

## THE WORKERS PARTY AND THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

By Ernest Erber

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## I N T R O D U C T O R Y   N O T E

The recent pre-convention discussion in our party stimulated a widespread interest in the theoretical roots of our program of transitional demands. A number of branches organized educational discussions in response to this interest. However, their efforts to find available reading matter on the question were not very fruitful. The National Education Department was not in a position to undertake the preparation of new material on the subject. It decided to reissue the only study outline the Party had published on this question in the past and which was no longer available.

This outline was first presented in the form of two lectures to the Philadelphia Branch in the Summer of 1944. The date of its writing should be noted in view of the fact that some of the references to the post-war period are general and on the historic scale, rather than attempts at precise relation of the transitional demands to a concretely analysed post-war economic situation. It was thought advisable to leave the outline in its original form and get it into the hands of the party as soon as possible rather than delay it for necessary revisions in line with the more exact analysis of the post-war situation made by our party today. Another reason for the decision to refrain from a re-writing is that the National Educational Department plans a much more thorough and comprehensive study outline on this question. It will appear as one of the Blue Cover Series. Until then, the present edition should prove a valuable stop-gap.

Ernest Erber  
National Educational Department

WHAT IS A PROGRAM OF "TRANSITIONAL" DEMANDS?

1. Socialist Programs Have a Scientific Basis

Socialists, that is, Marxists, differ from all other political movements in that their activities are based upon a scientific examination of the society we live in and its history.

This examination of society and its history, begun by Marx and carried on by other great Socialist thinkers, has resulted in a whole series of conclusions. The latter have been tested against the background of nearly 100 years of history. They have been enriched, expanded, added to, or altered in the light of experience. This series of conclusions or body of theories is the scientific program of our movement.

The main tenets of this program are:

- (a) the theory of historical materialism
- (b) the labor theory of value and surplus value
- (c) the theory of the class struggle
- (d) the theory of the class character of the state
- (e) the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and
- (f) the theory of the classless society of socialism.

2. How Our Scientific Program Was Developed

Socialism, that is, Marxism, is a science.

Its theories are, therefore, developed like those of any other science, i.e., by a sober, scientific analysis of all facts, data, and experiences at hand. The materials that the Marxian scientist deals with vary from the history of revolutions to a government census report, from the trends of international trade to the lessons of the latest strike.

However, no matter what his materials, the Marxist seeks always to produce one thing: a truthful statement of conditions and of their trend or direction of development. In this he yields neither to the pressure of the ruling class nor to the prejudices of the workers. Once the Marxist deviates from seeking the truth, in order to please this or that interest, he becomes a navigator without a compass, and sinks to the level of the politicians and professors of capitalism who lie and deceive for a living.

Marx began the great work of seeking the truth for the working class. He developed our philosophical views (dialectical materialism), our method of interpreting history (historical materialism),

our analysis of capitalism (labor theory of value), and our understanding of the class struggle. This work was carried on by Lenin who developed our views on the nature of the state, on the need of a revolutionary party, on the form of the proletarian dictatorship, and on the nature of the proletarian revolution. These views were further enriched by Trotsky with our theory of permanent revolution. In addition to these there have been countless other contributions, great and small, by the many thinkers and activists of the working class movement of many countries.

All of these theories lead to the one final conclusion: that capitalism is unable to continue and must give way to the Socialist Society.

As active participants in the making of history, Marxists aim all their activities toward that final goal: to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism

### 3. Can We Educate the Working Class to Socialism?

If we are to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism we must have the power necessary to do it. This requires that we have on our side the active majority of the population, above all, the decisive majority of the wage workers.

How can they be mobilized behind our movement to establish Socialism?

We attempt, of course, to educate as many as possible to understand our scientific program. However, the conditions of life under capitalism are such that the great mass of the workers are not able to study and learn the involved and complex theories necessary for such an understanding. Only an exceptional handful of workers are in a position to do this.

A large number of workers are able to understand our views about the need to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism. The worker has much experience with capitalism that makes him sympathetic to what we say. Our description of what Socialism is and how it will work sounds attractive and practical to him. But this understanding, too, comes only to a minority of the workers. The combined forces of capitalist propaganda through school, press, radio, movies, church, and other means closes the minds of most workers to an acceptance of Socialism as a practical solution to their difficulties.

