propaganda for the revolutionary party and revolutionary action. This is a difficulty but one which can be resolved only through a clear and unambiguous program, by

keeping one's roots and activity in the working class and by the maintenance of an address and name plate which takes on the aspect of permanence. We know that the working class is not going to indulge in the past time of arguing the point as to whether the WP is a party or not a party, whether it is an agitational group or a propaganda group. It is very fortunate that the labor movement is not concerned with this type of discussion.

The big problem before the WP today, as always, is the problem of what can be called applied politics. In the bourgeois world virtually the whole of political procedure is application, practical activity, getting out the vote. This can be the political procedure of a class which has social power and uses its political power only for the protection of its social power. This cannot be the procedure of the working class however. We must begin with theory and with program. The WP has given considerable attention to political theory and political program. As far as it goes we have an impossible program down on paper. But we have two main shortcomings: (1) Our political program does not go far enough. (2) What we have is pretty much just something on paper, the center of much storm and fury before adoption but afterwards a sort of valley of dry bones.

Our program does not go far enough in that we do not have any developed and living political program which labor can use in practice over against the programs of the bourgeoisie. The absence of such a practical contemporary political program is an illustration of our failure to function even as a propaganda group. It is precisely the function of a small party such as the WP to provide labor with a practical political program to advance over against the programs of the NAM and the capitalist parties. What we mean can be illustrated in the case of the Taft-Hartley Act. Here we sought correctly to stir labor to action. What we did not do, however, and what must be done is to supply a counter-bill to the Taft-Hartley Act, extending the rights and immunities of the working class. Labor could then approach the "friends of labor" in Congress and demand that labor's own bill be introduced and defended. Not only could this be done in the National Congress but in state legislatures and city councils. This matter will be dealt with again in a program of action.

Since 1938 the "Trotskyist" movement, including the WP, has based itself on a "Transition Program" written by Trotsky. We have had little success with this transition program outside the pages of LABOR ACTION where the success of the Party has been considerable. Looking back on ten years' experience and re-examining the Transition Program and the conditions which prompted its formulation, we can say that it was not really a transition program. It was in fact written for a situation which did not materialize. For a long time it has been clear that the Transition Program needed revision. We need and must have a real transition program for the U. S. today.

Our political program does not go far enough in that we do not have a unified and comprehensive body of agitation and propaganda which can serve not only as a center of ideological and political illumination for the working class but also from which can be taken

just such more or less practical measures as the union counter-measure to the Taft-Hartley Act mentioned above. The program of the CIO, not only as written but with what is implicit in that program and infused with Marxian content and direction, would provide the Party with just such a political program.

We have to give attention to the problem of how to develop political programs and political activity for the Party and its periphery, no matter how small, which are in harmony with what is actually going on in the U. S. at a particular time. We point out that if our Party were imbued with living political outlook for the U.S., it would have been the WP which would have advanced the Truman Civil Rights Program. We are not talking about the "ideas" but the actual program, down on paper for presentation in Congress. After all there are two Negroes in the House. If they were politically alive and in New York State, our New York branches would have prepared some non-discrimination bills for the state legislature. This is suitable activity for a small organization - certainly for one which claims to be a propaganda group.

Our greatest weakness and the one which will be the most difficult to overcome is our inability to translate our political decisions into action. We discuss and adjourn to meet and discuss again. This tendency goes straight through the Party from the PC to the lower ranks. We have not learned how to concretize our theory and how to apply our political programs. This lack, this inability is the central cause of the failure of the Party to grow. It is true that Marxism is not so popular as it was two decades ago. The degeneration of the Russian Revolution, of the Communist Party, and the relatively high standard of living in the U.S., all militate against the progress of a Marxian party. But in truth we can only say that these factors are the cause of there not being a mass party or a large party in the U.S. But these factors cannot realistically or seriously be put forward as the reason why the WP has not only not grown but lost membership since the close of the war.

We have not maintained our factory orientation. The Party has drifted out of the factory and away from the ranks of labor. There has been increased emphasis on entering school, taking petty-bourgeois jobs and any occupation which is not that of a proletarian. We must reaffirm our former position that the Party must go into the factory and stay there. A party cannot recruit proletarians and other toilers on college campuses or in bourgeois offices. Above all the Party must purge its leadership of students and those following petty-bourgeois occupations.

