

SPARK

A MARXIST MONTHLY

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TOWARDS A MARXIST PARTY

An Analysis of NCP's Position

INTRODUCTION

Our "Draft Transitional Program" (in April SPARK) included a statement of certain left errors. We followed this (in May SPARK) with our reaction to Dunne's pamphlet ("The Struggle Against Opportunism in the Labor Movement—For A Socialist United States") and to those ideas of NCP contained in its letter to SPARK. In this issue we will deal more fully with NCP's ideas.

If we want a real C.P., we must systematically eliminate every idea that will prevent its earliest realization. Polemic, therefore, becomes essential. Comrades should seriously consider the disagreements now breaking into the open and try to detect the logic and orientation behind the different ideas. This will help advance current thinking beyond its present fragmentary and often inconsistent state. There is not the slightest value in the caution that polemic disunifies our movement at a time when it is so weak. A rather short while ago, there was no polemic, no commitment,—and no unity. Now groupings will form logically and unavoidably. On the basis of clear stands we can develop real working unity and allow the correct ideas to isolate the wrong ones. With the setting aside of the wrong ideas in our movement will come unity and organizational advances.

Should we thrash it out in the open—even for the C.P. to see? Yes. What we once had to insist

on in the C.P., we now have to remind ourselves.

"... Party struggles ... give a party strength and life ... The best proof of the weakness of a party is its diffuseness and its blurring of clear-cut differences ... A party becomes stronger by purging itself." (Lenin's quote from Lasalle on the title page of "What Is to Be Done.")

In fact, even the interest of our discussion will demand the attention of the C.P. rank and file and non-party comrades. Perhaps those confused and gossip-fed C.P. members who think we're Trotskyites will involuntarily slip into a consideration of our debate and make a discovery or two.

When the C.P. leaders bark "left-sectarian" at us, they know not what they say. The sad fact is, however, that there is too much of the "left-sectarian" in our movement. The opportunists can never possibly understand a left error because they have given up any real belief in Socialism. A left error may be at its worst *infantile in tactics*, but the Dennis-Foster opportunism is at its best *senile in principle*. When we criticize NCP in this article, we criticize Comrades we expect to end with in a real C.P. which will avoid all our mistakes. And when we attack any current left errors, we do it with the attitude that much of it is due to a normal boomerang from the opportunist horrors of the C.P. In many cases the original fight for the best parts of the C.P. program has boomeranged to the rejection of those very parts.

In discussing NCP's ideas we will try to make ours clear. We will let NCP's ideas stand on NCP's own words—instead of our paraphrase. (All numbers refer to *NCP Reports*.)

I—Work in the C.P. and with the Rank and File

NCP correctly gives priority to the need for a real C.P. It should logically follow, therefore, that the question of work in the C.P. and with rank and file C.P.'ers is of great importance and should be answered simply and unequivocally.

NCP's advice is confusing and contradictory. In its letter to May SPARK it ridiculed our concept of working "with the attitude of salvaging as much as possible to prepare for either eventuality"—a new Marxist party or a "rescue of the CPUSA" (from our Draft Transitional Program). But NCP *both* agrees and disagrees with us:

"There are two ways this could happen, it seems to us: first, it is conceivable that the leadership of the U. S. Communist Party could repudiate and renounce its present anti-Marxist line and project both in words and in action a Marxist line; second, a new political party would have to be formed—not by NCP but by *all* the Marxist forces. We say that the first is conceivable; it is certainly desirable; we do not regard it as particularly likely. There are insufficient objective signs, so far, of any such change coming about." (10)

Here NCP agreed with us—(we would substitute "rank and file" for "leadership"), and we were glad to read it after NCP's reprimanding us for vainly dreaming of reforms in the C.P. But in cases both before and after, NCP confuses and contradicts this correct attitude.

"Q. Are you for starting a new party in the U. S.? No. The main reason is

that we cannot. A new party must be started by a lot more people and, especially, by a lot more workers than as are yet involved in NCP" (4) . . . "That is why NCP has raised and continues to raise the slogan, 'A New Communist Party for the workers and ordinary farmers of the U. S.'" (15)

If we total at this point, we find that, NCP ambiguously, in not starting a new party raises the slogan, a New Communist Party—that in ridiculing SPARK'S "either eventuality" it proposes exactly that.

SPARK believes and engages in work towards a new C.P. with no reservations; it believes and engages in work within the C.P. and with rank and file C.P.'ers with no illusions about conscience-stricken National Committee members. It agrees with:

"NCP's projection of the New Communist Party idea not only does not preclude a change for the better in the line of the CPUSA, but is designed exactly to speed up such a change, if one is coming, or to prepare for the failure of such a change to come about, if that is to be the outcome." (14)

We think this is well put and very balanced, based on "either eventuality" and on a conscious attempt to influence the C.P. In practice, however, NCP undermines the very sense of it. It should be the factor in solving the simple problem: should comrades sympathetic to us or connected with us stick it out in the C.P.? Our answer is definite. Remain in the C.P. and fight for a real Communist program. Put the good "paper" points of the C.P. program into militant action. Lubricate the inner party discussion by applying your elbow grease to the N. C.'s lipservice. If and when you approach the "casualty" stage, make of your case a valuable platform and proving ground on which

other comrades can learn through their experience. Upon expulsion, go through as much of the ugly farce of appeals as you can take (depending on the degree of Bolshevization of your stomach), continuing to explain the opportunism in the C.P. After expulsion, work with a group representing your ideas and continue your C.P. work through your party contacts and through a continual "coalition" with the C.P. rank and file.

Where does NCP stand?