Meanwhile, the conditions of capitalism force the mass of the workers, regardless of what they think of Socialism, to constantly struggle for a better livelihood, or at least to defend what they have. As part of the working class, we Socialists take part in this class struggle. Because we have a scientific program we do not take part blindly as do the mass of workers. We know the causes of the struggle, we can interpret its stages and we know the ultimate solution, Socialism.

But it became obvious to Socialists almost from the outset that it was quite impossible to give the workers any guidance or direction in the day to day struggle if the only goal the Socialists aimed at was Socialism. To achieve Socialism would truly win the class war for the workers. But before an army can win a war it must win battles. Each battle aims at a certain immediate and practical goal. Once this is achieved, the army aims at the next objective. To give intelligent direction to the working class in its day to day struggle the Socialists developed a program of:

#### 4. Immediate Demands

The immediate demands raised by the Socialists varied, of course, from country to country and in accordance with the prevailing conditions.

However, they all had one thing in common: they were demands that could be achieved within the framework of capitalism.

It was highly improbable that most of them would be realized under capitalism. However, what we must remember is that their adoption would not require a break in the system of capitalist property relations.

Such immediate demands usually were of two general categories, political and economic.

The political demands were concerned with the establishment and expansion of democratic institutions, Socialists living in monarchies, like Germany and Russia before 1914, called for a republic. Socialists in France called for women's suffrage. Socialists in America called for direct elections, abolition of the Senate, election of all judges, referendum on war, etc. These are examples of the political demands.

The economic demands were concerned with improving the wage earners' position. They were demands for unemployment insurance, old age pensions, eight hour day, adequate relief for the needy, public works, jobs for the unemployed, etc.

The Socialist programs before 1914 were therefore written in two distinct sections. The first section was a statement of the scientific program of Socialism. The second section was a statement of the immediate demands for which the Socialists asked the workers to fight as the next stage in their struggle. They were often referred to as the "maximum" program (i.e. Socialism) and the "minimum" program (i.e. reform under capitalism). The classic Erfurt Program of the German Social Democratic Party (published in this country under the title of "The Class Struggle", by Kerr and Co.), written by Karl Kautsky, was an example of this. It in turn was the model for practically all the party programs of the old Socialist International.

What happened in practice with these programs? Did they serve as an effective guide to the Socialists in leading the working class and fighting for Socialism?

What happened in practice was that a great gulf was created between the "maximum" and the "minimum" demands. The "maximum" demands became the basis for holiday speeches and manifestoes, as on May Day. The "minimum" demands became the basis of the day to day work in elections, trade unions, and in legislative bodies. The pre-war Socialists found no way to bridge the gulf (no that they tried). The out and out reformists in the party said that Socialism would be the result of a gradual achievement of more and more immediate demands until capitalism would grow into Socialism almost unnoticeably. The orthodox Marxists opposed this concept of piecemeal Socialism and said that Socialism would be the result of a catastrophic end of capitalism and the introduction of a Socialist order. But until they they too saw in the immediate demands the only practical basis of day to day struggle. They looked to the workers being educated in this day to day struggle until a majority were prepared to fight to the "maximum" program of Socialism. Meanwhile the gulf remained unbridged.

##### 5. Lenin Finds a "Transitional" Bridge

The program of the Russian Socialists (both Menshevik and Bolshevik wings had the same program) was based on Kautsky's Erfurt Program. It was superior to the latter in that it restored Marx's classic phrase of "dictatorship of the proletariat" in place of Kautsky's more general wording which indicated that the working class would rule through a parliamentary democracy. However, it too followed the classic division of a "maximum" program and a "minimum" program. This sufficed throughout the years of preparation for the revolution. The Bolsheviks educated a generation of Marxists on the basis of the scientific program of "maximum" demands and steered the party through periods of upheaval and of reaction on the basis of their "minimum" program. (The latter was condensed for popular presentation into the so-called "three whales" of Bolshevism; the republic, land for the peasants, and the eight hour day.)

