

## CPA Discussion Page

Open to All CPA Members—Send Your Contributions to Communist Political Association, 35 E. 12 St., N. Y. C.

# Practical Effect of Opportunist Policies

By ROSE WORTIS

AS I reread the historic letter of Comrade Foster addressed to the National Committee a year and a half ago, in which he unsuccessfully tried to steer us away from the policies of opportunism and revisionism, one question kept pounding at me: how could we so thoughtlessly have disregarded the basic truth embodied in that document? How could we have ignored the warning of the most outstanding and tried leader of our movement, who is intimately associated with the struggles and the aspirations of the American workers for the past half century?

The only explanation that I can offer is that our departure from the basic principles of the class struggle also led us to an underestimation of the role of Comrade Foster and undermined his authority in our movement.

A large measure of the responsibility for this rests especially with the old-time trade union Communists in the leadership, including myself. We have gone through many struggles and because of our contact with trade union comrades we were in the best position to test the application of our policies in life.

I cannot say that I was altogether unaware that some comrades had reservations with regard to our policies on the manpower question, our insistence on boosting labor-management committees which existed only on paper, our acceptance of "free enterprise," the no-strike policy in the postwar period, etc.

Our trade unionists were often compelled to depart from the accepted policies to retain leadership among the masses. Thus the compelling pressure of class interests made our practice at times better than our theories. Had we paid more attention to these misgivings troubling the minds of our comrades, we might have realized much sooner that something was wrong with our basic policies.

Had we not been blinded by our false theories we would have seen that class peace was a one-sided proposition, not only as a postwar perspective but during the war itself. Even the anti-fascist employers in the fur industry where we have the powerful Fur and Leather Workers Union fought tooth and nail against granting concessions to the workers. The capitalists in the camp of national unity never for a moment forgot their class interests. In the last elections many who supported Roosevelt's foreign policy were in the Dewey camp, determined to expose with all their might the Roosevelt-sponsored reform program. The bourgeoisie defeated the \$25,000 income limitation, while millions of workers in the textile industry, foundries, etc., remained on a very low wage level. The decision of the War Labor Board to raise the minimum wage of the textile workers to 55 cents affected more than 4,000,000 other workers who were receiving less than the 55 cents minimum during the unprecedented war prosperity.

The U.S. Department of Commerce figures on corporate profits before taxes show that in 1939 profits amounted to \$5,400,000,000 and in 1942 rose to \$18,800,000,000, an increase of 248 percent. Other sources show increases of from 272 to 300 percent. Wages and salaries on the other hand, taking 1935 to 1939 as an index, increased by 86 percent by 1942, and in other cases 56 percent. These figures include the high salaries of corporation officers, and the 1942 wage and salary increase was spread over 26 percent more workers.

Since the main basis of our policy was not to fight for restrictions on

the monopolies lest this disturb national unity, we had no program that could mobilize the masses to fight the profiteers. Our failure sufficiently to expose the greed of the monopolists helped the bourgeoisie to retain its prestige among the people despite the fact that they turned the blood and tears of the nation into profits.

We built up the illusion that full employment in the postwar period was to be taken for granted. Because of this, the workers, including our own comrades, were unprepared to cope with the present layoffs. The main basis of Reuther's strength in the Auto Workers Union flows

## CPA Members

ALL MEMBERS of the CPA are urged to attend their meetings and participate in the discussion and vote on the Draft Resolution and on delegates to the State Conventions.

We call upon all members to immediately pay up their dues through the second quarter and convention assessment.

from our incorrect evaluation of the role of the automobile corporations.

When the public members of the War Labor Board, to the consternation of the entire labor movement, rejected the revision of the Little Steel formula, our trade union comrades were advised to go along with the President on the ground that any further struggle on this issue at this time would jeopardize his foreign policy and shift the fight to new grounds. This approach was not conducive to a militant struggle on the wage question. It was tantamount to putting a damper on the fight.