"As to fighting inside the Party, we are in favor of it, except that we must call attention to the fact that as soon as CPUSA members begin to fight, they become ex-CPUSA members." (4)

Isn't this a bit of advice to do the useless: fight but all it will net you will be expulsion? Such advice can hardly be classified as encouraging. Factually, it's wrong (N.C., please note). We know those who weren't expelled so quickly and those who haven't been yet. More will be expelled although the N. C. hates to do it. It has learned from bitter experience that the politically excommunicated continue to communicate politically. It has learned that hearings, trials, appeals, and expulsions are fertile ground for sowing anti-opportunist seed. They have learned to avoid exposures in the press—when possible—since every denunciation is a basis for a good discussion on opportunism and "Towards a Marxist Party."

Add to NCP's other advice:

"Withdraw any support you are now giving to the *line* of the CPUSA." (4)

Such statements have to be a little more specific and careful so as not to be misunderstood. The *line* of the C.P. is opportunist, but it must be made clear that comrades

in the C.P. have a lot of good words on paper with which to prod action. We must avoid the confusing impression that whatever the *D.W.* says is wrong. When the *D.W.* chatters a good deal and does nothing, we only sow logical mistrust among party members if we reject *even the idea*—as if it were *D.W.* property.

Either NCP does not want to recognize work in the C.P. or it does not know of any.

"NCP's position does not preclude 'work' within the CPUSA but opposes limitations to such 'work'—and it must be said frankly that such 'work' is as far as the evidence shows: simply nonexistent." (14)

This is untrue. We meet with, correspond with, and get reports and good advice from comrades in the C.P. Such valuable comrades are held up principally by the confused nature of *our movement* at the moment. But NCP mocks at our ". . . unspecified 'work' within unspecified sections of the CPUSA and for the attainment of ends that are unspecified further than the replacement of 'evil' with 'good.'" (32)

SPARK will continue NOT to specify any information that can serve the scrap sheet of N.C. expellers. Perhaps we are lying and fabricating ersatz work. In that case, we are dangerously ignorant not to know that Communists commit a deadly mistake when they fabricate or exaggerate their influence in any situation. Impossible situations are generated by fictitious information. There is one way to check (N.C. need not note; they have already checked): right in the stamping grounds of the P.R. Club. There the unspecified work in unspecified places, etc., assumes specific form.

We can gain the greatest respect of our audience by taking a few "security pains" to avoid any needless exposure of C.P. members. We should also do them the justice of not confusing them with oracular advice—fearful ambiguity (do it, but it won't help); pompous contradiction (do it, don't do it); and dishonest, evasive tautology (do it if one should, don't do it if one shouldn't).

II—War and Fascism

NCP makes a serious error in not considering fascism a prerequisite for an American anti-Soviet war. In fact, NCP thinks that the Axis formulae for fascism have been demonstrated as impractical even to the bourgeoisie. First NCP found that the menace facing "the masses of the world and hence of the U.S. can be summed up in one word: Imperialism." (1) Fascism was not mentioned. Then it found movement "at present . . . toward a form that will no longer be bourgeois-democratic, but will be *fascism*. But the fascist form has not yet crystallized." (16) No change of analysis was stated—no revision announced. Suddenly—and still without change?—NCP found "immediately ahead of the U.S. working class only *two* futures—and nothing matters quite so much as which one it is. Fascism or Socialism." (23)

This is a labyrinthine excursion—to start with no danger of Fascism (1), proceed to an uncrystallized fascist danger (16) and arrive at the choice of Fascism or Socialism. (23) Since NCP has often counseled reevaluation and open self-criticism, but has indicated no

change of position here, we wonder whether the three opinions above are supposedly synchronized.

In any case, NCP now thinks we face the choice: Fascism or Socialism. This is a dangerously incorrect orientation that absolutely guarantees wrong policies and attitudes today in the U.S. *The issue in the U.S. today is Democracy or Fascism.* (And this in no way contradicts the fight for Socialism as point one on our program.) To say otherwise is to sabotage the movement against war and fascism, for a third party, etc.

The American people are not for Socialism yet. If we start now to tell them about it and turn all our thoughts and work towards a day-to-day fight for Socialism, we can change this situation and quickly. Once we recognize the militant anti-war, anti-fascist temper of the American people and realize that only through Fascism can a new war be forced on us,—then the issue is clear. Protect every democratic gain and destroy every beginning of Fascism. Every lousy bill in Congress and every lousy unwritten tradition working outside Congress is a precision part of a well planned whole: the coming of Fascism with American trimmings, but differing in no *essentials* from the Axis way.

NCP's Socialism or Fascism position reaches a consistent absurdity—the lumping of allies with the enemy. And who according to this idea are enemies? Let us witness NCP's reaction to Wallace:

"There is not the slightest reason, in our opinion, why any worker should extend any support to Wallace's declared political line." (28) . . . "As to what the U. S. government ought to

do about it, Wallace and Truman's position is about the same. Wallace declares that 'it is the task of countries which have the atom bomb and which have not, like Russia been devastated by war and boycotted in peace to try a *new* type of power politics.' What is this other than to say—exactly as the open imperialists say—use the atom bomb against Russia while there is yet time?" (26)

It's sectarian waste to take what opposition there is to the Truman Doctrine and call it the Truman Doctrine. Illusions are not needed about Wallace—neither the illusion that he's for heaving the atom bomb nor the illusion that he's for the century of the common man. By his own admission, he's a tried and true representative of Capitalism. The U. S. needs the popular front to prevent war and fascism—and there's a logical place for Wallace. Retaining our independent position, we can work with Wallace when he's right; without him and against him when he's wrong. We can criticize and use pressure. As long as we don't succumb to opportunism, Wallace doesn't stand much chance of seducing us ideologically. Communists who have real confidence in their principles need have no fear of coalitions. It's the lack of all principle in the C.P. today that makes every coalition a "deal."