The Party must give more attention to discipline. This question has been the subject of much discussion and much misunderstanding in the Party. This matter must be clarified or the Party will continue to stagnate and be the nesting place for all manner of individuals who feel that it is fashionable or satisfying to belong to a revolutionary party but who at the same time resolve to carry on either no activity or the barest minimum, and that not in the places to which the Party might direct them.

The Party is a voluntary organization. This does not mean

that one can decide for one's self at all times whether or not to continue membership. It only means that the Party cannot compel one to remain a member. It does not mean that the Party cannot terminate one's membership. There are members of the Party who seemingly hold the opinion that "once a member always a member." The Party must be a place for those who do the will of the Party.

We believe that the proper attitude on this question was expressed by Lenin and by the Third World Congress of the Comintern:

"...How is the discipline of the revolutionary party of the proletariat maintained....First by the class consciousness of the proletarian vanguard....Secondly by its ability...to keep in close with...the broadest masses of the toilers....Thirdly by the correctness of the political leadership exercised by this vanguard and by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics.... Without these conditions discipline...cannot be achieved. Without these conditions all attempts to establish discipline are inevitably transformed into trifling phrase-mongering and empty gestures. On the other hand, these conditions cannot arise all at once."

"Democratic centralism in the Communist Party organization must be a real synthesis, a fusion of centralism and proletarian democracy. This fusion can be achieved only on the basis of constant common activity, constant common struggle of the entire party organization.

"The acceptance of a Communist program is only the expression of the will to become a Communist. If the Communist activity is lacking and the passivity of the mass of members still remains, then the party does not fulfill even the least part of the pledge it had taken upon itself in accepting the Communist program. For the first condition for an earnest carrying out of the program is the participation of all the members in the constant daily work of the Party.

"The art of Communist organization lies in the ability of making use of each and every one for the proletarian class struggle, of distributing the party work amongst all the Party members, and of constantly attracting through its members ever wider masses of the proletariat....

"A Communist Party must strive to have only really active members, and to demand from every rank and file worker that he should place his whole strength and time, insofar as he can himself dispose of it, under existing conditions, at the disposal of the Party and devote his best service to those interests.

"...To the duties of the Communist activity belong also that of submitting reports. This is the duty of all the organizations and organs of the Party as well as of every individual member...."

This is the sort of thing we should aim at. To proceed in this manner, however, does not mean that the Party leading committees are relieved of the responsibility and the necessity for invoking sterner and more mechanical measures on occasion.

pose the "reports" don't come even after a season of "constant common struggle of the entire organization."

A party can be just as bureaucratic in refusing to expel, for instance, as in resorting to expulsion. Refusal to censure or suspend or expel is not necessarily evidence of the practice of democracy. It can be the practice of bureaucratism. Such alleged democracy may be in fact evidence of cowardice, or inefficiency, or a feeling on the part of a leadership that it dwells in a glass house.

LABOR ACTION must be revived as the popular educational and agitational organ of the Party. The paper has seriously deteriorated since the close of the war. This is not the fault of the editors but of the deterioration of the Party. LABOR ACTION formerly was predominantly an agitational organ. While there has been an attempt to make it pass as a propaganda paper, it is neither what it was before nor what it is claimed to be. It is neither fish nor fowl. It is in danger of becoming a stilted and stuffy journal that is more of a "house organ" than a paper for the political education of its non-Party readers.

The only way through which the paper can be brought to life is to inspire and lead the Party to activity in the factories and the unions. This must be the first task of the Party national committee. The paper is certainly not the reflection of the working class. It is the reflection of the slowed pace of the Party, of its present doubt and wavering and of the fact that the Party has been uprooted.

The NEW INTERNATIONAL should be improved as a theoretical and propaganda organ. It should be the Party's real propaganda organ. This does not mean that its articles should be written in obscure, cryptic or "learned" fashion. They should be written with theoretical preciseness and at the same time so as to be comprehensible to those contacts in the unions who have come under the influence of the Party.