However, in the summer of 1917 the economic and political situation of revolutionary Russia was such that the "minimum" program no longer sufficed. The old order had broken down and the Kerensky government showed no sign of being able to keep the cities from complete starvation. Production, transportation, and distribution were rapidly reaching a state of complete paralysis. Meanwhile the Bolsheviks had become a tremendous force and were seriously aiming at taking power. They already had a majority of the industrial workers behind them. These were traditionally Socialist in their views. The Bolsheviks had won them over by showing that they fought consistently for a Socialist solution. But the millions of peasants, the middle class, the peasant soldiers in the garrisons and at the front, and the less advanced workers, all these had to be convinced that the Bolsheviks deserved power on the basis of a practical program. Lenin gave them such a program.

In developing this program Lenin took a completely new point of departure. Whereas the old programs proceeded from a division of those demands that could be achieved under capitalism and those

that could be achieved under Socialism, Lenin proceeded by asking, "What is necessary to solve our problems?" and proceeded to give the answers without regard to "whether it can be achieved under capitalism" or not.

He pointed out that economic chaos would engulf the country unless they immediately brought about the unification of all banks, the nationalization of all monopolies and trusts, the opening of all books and accounts of the capitalists for inspection by the workers, etc. All of this must proceed under the control of the workers through their elected committees. Was this Socialism? Of course not. Was this capitalism? Hardly. Would it work? Was it a stable plan? Lenin offered no guarantees. This is at least a solution in the right direction.

But the Kerensky government will not adopt this program, the workers answer. And Lenin says, "Of course not. That is why we must transfer all power to the Soviets, that is why we need a government of the workers and poor peasants."

The old "maximum" program gave the workers a glimpse of the Socialist future. It showed them the whole system and all of its workings. But it seemed too far away for most workers to see and understand. Lenin took the workers right up close. They could not see the whole thing. They did not know how its various parts would fit together. Nor did they care. This was for the bourgeois economists to worry about. The workers looked into a window marked "nationalized banks" and it looked like a practical proposition. They supported it. And to achieve this and many other solutions they placed the Bolsheviks in power in the Soviets and the Soviets in power in the country.

Lenin had "sold" them on Socialism without regard for labels.

Lenin's program to fight economic chaos was not the presentation of the Socialist future as the alternative. It was a program of drastic, yet practical, proposals for a way out of the crisis. It was offered without regard for the "limits of capitalism". Actually, it was impossible to achieve this program and leave capitalist property relations undisturbed. But the masses said, "Give us the solution and let capitalism take care of itself."

Lenin said his program "is not yet Socialism, but it is no longer capitalism."

Lenin had found a program of transition from capitalism to Socialism. That is why his demands were referred to as "transitional" demands and his program a "transitional" program.

Lenin had found the bridge between the immediate demands of the day to day struggle and "maximum" demands of the Socialist society.

## PART TWO

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM ON THE AMERICAN SCENE6. Can the American Working Class Be Educated to Socialism?

The American working class lags behind that of every other country of the world in its political development. With the exception of England, the workers of every European country have in the past espoused Socialism in some form as the goal of their struggles. Even the English Labor Party has adopted its own brand of Socialism as the goal of the class struggle. But the American working class has for a hundred years of organized existence remained immune to a Socialist perspective. The historical reasons for this are the subject for a separate study. What concerns us now is the inescapable fact that the American working class has lived through a world war, through a decade of economic breakdown of capitalism, and now through a second war without showing any signs of the acceptance of Socialism as the alternative to capitalist society.

It is now the year 1944. The prospect for the post-war period is one of turbulence and violent social conflicts. The workers will learn much in this period. But who will say that there is still time in America for the piecemeal education of a Socialist working class? The great struggles are too close upon us. The final decisions between the working class and fascism will certainly come long before a Socialist working class will be trained. Yet the great social struggles and the rise of fascism will pose the Socialist solution squarely before the workers. How will they come to accept Socialism?

7. The American Working Class Will Accept Socialism in Form of a Series of Specific (Transitional) Solutions

Historical development has cast the thinking of the American workers in the most piecemeal, day-to-day "practical" form. They have, consequently, rejected Socialism in theory. But they will be all the more practical in accepting it in practice.

How else will the workers of this country be able to answer the overwhelming logic of the situation when capitalism can provide no jobs, except through increasingly more radical Socialist measures. Already the post-war plans of most unions show a lack of faith in the ability of "private enterprise" to provide a going economic life. The post-war plans of the UAW go further than any in this direction and link up their planning with great reliance upon government intervention and control over economy, including nationalization of many basic enterprises.