NCP's attitude towards the U.N. again reflects the lack of a clear straight-forward approach. From what we can deduce, NCP is against the U.N. The closest it has come to a backhanded support is:

"The cause of the workers is not served in any way by shouting about 'upholding the UN' without adding that this means upholding the veto principle—a principle which is the only legal barrier in the UN to utilization of

the UN for anti-worker purposes." (24)

The point on the veto is of course true and very important, but we have misgivings because while NCP has never found the occasion to actually state its support for the U.N. idea and the idea of Big 3 cooperation, it has said:

"Let us leave it to the Henry Wallaces and their kind to conduct debates on 'UN or no UN' for the Greek situation—debates that go on while living human beings are being slaughtered in Greece." (25)

The future of the U.N. depends on the veto and big three unity. But even big three unity doesn't merit a kind word from NCP.

"A subtle form of the anti-veto position is the slogan issued by the U. S. Communist Party, about 'strengthening' so-called 'Big Three Unity'—usually, it is added, by 'resurrecting' the 'Roosevelt program.' If these slogans were actually carried out it would mean the triumph of imperialism and the defeat of Socialism. For there is and can be no 'Big Three Unity' so long as the U. S. and Britain remain capitalist countries, they will of course pursue an imperialist line." (4)

SPARK agrees with NCP that the C.P. slogan "resurrect the Roosevelt program" is incorrect and misleading, but we believe that we must save the U.N. Imperialism is trying to destroy the U.N. How? By forcing the S.U. out of the U.N. through the destruction of the veto. Without the S.U. there would be no U.N. SPARK thinks all this can be avoided. "New Times," the Soviet foreign policy weekly, in its May 16th editorial says:

"One of the favorite arguments of the foes of international cooperation is that there can be no cooperation between the Anglo-Saxon countries and the Soviet Union because of their different social systems . . . Stalin once again expressed his conviction that cooperation between the two systems was possible and desir-

able."

Ambassador Novikov made the same point the other day in his Chicago speech.

Finally, anti-war talk makes NCP highly suspicious of tendencies towards pacifism and social-pacifism; ". . . the hallmarks of this pacifism are slogans of 'peace' and 'against war.'" (15) NCP does admit that "they can be justified *only* in agitational work, and even then only when the concrete agitational situation makes misunderstanding impossible." (15)

In this atom bomb day, in the thick of the roar of anti-Soviet war talk, a Communist can speak against war without implying pacifism and without misgivings about the morality of the American Revolution or the fight of the Red Army in China.

III—A Third Party

Today in the U.S. there is a practically unled, spontaneous movement for a third party. Of course only a real C.P. can guarantee the correct outcome of such a movement, but it's important to notice the health of this movement at its rank-and-file level—anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, and non-red baiting. It's at the higher levels (definitely including the inconsistencies of Wallace) that reaction sneaks in because the C.P. has refused to give leadership. The C.P. has yielded third party initiative to the Social Democrats and Trotskyites—the Dubinskys and the Reuthers. So far, fortunately, *the workers haven't*. In such a mess it's pitiful when part of our movement moves to isolate itself from the third party question completely.

The whole world watches for the emergence of a third party here. A U.P. report from Moscow (June 8) reports:

"The formation of a third party in the United States by 'progressives' is an 'especially urgent necessity,' a prominent Russian political commentator, Ivan Lemin, wrote today in the monthly *World Economy and World Politics*."

What has NCP to say?

". . . shall or shall not the revolutionary proletariat launch or support, or seek a bloc with a 'third' party? is a *non-existent* question" . . . "It cannot be answered one way or the other, because the question is unreal. Life, so to speak, is not even putting this particular question to the proletariat" . . . "there also does not exist a third party" . . . "questions nevertheless come up that are honest questions and deserve the best answers that can be supplied" . . . "what should be the attitude of comrades who . . . have to deal with various forms of the so-called 'third party question'" . . . "Also there is a perfectly legitimate desire to understand more about united front tactics" . . . "It is not entirely pointless, then, to discuss these principles, even though they cannot yet be applied in action just as they stand." (32)

"In the absence of a revolutionary, Stalinist political party, it is a waste of time to debate about 'third parties.'" (4) "If the question were put to you, 'do you favor this union's supporting a third party?' in the form of a motion, requiring a 'yes' or 'no' or 'abstain' vote, the really important thing about it all would *not* be whether you voted 'yes' (which we think is the correct tactic) or 'no', but rather the *kind of use* you made of the situation to explain matters better to your fellow workers." (32)

"Support the idea of workers . . . forming a third party . . . a precondition to—*but not a guarantee of*—a political break with the capitalist class." . . . "A group of ten people working together cannot start a 'third' party nationally . . . But what they can very well do is to organize in their own neighborhood for a much lower level 'third party'" (33) . . . "No truly

Communist movement can support either of these organizations [ALP and PCA]." (20)

We have quoted at length here because it is the worst case of NCP confusion. Now, let us pair a few. NCP says the so-called third party is a non-existent, unreal question—a waste of time. But, NCP admits that honest questions reflecting practical third party work come up. NCP says there is no third party, but don't support this party which does not exist. Also—support it. Also, start it—even ten of you. No real Communist movement can support this—but vote for it. NCP objects to the name third party—so it always calls it the third party. It says there can be no tactics without a real C.P. and proceeds to give them.