The WP must become and remain, under its own name, the center of Marxist education and agitation in the U.S. It must be an American party and an activist party. The WP must be and become the outstanding defender of Marxism, of Marxian economic philosophy and politics. We must not make any compromise whatsoever at this point. We must be prepared to face and combat the bourgeoisie and its retainers, daily of need be in defense of Marxism. The Party must not become so "democratic" that it departs from the fundamental principles which made the party of Lenin the great and only party of the proletariat. The Party must not be so swift in its flight from Stalinism that we even approach the camp of the reformists and the social-democrats. This is only to flee from the real Stalinists to cohabit with those who would be Stalinists if they could.

If the WP will pay attention to these considerations in the party will be able to remain its once healthy state and be in a position to recruit to its ranks and to increase its influence in the class struggle.

RESOLUTION ON THE NEGRO QUESTION

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For the present period the Workers Party lays down the following program for Negro work, based on the strategic orientation of the resolution on this question adopted by the Fourth Convention in 1946.

I. LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(a) The Civil Rights Program proposed by President Truman has been accepted by all sections of the Negro community and by the labor movement as their platform in the fight against Jim Crow.

(b) The party recognizes that despite its inadequacies the enactment of this program would represent a great step forward for the Negroes in America.

(c) As socialists, we do not share the liberal illusion that the Negroes can achieve full equality by legislative action alone. Yet the enactment of this program in full would create a juridical framework which would tremendously facilitate the further struggle for equality.

(d) The party regards the Civil Rights Program as the rallying-ground for the political unification of the Negro community as a whole and the labor movement. Hence it will seek to achieve the widest and most active participation of Negroes and white workers in the struggle for the enactment of this program into law.

(e) In so doing it will enlighten those within its reach on the imperialist and commercial calculations behind capitalist support for this program, and on the limitations of a purely legislative approach to the solution of the Negro question in America.

(f) We recognize that the Congress will probably not enact the Civil Rights Program, regardless of the pressure generated behind it. In all likelihood the President and the "friends of labor" in Congress will settle for a compromise in the interest of maintaining the unity of the Democratic Party.

(g) The Workers Party will vigorously oppose any compromise on the Civil Rights Program. In the eventuality of such a compromise we will seek to combat and expose those in the Negro organizations and the labor movement who are willing to sell the Negroes down the river for a political deal, and to educate the white workers and Negroes who have been brought together in the struggle for this program to the necessity of an independent labor party as the most essential prerequisite for the achievement of their goal.

II. THE DIRECT STRUGGLE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

(a) In addition to its support of the Civil Rights Program as the legislative platform for the fight against Jim Crow, the party will continue and seek to intensify its direct struggle against all manifestations of racial prejudice in America.

(b) In the unions and all popular organizations, party members will seek to be the outstanding champions of the struggle for full social, political and economic equality for Negroes.

(c) Whenever opportunity offers, the Party will seek to participate as an organization in specific struggles against Jim Crow, while carrying on constant propaganda and educational activity on this question by all means available.

(d) Where feasible, Party members will enter and work actively in organizations such as the NAACP as loyal participants in the struggles engaged in by these organizations.

III. SPECIAL TASKS AND ORIENTATION

(a) While engaging in the struggle for full equality for Negroes in all types of organizations or independently, the Party and its members will seek to play the additional role of propagandizing and implementing our conception of the relation of the Negro struggle to the general struggle for socialism recorded in the fundamental resolution on this question passed by our 1946 convention.

(b) In all phases of this activity, the Party and its members will seek to approach, educate and attract those Negroes who display an advanced degree of initiative, responsibility and social and class consciousness with the aim of recruiting in this period a real cadre of Negro members who are capable of giving socialist leadership to their people in the struggles which lie before them.

(c) To facilitate this activity, the Party will publish as soon as possible a pamphlet directed to this stratum of Negro workers. It will also make available to all its members the resolution on the Negro question of 1946 and initiate a discussion in all branches based on it.

LARRY O'CONNOR

(NOTE: The foregoing resolution was received by the Political Committee and is being considered by it. In order not to delay the appearance of the resolution, the Political Committee decided to publish the resolution under the signature of Comrade O'Connor and to announce its decision on the same at a future date. Editor.)

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