Of course, none of these measures are called socialistic by the unions. Nor will the even more radical steps be thought of as Socialist. Even when the capitalist press will howl "Socialism" and "Communism", the workers will deny it or ignore it. If the banks close down again the workers will become convinced that only

nationalization of the banks can bring security to their savings and their homes. If raw materials and foodstuffs accumulate in the countryside and people are in want in the cities, the workers will become convinced in favor of direct government distribution.

In this sense the recent Brewster "stay-in" is of tremendous symptomatic significance. The contract was cancelled. There was no work to be done. The workers were to go home and look for an employer elsewhere. But the workers thinking transcended these accepted patterns of "wage-slave" behavior. They no longer thought "normally" about a lay-off because down in their bones they felt that these are not normal times and that normal solutions are out of place. The long years of the depression still leave their trace upon the workers' thinking and the long shadows of the coming post-war depression already are cast over their minds. The Navy and Brewster said, "There is no work, look for a job elsewhere." "Why elsewhere?", the workers asked. "We will stay in the plant and look for something to do here. These are our jobs and here we will work. Instead of looking individually for another job we are more secure in staying here and looking for another contract and raw materials with which to work."

The idea of a "stay-in" for a contract and jobs will soon forge a link in the workers' thought to its next, higher stage; workers control of production.

It is in this fashion that the American workers will accept Socialist solutions to their problems and carry through a Socialist revolution.

#### 8. The Nature of the Problems That Will Face the American Working Class

The American working class will only accept such thoroughgoing measures when it becomes inescapably plain to everyone that they are the only way out. The question then arises, "Will the crisis of capitalism prove so insoluble that only these measures can affect a solution?"

The basic premise upon which a program of transitional demands must rest is that the social order is in such a state of crisis that only revolutionary economic measures assure a way out. If such a crisis has not gripped society, if normal measures within capitalism can provide a solution, then a program of transitional steps to Socialism becomes meaningless. Worse, it serves to misdirect the Marxists and throw them off their course so that they lose touch with the main stream of the working class in struggle.

It is our contention that American capitalism has been in a state of crisis since 1929. The days of "normal" capitalism are over for good. The depression of 1929-39 was relieved only by the war, which is but a different form of capitalist crisis. Even if we have a period of "civilian goods" prosperity after the war, it will be both brief and very limited. It may prove that no more

than a year, at most two, will suffice to once more stock the market with automobiles, refrigerators, and radios. If it was possible to turn the nation into an arsenal for the world, it will prove far simpler to turn out an over-production of consumers goods. Nor will such a form of "prosperity" affect the whole working class. Miners, steelworkers and other basic producers cannot be employed on civilian orders at the rate they have been on war work. Unemployment in any one branch of economy means lack of purchasing power for civilian goods and affects, in turn, production elsewhere. One of the worst immediate victims of peace production will be the farmer. The lag of farmers' purchasing power will react swiftly upon industrial production.

The crisis of 1929 was not accidental. It was not the result of one single cause. It was the accumulation of the multitude of contradictions inherent in capitalist economy. These have not been eliminated by the war. They have been held in check temporarily through the operation of the abnormal war-time economy. With peace, the depression of 1929-39 will strike the United States with redoubled force. Events will move swiftly, dramatically and chaotically. From manpower shortages and labor drafts we will pass within a few months to mass unemployment of millions. From rationing and material shortages we will pass within a few months to over-production and stagnating surpluses. From the fever pitch of war we will pass suddenly to the chilling paralysis of depression.

This condition of capitalism is the "final crisis". It is the normal condition for an over-aged and out-dated economic order. The system has been in a state of decay on a world scale since 1914 and in this country since 1929. The depth and range of the decay is so penetrating and all-embracing that no phase of American society escaped its effects. That is why it is proper to speak of it as a "social crisis". This denotes that it is more basic than a conjunctural crisis that capitalism has always known and has always overcome in accepted economic channels. The social crisis will only be overcome by going beyond the framework of capitalism for a solution.