But didn't NCP call the issue Fascism or Socialism? How does its occasional support for a third party enter here? In order to show how lost in bad reasoning NCP's disorganized, fragmentary program becomes, let's consider its attitude towards alliances. In speaking of a merger of AFL and CIO it says:

"That the program be *for* Socialism is not required as a minimum—but that it be against capitalism is required." (29)

This is given similarly for alliances generally all through NCP Reports (e.g 15, 23, 26). If the question is Socialism or Fascism why decide coalitions on the basis of a stand not necessarily for Socialism but against Capitalism. A lot of movements and individuals who are not against capitalism certainly do their share in an attack on Capitalism when it's in defense of Democracy and against fascism. (See *May SPARK*.)

IV—On Spontaneity

Many of us have engaged in an attack on spontaneity in the C.P. line. But there is being built at the moment in our movement a great "anti-spontaneity" warehouse where all immediate problems are housed pending the appearance of a real C.P. And he who dares start work on immediate demands *now* is accused of "nothing more or less than the notion of the 'spontaneous' generation of united fronts . . ." (32)

Lenin lashed at the idea that "That struggle is desirable which is possible and the struggle which is possible is the one which is going on now." But he would take a fit at the current attitude that that struggle which today is spontaneous in the U.S. is undesirable—in fact non-existent—and immediate needs must wait action 'til after we produce a Marxist party. "But there is a difference between spontaneity and spontaneity," Lenin said in "What Is to Be Done." He explained that "the 'spontaneous element,' in essence, represents nothing more or less than consciousness in an *embryonic form*." There's plenty of such embryonic consciousness in the U.S. today but NCP assigns it to the anti-spontaneity warehouse. Even on this problem, Lenin pointed to the facts of Russia, noting that

". . . simultaneously we had both the spontaneous awakening of the masses of the workers—the awakening to conscious life and struggle, and the striving of the revolutionary youth, armed with the Social-Democratic (read Communist now) theories, to reach the workers."

We have repeated several times

that the fight for Socialism, the fight against war and fascism, and the fight for a real C.P. must be waged simultaneously, that they generate each other and there is no contradiction between them. NCP has made the mistake of ignoring the spontaneous role completely and of ignoring all movements without Socialist direction but with important "embryonic consciousness." In fact, NCP has become so involved in its suspicions of advanced struggles on a trade union level that it seeks new unfettered territory.

"This stratum, the 'aristocracy' of the proletariat [speaking of organized workers], cannot be neglected politically—but it also cannot be relied on as the main source of proletarian energy at the present time. The unorganized workers, the unemployed workers (who will soon be even more numerous), and those strata of organized workers which are not bourgeoisified constitute as a whole the main place to look for proletarian energy." (15)

Our philosophy is not so mechanical that we can expect militant spontaneous movements to stop or die while we catch up with a real C.P.

What has happened is that the leaderless, spontaneous movement in the U.S. today is orphaned from two sides. First, the C.P., with its credo of tailism and spontaneity waits for the movement to do all. It follows. On hot issues, it doesn't even do that; it merely separates itself from the heat of struggle and editorializes that it cannot quite object to this or that correct demand. The C.P. will observe events with the greatest of interest. Second, the spontaneous movement is orphaned (only potentially, fortunately) by leftism in our movement.

Also involved is the old buga-

boo—the contradiction between the fight for Socialism and immediate demands. NCP sees "that the immediate program cannot be opposed to socialism as a goal" (1), but in practice, NCP mistrusts discussions of immediate demands as an obstacle—an indication of spontaneity.

V—Sophistry

Sophistry, in a Communist Movement, is dangerous quibbling *off the point*. Sophistry manipulates and distorts simple words and concepts into a mystical, pseudo-dialectical, horrible "game of Marxism." It pigeon-holes, it paraphrases wildly in preference to a simple quote, it lumps enemies and separates friends. At its *near* worst it becomes nastiness. At its *worst* it prevents discussion completely—the hurdles over every word and punctuation mark having become too exhausting.

The gradually thickening sophistry in *NCP Reports* has affected NCP's attitude, its attempts at a program and its logic generally. We will cite only a few of an unending list of NCP's pointless and dangerous sophistries.

"Socialism is neither the final aim of a bona fide Communist movement, nor is it the basic strategic aim. The final aim, to be exact, is not socialism, but *communism* . . ." (15)

Is SPARK'S goal Socialism? Yes, a thousand times yes! Is it Communism? Yes! Our goal is either and both, but we take a fright over the complication of a concept that is crystal clear. That is one problem that we can assign to limbo. Let's take pains to explain the different stages—but let's not tempt some Kilroy-ic spirit to butt in and venture, "You, SPARK stand for

Socialism, you NCP stand for Communism. How primitive of you both. I stand for a third stage. What was it Engels mentioned—a higher stage with contradictions on a higher plane? That's my goal. I'm working on a name for it."

"So far as these election results are concerned, the workers were not defeated—because there were no statewide candidates, no political parties, and no programs that represented the fundamental interests of the workers. How can it possibly be said, then, that the workers 'lost'? But were the capitalists, then defeated? Here, too, the answer is certainly no." (3)

May we suggest that in such a manner Fascism could come to power without winning and without the workers losing because they had no candidates, parties or programs. This is sophistry with a vengeance. A neatly turned phrase and out of death we get release from life. The C.P. has tried to hypnotize away defeats but never with such bravado.

"But such groups as the American Labor Party, Liberal Party, and Trotskyites . . . are also against socialism." (1)

What a lumping is this. It can only serve the purpose of (1) harming the ALP by putting it in the company of the Trotskyites and (2) helping the Trotskyites by putting them in the company of the ALP. And how embarrassing now when the NCP considers (rightly) support for the ALP.