Comrade Browder's proposals that we give private industry a chance to provide full employment so that

if they fail we will know where the responsibility rests may sound logical in the abstract, but is dangerous because it creates illusions and leaves the masses unprepared to meet their problems.

The whole policy of class peace was based on the assumption that collaboration with the Soviet Union, the urge for foreign markets would dictate a cooperative policy on the part of big business toward labor at home.

The experience of the world labor movement were at variance with our perspectives. Extension of foreign trade in capitalist countries prompted the bourgeoisie to give concessions to a small section of the more highly skilled workers, but this was always done at the expense of the less skilled and unorganized, and the workers of the more backward countries. Collaboration with the Soviet Union is no guarantee for progressive internal policies. The same week that the San Francisco charter was signed, the Military Affairs Committee came out with a vicious attack against the Communists. Efforts are now being made in Congress to revive the Dies witch-hunt under Rankin's leadership.

The automobile corporations are planning extensive trade with the Soviet Union, but the Automotive Council is also planning to reduce the volume of production, increase sales prices, so as to build up a vast army of unemployed to undermine the living standards of the workers and smash the union.

We must use all our influence to strengthen friendly cooperation between our country, the Soviet Union and other democratic nations. The best guarantee for advancing such relations is a powerful labor movement and a Communist Party in position to influence the foreign and domestic policies of the nation.

The National Committee resolution correctly sounds the danger signal against the concerted drive of the reactionaries to shackle the labor movement through the introduction of the Ball-Hatch-Burton bill in Congress, the conspiracy to kill the FEPC and the legislation on reconversion.

Plots are under way to create a wedge between veterans and the labor movement, to inflame race prejudice. The employers are consciously using reactionary AFL officers to instigate jurisdictional disputes between AFL and CIO to discredit the labor movement and alienate labor's allies. Our rosy postwar perspectives weakened the vigilance of the labor movement against such attacks and encouraged complacency even on the part of the Communists, from whom the workers have learned to expect foresight and leadership.

Time and again Comrade Foster called our attention to the urgent need of labor unity to meet the postwar period. But our optimistic outlook for peaceful class relations caused us to underestimate the danger of the split in labor's ranks.

The arbitrary dissolution of the industrial and shop branches seriously weakened the progressive forces in the AFL at a time when thousands of new workers, free from the reactionary craft ideology, joined the AFL and could have been mobilized in a campaign for labor unity.

The entire membership is looking toward our state and national conventions in the expectation that we will correct our political and organizational policies, strengthen the leadership by including some of our best mass workers from the shops and trade unions. This will guarantee that the Communist movement in our country will fulfill its historic role.

## Made Utopian Appeal to Capitalists

I would like to express my full agreement with the resolution of the National Board, both in its outline of policy and in its correction of the very serious errors that we had been making.

Our incorrect policy was based on the assumption that the capitalist class would follow an "intelligent" and correct path, because of logic and because we pointed out that it was to their economic interests to do so. But what Comrade Browder might see as the correct and proper path for them is not necessarily what they would consider the proper path. In fact, it would be strange if they would. Our approach is based on the interest of the nation and of the working class and farmers who make up the bulk of the nation, while the approach of the bourgeoisie is themselves—their profits and, as important, their political state power to be able to continue their profits.

Our position was based neither on Marxism nor on reality. We have seen many examples of situations in which capital will sacrifice their immediate economic interests for long-range political goals; the "sit-down strike of big capital" in 1938; the sell-out of France by capital in order to keep down the French workers; the abandonment of bourgeois democratic reforms in the South after the Civil War; and the widespread opposition of industrialists in Oklahoma and Arkansas to the development of an Arkansas Valley Authority, in spite of the economic gains that would come from it, because of the fear of what they label "collectivism."