#### 9. Why All Workable Solutions Will Violate Capitalist Property Rights

In the face of such a catastrophic breakdown of capitalist economy, all "immediate demands" will soon appear to be pitifully inadequate. What meaning will it have to speak of public works, adequate relief, and similar measures when 20 million will be unemployed, (i.e. about half of the working class), when many plants will be completely shut down and others will work at 50% capacity, when farm surpluses will pile up and hungry people will search for a hand-out in cities? Of course, Socialists will fight for immediate demands like public works, jobs and relief. But as a party that offers a way out this would seem fantastically insufficient. And with each month that passes and sees capitalism unable to organize production, the inadequacy of all proposals that operate within capitalist economy will become increasingly obvious.

All sorts of capitalist proposals will deluge the country.

Some will want to tinker with taxation, others with foreign trade, others with government aid to business, others with subsidies to farmers, etc. These will all operate like Roosevelt's "pump-priming". They will produce as much water as was used to prime with. They cannot produce more for the well of capitalism is bone dry.

The workers will hear all this "monkey business" once more, as from Hoover and Roosevelt from 1929 to 1939. It all seems exceedingly complicated to them, really unnecessarily complicated. Soon the charm of the capitalist medicine men will wear off. Workers will realize that these people either don't know what must be done or don't want to do it. The breakdown of one plan after another that limits itself to capitalism will cause the workers to examine, in that characteristically simple and direct approach of the working class, the nature of the problem. Here are idle factories - and here are hungry people. We must bring together idle machines and idle men and we must bring together surplus food and hungry people. Never having been exposed to mumbo-jumbo of a college course in economics, the workers will take the short cut.

They will act the way the Brewster workers approached the problem of lay-offs. "We are laid-off? Like hell. We will stay right here and find something to do." The workers will likewise reason, "We are locked out and left to rot in idleness while the machines rust. Let us take over the factories and set them in operation through our own factory committees."

"But this is illegal," the capitalist press will shriek. To which the workers will answer, "Then it must be made legal. A government which says it is legal for a man to go hungry but illegal for a man to work must be changed. We will establish a government which says it is illegal to lock up a factory and throw men on the streets."

Such thinking by the workers is plainly revolutionary, whether they consider it so or not. It simply means that the institutions of capitalism have come into conflict with the needs of the majority of the people and latter are trampling these institutions underfoot to achieve the right to live.

#### 10. The PLATFORM OF THE WORKERS PARTY As a Transitional Program

The Socialist revolution, however, will not come about as the result of blind action by the masses. The class war is like any other war. The army needs a general staff that plans out the strategy and directs the day-to-day battles. The Socialist revolution is but the last campaign in that class war. The revolutionary Socialist party must guide and direct the actions of the working class toward the logical and ultimate goal of the class struggle, the establishment of Socialism.

As pointed out in the beginning, the whole theory of Socialism is based upon our scientific program. But for the day-to-day

struggle we can only direct the actions of the working class, if we have a platform of demands that coincides with (a) the level of the workers thinking and their demands and (b) the practical answers to the objective problems that confronts us. This is what the platform of the Workers Party seeks to do.

It combines both immediate demands, i.e. those coinciding with the workers current level of thought and demands, and transitional demands, i.e. those that indicate a solution to the deep-rooted social and economic problems confronting the people.

Our transitional demands are no more radical than the evils they seek to combat. Nothing less than these transitional solutions will be worth discussing in the face of the grave post-war collapse of economy.

Of course, they do not sound reasonable to the bulk of the workers today. If it were our aim to sound reasonable to the workers today we could find many pleasant things to sell them. But these would all be either lies or half-truths. It is not the role of honest Socialists to enter into such lying contests with capitalist politicians who are experts in telling pleasant lies to the people. We set our sights higher and aim to the future when the facts of life will bring home the truth of our views upon the bones of the workers. Yes, we note the level upon which workers think. We try to continually find common voice with them in their daily needs and demands. LABOR ACTION is doing an excellent job of this. It speaks about wages, prices, job freezing, the "no strike" pledge "the Little Steel Formule", and countless other problems that today occupy the thinking of the trade union movement.

But this is only the necessary level at which our public education begins. We would be less than honest and stupidly short-sighted if we did not tell the truth about what the workers will face and how to overcome it. This is the duty of a party that aims toward Socialism. Only in this manner will it grow and wield influence.