The NCP has invented a new category of party work: isolation from the capitalist class:

"The successes in the French example come from the fact that the French Communist Party *isolated* itself from the capitalists, and thereby it overcame its *isolation* from the workers, from the poor farmers and the masses generally." (4)

Then it mentions the CPUSA's "refusal to 'isolate' itself from the capitalists." Isn't this again making the point the hard and sometimes confusing way. In the first place a C.P. could "isolate" itself from the capitalists and still be isolated from the workers. In the second place what does this concept of isolation from the capitalists mean? Does it mean simply that the C.P. earned the hate of the capitalists? Wouldn't it all be clearer to talk in terms of how C.P.'s lead the workers, etc. Then it would be clear that the French C.P. did a good job of leading the workers—and in fighting the capitalists, whereas the CPUSA didn't lead at all. The C.P. should be the vanguard of the working class. It is an organized detachment of the working class. This should absolve it of the special formulations of isolation from the capitalist class.

Words start ambushing discussion needlessly. NCP edits "American" to read "U.S." (17) because "American" is chauvinist. A political tragedy has been made of a grammatical necessity: that, of the words United States and America, only America assumes the adjective form naturally (American) whereas United States doesn't.

We have made this point specifically, because it is rather shocking to observe NCP's rigid rules of speech here and then be startled by its disdainful usage of "melancholic ex-rabbis." (26)

NCP makes a sophist to-do over the term "3rd party." It refers to it as the "so-called 'third party'" (18, 32, etc.) Why quibble over

a name at this stage when the main point is to define the character of the right kind of 3rd party. How natural it is to use "3rd party" 'til it gets a name, is attested to by NCP's own continual use of that term.

Out of an attempt to discuss 3rd party ideas, NCP produces only a theme and variations on the word "rope" (32-33) from SPARK'S quotation from "*Left-Wing Communism*."

More words that trouble NCP!

"Wallace's talk about a 'new' type of power politics does not make any real sense. What 'new' type is there. Either power is to be used against Russia (as the imperialists advocate) or it is not to be used (as working class interests demand)." (26)

What does NCP want of language—to have a razor-like, hair-splitting edge but a dull sound? Certainly, if NCP extends itself the right to "isolate" the French C.P. from the capitalists, it should grant Wallace a less unclear literary figure.

The once simple term "bourgeoisification of the proletariat" has suffered such elephantiasis that in NCP's eyes organized labor is incapacitated and one must turn to unorganized labor as a main factor.

NCP warns:

"It may make you a little sick to see the ads that depict Lenin as a comrade of—of all people!—George Washington and Thomas Jefferson . . ." (13)

On the contrary, NCP's reaction worries us. Washington had his good points, but Jefferson was really a great man. This is a good time to reread Lenin on the sectarian rejection of bourgeois history and culture (*Lenin Speaks to the Youth*) or about our great revolu-

tionary traditions in Lenin's *Letter to American* (did we see "American!") *Workers*.

Jefferson was what a Communist should be—a tribune of the people. SPARK will bet its tombstone against NCP's that Jefferson's tombstone will live forever in American history—through Socialism and Communism.

When NCP gets nasty it indulges in such contributions as:

"The super-action school also requires no tactical line—for might not such a tactical line interfere with practical work?" (32)

This is turned against the mildest attempts to engage in something other than disconnected theoretical fragments. Or

"So far as we know neither Lenin nor Stalin at any stage in their political careers ever found it even necessary to assure their audiences that they were 'sincere' and 'devoted'."

If this is an attack on our S.O.S. issued as a C.P. Club (not yet expelled), we plead guilty. The two above-mentioned "honorary" members of our club, Lenin and Stalin, need not answer slander. As for the rest of us, we have not earned the respect and trust that comes only with proven leadership and so we have to try to disprove slanders about us that have been fed to the C.P. members.

NCP's wild art of paraphrasing approaches slander. It prefers to paraphrase for paragraphs rather than quote one sentence. We suggest to NCP that when it attacks SPARK or the PR Club it name them. It will be a service to both those who agree and those who disagree. It will prevent switching victims in mid-punishment. NCP has a habit of attacking an idea

from SPARK (unnamed), then attributing an idea to the CPUSA leadership (named) and then generalizing conclusions as if it were talking about one group all along. If its aim is to lump us with the CPUSA leadership, it should do so boldly as it did when it lumped the ALP and the Trotskyites.

We now offer the apotheosis of sophistry:

"Why Be A Witch."

"We wish the D.W. and its followers would stop referring to anti-Communist drives as 'witch-hunts'. If witch-hunt means anything at all in this context, it means either that (a) Communists are witches, or (b) Communists, like witches, do not exist. True, we can recall partial evidence that maybe there is something to both theories—but seriously, neither is true. Let us have no more talk about witch-hunts." (3)

No comment is necessary.

Now for a climax:

"For his own special version of the upper limit theory, Bittleman is obliged to play around with sources a bit, in a rather unscrupulous way.

He goes, for example, not to Marx's complete and detailed exposition of his own views—but rather to Marx's excellent agitational lecture, delivered in 1865, entitled *Value, Price and Profit*, a considerably simplified and incomplete statement of Marx's views which, as Marx himself wrote to Engels on June 24, 1865, 'has necessarily to slur over all sorts of things'.

