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# Problems of the Party — I: Limits of the United Front.

by John Pepper

Published in *The Worker* [New York], v. 6, no. 272 (April 28, 1923), pg. 5.

The entire policy of the Workers Party is focused today upon the United Front.

Our campaigns for defense, for amalgamation, for protection of foreign-born workers, against Fascism, are but attempts to reach various sections of the working class through many avenues.

The greatest steps forward have been made by us in the United Front against Fascism. For this very reason we must discuss, in this connection, the limits of the United Front.

The policy of the United Front holds two dangers: We have sectarians who do not want to admit that it is permissible in any way to form a United Front with the yellow leaders. And we have too broad-hearted comrades who want to embrace everybody in the United Front, and in this way they forget their own Party.

The Italian Federation of the Workers Party has accomplished admirable work. It took up the initiative in time, and established the United Front with all the Italian trade unions, with the Socialist Party, against the Fascisti. Our comrades secured all the important strategical positions in this struggle. The *Alba Nuova* took up with energy the struggle against the Fascisti.

But we must say openly that in the continuation of the fight so brilliantly begun, dangers may arise. Sharply and clearly stated, the main danger is that the Party will be pushed into the background in the minds of our comrades. We must therefore follow the fol-

lowing policy energetically:

1. Some of the Italian comrades are opposed to permitting the Anarchist group (Carlo Tresca) and the IWW to enter the United Front. But at the same time, a comrade who otherwise is a very good Communist declared naively, "We want to forget our hatred for the yellow Socialist leaders."

Naturally, both viewpoints are false. We cannot allow a so-called Left group to stand outside of the United Front — not even if this group is not a real Left group, but one that is confused, unorganized, and at times even hostile. And it is impossible to forget the hatred against the yellow leaders at the moment when the Socialist Party makes a formal conspiracy in an underground meeting against Soviet Russia, and against Communists in general.†

2. The fight against *Italian* Fascism must be broadened and extended into a fight against *international* Fascism. Not only in Italy, but also in Hungary, Fascism holds sway. In Germany it is increasing its might. In Poland and in Czecho-Slovakia it has armed organization. In the United States the Ku Klux Klan and its policy against Jews, Catholics, and Negroes is becoming even mightier. The United Front of the Italian workers in America has the duty to call upon the German, Polish, Hungarian, Jewish, Czecho-Slovakian workers of America, and the Negro worker and tenant farmer, to establish a great and mighty United Front against international Fascism. The German, Polish,

†- Reference is to a so-called "secret meeting" of New York Socialist leaders (later revealed to be merely a special meeting of the Board of Directors of the *New York Call*) held March 29, 1923, which conscripted the editor of *The Call* into the sectarian war between the Socialist Party and the Workers Party. For additional information about this incident, see two articles from *The Worker* attributed to Louis Engdahl (both available for download from [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org)): "*NY Call* in Conspiracy Against Russia..." (April 21, 1923) and "Cahan Dictator of *The Call* as Karsner, Editor, Resigns..." (April 28, 1923). These accounts differ in their tone and particulars, the former being a lurid and sketchy exposé and the latter a more temperate and nuanced account apparently based on information provided by Karsner himself. Pepper was clearly writing here under the influence of the first of these two articles.

Jewish, Hungarian Federations, and the Negro organizations of the Workers Party have the duty to follow the example of the Italian Federation of the Workers Party, and to group around themselves as many labor unions and benefit societies as possible, and lead all American workers to a great common United Front against Fascism.

3. But that is not enough. We must extend the fighting front still further. The Communist International has begun an immense fight against Fascism on an *international scale*. Under the chairmanship of Clara Zetkin a provisional international committee, which aims to include not only Communists, but all labor organizations, has been formed. We are duty bound to tie up the fighting front of the American workers against Fascism with the world fight against Fascism.

4. We must also broaden the *program* and the *slogans* of the struggle. And at the same time we must anchor it deeply in American political life. We must unify the anti-Fascisti campaign with our campaigns for the protection of the foreign-born workers and for a Labor Party. The various efforts of American capitalists to carry through laws for the discrimination against foreign-born workers are nothing but the American expression of International Fascism. And without a mighty, independent political party of the working class it is impossible to break the might of the Ku Klux Klan, or the Italian Fascisti organizations in America, and it is impossible to prevent the laws which wish to treat the foreign-born worker as criminals and prostitutes.

5. It is incumbent upon our Italian comrades to double the membership of their Federation in this struggle. The present Italian Federation is too small a basis for influencing the masses.†

It is our duty to make the *Alba Nuova* a *daily*. The *Alba Nuova* must become a center, and at least

unofficially it must become the official organ of the fight against the Fascisti. We must take a decisive stand against this idea to create an Italian daily independent of our Party, even if the editors of the daily happen to be at the same time members of our Party. The Party has had enough unpleasant experience with periodicals which have not been political expressions of our Party, but organs of individual literateurs.

It is our duty to convert our Italian Party units, which until now have been built on an artificial basis, into *shop, trade, and trade union branches*. The workers Party can really become a party of the workers only if it knows how to take root in the industries and factories.

To sum up: We should form the United Front with every workers' organization, and when it is necessary, even with yellow Socialist leaders, with confused Anarchists. But we should not forget for a moment our distrust and hatred for these misleaders. *We become bad Communists when we forget our own Party within the United Front.* The Communist Party's interests can never stand in contradiction to the true interests of the working class. It is not Party egoism when we wish to protect the absolute organizational and ideological independence of our Party within the United Front. The trade unions represent only *momentary* interests and *sectional* interests of the workers. The Socialists and Anarchists have no clear program for the historical tasks of the working class. The Communist Workers Party is the only organization which represents not only the momentary interests of the workers, and not only the interests of all the sections of the working class, but the greatest interests of the whole future of the proletariat. The Communist Party is the *head* of the working class. Communist who forget their own Party within the masses unified for the struggle are like soldiers who lose their heads in the midst of battle.

†- In the preceding quarter (1923-I), the Italian Federation of the Workers Party of Membership had an average actually paid membership of 462 — about 2.9% of the party. [Tim Davenport (ed.) "Membership Series by Language Federations for the Workers Party of America: 'Dues Actually Paid' — January to December 1923," based on Comintern Archives, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 206, l. 10.] The comparable figure for the first quarter of 1924 for the Italian Federation was 509 — or 2.8% of the party. [Davenport (ed.), "Membership Series by Language Federations...January to December 1924," based on RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 341, l. 22.] Both of these files are available for free download from [www.marxisthistory.org](http://www.marxisthistory.org) )

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport.*

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