This policy led to the situation where our main approach and appeal was being made to the bourgeoisie to "act correctly," instead of to the working class and its allies to struggle for the correct policy. Like the Utopian Socialists of the 19th Century, we appealed to the capitalists to "do what is right." This characterized our whole approach to the NAM and to the most dangerous and fascist-minded monopoly capitalists.

In Oklahoma, for instance, we prepared a pamphlet on the postwar economic future of the state, which, while correct in its objectives, put the main reliance for achieving them, not on the workers, farmers and Negro people, but on the industrialists of the state.

We were also led into an avoidance of political struggle. Browder's statement that Roosevelt was more correct than we were in opposing centralization of the war economy, because capital opposed it; and his caution against any criticism of President Truman are but two ex-

amples of the dangerous extremes to which we went.

There are two points in the resolution that I think need to be strengthened. In the section dealing with the prosecution of the war against Japan, there should be a clear and sharp call for the war with Japan being developed as a coalition war. This, like the question of the second front, is a political question primarily. That section of American capital that wants an outright program of rampant American imperialism is pushing the war in the Pacific as an 'American' war, not wanting the forces of China, India, Burma and the Malay States strengthened. The way in which the war is fought will help to determine the outcome of the war, the number of American lives spent and the development of democracy and independence for the colonial peoples of Asia. It is from this same group that the demand for a negotiated peace, a "Far Eastern Munich," comes. The other point in the resolution that I think needs to be strengthened is the question of American-Soviet relations. It will be around the fight for this that will center the fight for the realization of the perspective of "many generations of peace."

In correcting our policy, and in all future policy, we must avoid the danger of going to extremes. In the period of the struggle for the people's front, we neglected for a while the necessity of education for socialism. While our policy on this during the war was correct, we must reject Browder's analysis that the question of Socialism must not be raised because the subjective factor of the readiness of the people for socialism is missing. It is precisely because of this that we, the proponents of socialism for America, must conduct this education, to change this subjective factor. Our education for socialism can be conducted in such

a way that it will not interfere with the national unity of the workers and farmers for achieving peace and jobs.

The other extreme that we must avoid is that of sectarianism. I have already heard one form of this expressed in the following way: A war with the Soviet Union is inevitable, since capitalism and socialism cannot live together peacefully; peace is impossible; a program of 60,000,000 jobs is unrealizable, etc. This is no way to lead in a struggle to win peace jobs. The possibility for these exists. We would not have helped to win them by spreading illusions that they were to be given to us, but neither will we help to win them by incorrectly stating that they are impossible. That is defeatism and fatalism. The nation can win peace and jobs if correctly led by the working class.

The responsibility for these errors is, I think, largely Browder's. He elevated these mistakes into a "theory" and engineered it. But the responsibility also rests on those of us, including myself, who accepted this "theory" uncritically, and who then proceeded to apply it and extend it. The blind following of one man and the dogmatic and undemocratic approach toward criticism combined to allow the ideology of the American bourgeoisie to infiltrate our thinking and actions.

In the South mistakes were made, although from the experience we can salvage much on which to further develop our work. The resolution, by the way, is not adequate in dealing with the problems of the South.

Out of this discussion, though, will come greater clarity, greater Marxist understanding and greater strength to accomplish our task of leading the people for a program of Peace, Security and Jobs, and in our task of education for socialism.

ALAN SHAW, Oklahoma.

## Doesn't Think Browder to Blame For All Mistakes Made in Past

I do not think it is fair to blame Comrade Browder for all our past "mistakes." If mistakes they were—which I very much doubt—we all agreed to change our policy for the duration of the war, which I think was wise.

Browder is a brilliant man. I have admired his writings and his speeches ever since I became a member of the party. And we have good places with Browder. It seems

to me we achieved more politically under his leadership than during the whole history of the CP.

To change our methods does not mean that we have to change our principles; Lenin and Stalin did it many times. Stalin still does. I like to see things accomplished, not just plodding along, worshipping a dogma.

I should hate to see Earl Browder leave the party.

AGNES AARER