Although the comprehensive works of Marx are presumably well known to Bittleman, he is obliged to ignore *Capital* with its very full discussion of the matter, and to snatch instead at parts of sentences from *Value, Price, and Profit*. He cannot go for support to *Capital* because no such support is to be found there." (26)

Doesn't the last sentence imply that "support" is to be found in *Value, Price and Profit*? Perhaps we can explain the germ of this insinuation by quoting a few more

words from the same letter:

". . . (2) in the second part the thing contains in an extremely condensed but relatively popular form, much that is new, taken in advance from my book, while at the same time it has necessarily to slur over all sorts of things. The question is, *whether such anticipation is expedient.*" (our italics)

Value, Price and Profit, The Communist Manifesto, Wage Labor and Capital, and Socialism, Scientific & Utopian are the examples of the greatest mass-distribution, mass reading, and mass education in the history of the world. If *Value, Price and Profit* is an "incomplete statement of Marx's view's" so is *Capital* and everything else he wrote. There is too much to Marxism to hold between *even* six covers of *Capital*.

To repeat, in conclusion, what are NCP's main errors? (1) Its concept of *Socialism or Fascism* as the issue in the U. S. today; its favorite question "for or against capitalism"; its consignment of allies such as Wallace to the Truman doctrine forces. (2) Its idea that the axis formulae for fascism are defeated and outmoded—a contradiction of the concept of Socialism or Fascism; its idea that fascism is not a prerequisite for an anti-Soviet war. (3) Its practical opposition to the third party and to (4) the U.N. despite a few words to the contrary *sometimes*. (5) Its disdainful attitude towards C.P. members, C.P. work and everything in the C.P. program. (6) Its ignoring of the spontaneous movements surging in the U.S. now. (7) Its sophistry which affects its attitude, its program and its polemic.

(SPARK will circulate any comment NPC may have with the next SPARK.)

LETTERS TO "SPARK"

Dear Comrades:

Now, just a couple of ideas I have that I seem to have picked up in my twenty-five years in the trade union struggle (altho I am only 44):

1. The demand for the shorter work day (6 hour day).

2. Applying the word to the deed in helping Labor, both on the domestic and foreign battlefronts.

Too little of the program that "we" are trying to formulate deals with the above two points in a major way. However, being that Lenin, Stalin and others have pointed out that the two points noted always, when applied, result in class warfare and all the experience of working class movements everywhere more than bear this out. The factors for such are favorable—all that is lacking is a revolutionary Party to give impetus and scientific leadership.

In the present practice of Capitalist nations (U.S., Britain, etc.) to openly conquer smaller Capitalist nations before the workers in those countries can effectively mobilize and take over, no opposition is being shown by the proletariat of the U.S. and Britain to the Capitalist POLICY of oppression for all wage slaves. Would it not be a vital point in any program to weaken Imperialism in one's own country, such as refusing to load supplies (of any kind) consigned to various countries for the purpose of suppressing the workers movements in those countries; example: China, Spain, Greece, Indonesia, etc.

Would it not be a vital point in

any program to demand and fight for the six hour day for wage slaves. Aside from its immediate benefits for the workers getting a shorter work day, there is another and major reason for getting the ball rolling as a major point for American Labor. If we knew anything about economics at all, we certainly recognize by now that Capital would, if forced, to keep entrenched, give the workers a two hour day at straight time if the workers will agree to work six, eight, ten hours per day at overtime. It is the length of the producing day that Capital is interested in maintaining, Capitalists do not necessarily care what you call it as long as you work it. Anyway the point is that American Labor could easily defeat American imperialism's present piracy by working a shorter work day and refusing to transport materials to be used against workers in other countries. Both points (applied) help to cut surplus value which is the secret weapon Capital uses to corrupt movements of workers before those movements have a chance to become really revolutionary. Comradely, with best regards for the future of SPARK.

KEN AUSTIN, San Francisco

(SPARK agrees with Comrade Austin's two points. Less important—(1) we feel his example of overtime an "overstretched hypothesis" and therefore misleading, (2) we can't consider the defeat of American imperialism so simply contained in the above suggestions, and (3) surplus value is hardly a "secret weapon," etc.)

Dear Comrades:

My reaction to current SPARK? Not having read Dunne, I cannot conscientiously comment on your review, except unofficially as I did. I agree with your reply to NCP and certainly don't applaud the NCP tone. I have so long been impressed with D.W. shallowness that somehow SPARK "reaction to the D.W." gives me no reaction whatever—like trying to crash an open door. Other readers may get a stronger kick, I agree.

In connection with the two articles, "How Late . . ." and "Reaction . . ." I would suggest that articles in future issues of SPARK deal with one central item rather than offer a kaleidoscopic view, that they be concentrated rather than diffuse—in short, that they be sparks rather than sparklets bunched together. That's my reaction.

In advocating a general strike in "How Late . . ." if you mean a one or two day demonstration of labor's strength, I agree, but you should say so. Aside from a demonstration, a general strike is nothing one can play with. It is a tool to be used only in conjunction with other tools towards a well-defined objective. Whether the objective is the capture of power or the more modest one of demanding that the Taft-Hartley Bill be shelved, implicit in the use of the general strike is the determination to do or die. Many a promising movement in Europe has foundered on the careless use of the general strike, or its leadership by elements who were not determined to follow through. Perhaps SPARK should

explain this point in its next issue, since workers are thinking along those lines.

Apropos my expulsion, I don't intend to bother with an appeal. If the climate is conducive—that is, if the convention climate becomes not conducive for the Dennises—then the formalities will not be the important things. The delegates will certainly know more or less the type of people who were expelled and will make on their own initiative an intensive effort to bring them back. On the other hand, if the Dennises control things with their rubber stamps, formalities will be meaningless. In the pamphlet I am working on, I am not assuming that the few senile charter members and the few tens of thousands of politically undeveloped members who follow the bureaucracy are the real reservoir or nucleus for an American vanguard. They are at best an element. In this respect I partly agree with NCP—the concentration point in building a vanguard must not be on the Party but on the 140 million outside. I do not share NCP contempt for those in the Party who "maneuver" and "foolishly appeal and threaten." I don't mean that if and when a convention occurs we should not make an effort to wake up some possible sleepy-heads there, but that is something different than concerning ourselves with appeal forms.

Comradely yours,

IRWIN EDELMAN
Phoenix, Arizona

June 1, 1947

LETTER FROM MARX AND ENGELS ON OPPORTUNISM

(The excerpt below is the last part of Letter 170 from the "Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence" written in 1879 to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke and other leading members of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany which was the Communist Party of that time. It was written "to define their fundamental attitude to the opportunist danger in the German Party and to place before the Party leadership with the greatest sharpness the choice between a break with opportunism on their part or a break with the Party on the part of Marx and Engels." (from "Correspondence" Notes). Marx wrote to Engels on Sept. 10, 1879 that "If they carry on in the same way with their Party organ we must publicly repudiate them. In these matters there is no longer any question of good nature." (Notes).

The Socialist Law referred to was an Anti-Socialist Law. The article attacked was written by Hochberg, Bernstein and Schramm—Browder, Dennis and Foster, Inc. of 1879. The opening tone of the excerpt is bitterly imitative of the undying bleating of the opportunists—then, or now in Daily Worker editorials.)

In order to relieve the bourgeoisie of the last trace of anxiety it must be clearly and convincingly proved to them that the Red Bogey is really only a bogey, and does not exist. But what is the secret of the Red bogey if it is not the bourgeoisie's dread of the inevitable life-and-death struggle between it and the proletariat? Dread of the inevitable decision of the modern class struggle? Do away with the class struggle and the bourgeoisie and "all independent people" will "not be afraid to go hand in hand with the proletariat," and the ones to be cheated will be precisely the proletariat.

Let the Party therefore prove by its humble and repentant attitude that it has once and for all laid aside the "improprieties and excesses" which provoked the Socialist Law. If it voluntarily promises that it only intends to act within the limits of the Socialist Law, Bismarck and the bourgeoisie will surely have the kindness to repeal this then superfluous law!

"Let no one misunderstand us"; we do not want "to give up our Party and our programme, but think that for years hence we shall have enough to do if we concentrate our whole strength and energy upon the attainment of certain immediate aims which must in any case be achieved before the realisation of the more far-reaching ends can be thought of." Then the bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and workers who are "at present frightened away . . . by the far-reaching demands will join us in masses."

The programme is not to be *given up* but only *postponed*—to an indefinite period. One accepts it, though not really for oneself and one's own lifetime but posthumously as an heirloom to be handed down to one's children and grandchildren. In the meantime one devotes one's "whole strength and energy" to all sorts of petty rubbish and the patching up of the capitalist order of society, in order at least to produce the appearance of something happening without at the same time scaring the bourgeoisie. There I must really praise the Communist,

Miquel, who proved his unshakable belief in the inevitable overthrow of capitalist society in the course of the next few hundred years by heartily carrying on swindles, contributing his honest best to the crash of 1873 and so *really* doing something to assist the collapse of the existing order.

Another offence against good form was also the "exaggerated attacks on the company promoters," who were after all "only children of their time"; "the abuse of Stroussberg and similar people . . . would therefore have been better omitted." Unfortunately everyone is only a "child of his time" and if this is a sufficient excuse nobody ought ever to be attacked any more, all controversy, all struggle on our part ceases; we quietly accept all the kicks our adversaries give us because we, who are so wise, know that these adversaries are "only children of their time" and cannot act otherwise. Instead of repaying their kicks with interest we ought rather to pity these unfortunates.

Then again the Party's support of the Commune had the disadvantage, nevertheless, "that people who were otherwise well disposed to us were alienated and in general the *hatred of the bourgeoisie* against us was increased." And further, "the Party is not wholly without blame for the introduction of the October Law, for it had increased the *hatred of the bourgeoisie* in an unnecessary way."

There you have the programme of the three censors of Zurich. In clarity it leaves nothing to be desired. Least of all to us, who are very familiar with the whole of this phraseology from the 1848 days. It is the representatives of the petty

bourgeoisie who are here presenting themselves, full of anxiety that the proletariat, under the pressure of its revolutionary position, may "go too far." Instead of decided political opposition, general compromise; instead of the struggle against the government and the bourgeoisie, an attempt to win and to persuade; instead of defiant resistance to ill-treatment from above, a humble submission and a confession that the punishment was deserved. Historically necessary conflicts are all reinterpreted as misunderstandings, and all discussion ends with the assurance that after all we are all agreed on the main point. The people who came out as bourgeois democrats in 1848 could just as well call themselves social-democrats now. To them the democratic republic was unattainably remote, and to these people the overthrow of the capitalist system is equally so, and therefore has absolutely no significance for practical present-day politics; one can mediate, compromise and philanthropise to one's heart's content. It is just the same with the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie. It is recognised on paper because its existence can no longer be denied, but in practice it is hushed up, diluted, attenuated.

The Social-Democratic Party is *not to be* a workers' party, is not to burden itself with the hatred of the bourgeoisie or of anyone else; should above all conduct energetic propaganda among the bourgeoisie; instead of laying stress on far-reaching aims which frighten the bourgeoisie and are not, after all, attainable in our generation, it should rather devote its whole strength and

energy to those small petty-bourgeois patching-up reforms which by providing the old order of society with new props may perhaps transform the ultimate catastrophe into a gradual, piecemeal and, so far as is possible, peaceful process of dissolution. These are the same people who under the pretence of indefatigable activity not only do nothing themselves but also try to prevent anything happening at all except chatter; the same people whose fear of every form of action in 1848 and 1849 obstructed the movement at every step and finally brought about its downfall; the same people who see a reaction and are then quite astonished to find themselves at last in a blind alley where neither resistance nor flight is possible; the same people who want to confine history within their narrow petty-bourgeois horizon and over whose heads history invariably proceeds to the order of the day.

As to their socialist content this has been adequately criticised already in the *Communist Manifesto*, chapter X, "German or True Socialism." When the class struggle is pushed on one side as a disagreeable "crude" phenomenon, nothing remains as a basis for socialism but "true love of humanity" and empty phraseology about "justice."

It is an inevitable phenomenon, rooted in the course of development, that people from what have hitherto been the ruling classes should also join the militant proletariat and contribute cultural elements to it. We clearly stated this in the *Communist Manifesto*. But here there are two points to be noted:

First, in order to be of use to the

proletarian movement these people must also bring real cultural elements to it. But with the great majority of the German bourgeois converts that is not the case. Neither the *Zukunft* (Future) nor the *Neue Gesellschaft* (New Society) have contributed anything which could advance the movement one step further. Here there is an absolute lack of real cultural material, whether concrete or theoretical. In its place we get attempts to bring superficially adopted socialist ideas into harmony with the most varied theoretical standpoints which these gentlemen have brought with them from the university or elsewhere, and of which, owing to the process of decomposition in which the remnants of German philosophy are at present involved, each is more confused than the last. Instead of thoroughly studying the new science themselves to begin with, each of them preferred to trim it to fit the point of view he had already, made a private science of his own without more ado and at once came forward with the claim that he was already to teach it. Hence there are about as many points of view among these gentry as there are heads; instead of producing clarity in a single case they have only produced desperate confusion—fortunately almost exclusively among themselves. Cultural elements whose first principle is to teach what they have not learnt can be very well dispensed with by the Party.

Secondly. If people of this kind from other classes join the proletarian movement, the first condition is that they should not bring any remnants of bourgeois, petty-

bourgeois, etc., prejudices with them but should wholeheartedly adopt the proletarian point of view. But these gentlemen, as has been proved, are stuffed and crammed with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideas. In such a petty-bourgeois country as Germany these ideas certainly have their own justification. But only *outside* the Social-Democratic workers' Party. If these gentlemen form themselves into a Social-Democratic Petty-Bourgeois Party they have a perfect right to do so; one could then negotiate with them, for a *bloc* according to circumstances, etc. But in a workers' party they are an adulterating element. If reasons exist for tolerating them there for the moment, it is also a duty *only* to tolerate them, to allow them no influence in the Party leadership and to remain aware that a break with them is only a matter of time. The time, moreover, seems to have come. How the Party can tolerate the authors of this article in its midst any longer is to us incomprehensible. But if the leadership of the Party should fall more or less into the hands of such people then the party will simply be castrated and proletarian energy will be at an end.

As for ourselves, in view of our

whole past there is only one path open to us. For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving force of history, and in particular the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social revolution; it is therefore impossible for us to co-operate with people who wish to expunge this class struggle from the movement. When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle-cry: the emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. We cannot therefore co-operate with people who say that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must first be freed from above by philanthropic bourgeois and petty-bourgeois. If the new Party organ adopts a line corresponding to the views of these gentlemen, and is bourgeois and not proletarian, then nothing remains for us, much though we should regret it, but publicly to declare our opposition to it and to dissolve the solidarity with which we have hitherto represented the German Party abroad. But it is to be hoped that things will not come to *that*. (All italics are in the original).

Thanks again for your letters and financial help. SPARK is still badly in need of funds. The depression has presented its credentials to most of us, but if all the friends who sent one and two dollars could send five or even ten, the continued publication of SPARK would be guaranteed. If you want SPARK to continue, please send your contribution this month—for a larger amount than you can spare.

Please make checks or money orders payable to: P. R. Club, P. O. Box 34, Tremont Sta., N. Y. Cash or 1½c stamps will also be appreciated.

SPARK

A MARXIST MONTHLY

CPUSA CONVENTION

The National Committee, CPUSA is now the embarrassed father of a bouncing boner. E-v-i-d-e-n-t-l-y, Foster invited Harry Pollitt to the National Convention of the CPUSA to be held on July Fourth. It leaked when Pollitt was denied a visa by the U. S. government. Maybe there was a convention planned when Foster left for his European penitence (snubbed by foreign party leaders), but the preconvention period never materialized and the convention was called off—and someone forgot to tell Harry Pollitt.

This bouncing boner is valuable. It should officially open preconvention discussion. Every party member should ask the leadership, "What about the Convention—and how about 60 days preconvention discussion." The Constitution of the CPUSA says: "Regular National Conventions shall be held every two years" (Art. VII, Sec. 1) . . . "Prior to conventions, at least 60 days shall be allowed for discussion in all Party Clubs of the main resolutions and problems coming before the convention." (Art. VII, Sec. 3.) But all this is of course sheer comedy to the opportunist faction that controls the CPUSA today.

The P. R. Club, Communist Party (Expelled) will appeal the decision expelling it if and when a National Convention is held. But this is only one of the many reasons one is not taking place. Any party member who is not completely corrupt will certainly want to know why the Daily Worker has offered no explanation for the absence of a Convention, and why it boycotts the news about Pollitt which the radio and capitalist press carried on June 22nd.