It is necessary to say that capitalism will not provide prosperity. That there will be millions of unemployed. That factories will be idle. And at every stage of the workers thinking about these facts, we must indicate along what lines the solution lies. We must seek constantly to push masses into action to achieve this or that object toward a solution. In this way we build the indispensable bridge or transition in the workers' thinking between the immediate problems of today and the Socialist re-organization of tomorrow.

The Platform of the Workers Party stresses three main concepts toward a break with capitalist forms of economy and government. Every step in realizing them will be a step on the road of revolution. These concepts are:

Firstly: Workers Control. This means much more in our use of it than it did to the Europeans. With them it meant the right of workers to examine the corporations' books, to check on profits

on salaries, on other "business secrets". We use it in the widest meaning of independent working class intervention in management and supervision and governmental authority. In this sense we call for workers control of production in industry, for workers control of rationing and distribution, and for workers defense guards to protect the workers' organizations against fascist violence.

None of the above are compatible with capitalism. They all go beyond the framework of the normal relations in capitalist production, distribution and government. Yet in the post-war period when production breaks down, when distribution is strangled by the profit bottleneck, and when fascist violence rises, these demands will achieve the character of increasingly pressing immediate demands.

To the extent they will be realized, they will transfer to the working class a measure of power in economy and government -- a revolutionary power. Since the old capitalist state apparatus will still remain and since ownership will still rest with the capitalists, this will be a period of dual power. It will be resolved only by the workers learning from their experiences and going forward to complete power or by the counter-attack of the capitalists to break the workers' movement.

To the degree that these transitional concepts are popularized among even limited numbers of workers today, the job of educating the working class to understand what it must do will be immeasurably easier tomorrow.

The second concept that the Platform stresses is the confiscation of the great concentrations of private wealth.

This too will increasingly be regarded an urgent necessity during the post-war economic stagnation. Industrial and business life will practically be at a standstill. Workers will be without wages, farmers without cash for their crops, and small business will fold up on an unprecedented scale. As in the depth of the last depression, people will everywhere ask, "Where is the money? During the war everyone had a pocketful of money. Now it had disappeared." And out of this query will emerge a more and more vocal answer that "the rich have it," that the bloated profiteers of the war are sitting out the depression on their money bags while the "little man" is losing his all. Huey Long caught the popular fancy with his demand that the wealth must be shared. It strikes people as the height of immorality for a part of the population to roll in wealth while unemployment and distress stalk the country. In addition, it seems quite practical to make the plutocrats disgorge part of their booty for the common good. "They have too much. We have nothing. Their system has cornered all the chips. We are broke. If the game is to go on we must have a re-distribution of chips. Give the poor people some money so they can start life over again."

In addition to this great urge toward confiscation of concentrated wealth, there is the very realistic need to find sources of taxable wealth if the government is to finance schemes to revive economy. The last depression saw all sorts of sales taxes and other indirect taxes levied upon the people. These prove very

unpopular. But beyond this, they are insufficient for any really drastic measures to provide jobs. It is estimated that housing alone will require 50 billion a year if we are to seriously tackle the problem of replaing the slums with decent houses. This is somewhere near half of the present war budget. Such sums can only be spent by confiscatory taxes upon great incomes and a steep levy upon capital wealth. Even the modest programs of the UAW and the CIO would require very heavy taxes upon wealth to provide the funds.

The platform of the Workers Party seeks to educate workers to understand this need. We call for the espropriation of the 60 Families, "the plutocratic 3% of the population who own 96% of the national wealth!" We call for 100% tax on all war profits, above a 5% maximum on invested capital. We call for a \$25,000 ceiling on all individual income. We call for a graduated capital levy on all accumulated wealth over \$50,000.

These are not "practical," it can readily be seen, if we grant the existence of capitalism. For instance, the expropriation of the 60 Families would mean the expropriation of the capitalist class for all practical purposes. A reduction of war profits to 5% of invested capital would make it unprofitable to operate plants in most instances. The corporation would do better by investing in government bonds. Yet the solution of economic difficulties after the war will make these steps appear as indispensable. The worker will not give a hang whether they can be achieved within or without capitalism. He feels that it is just and moral. Further, he feels that it is necessary. And still further, it appears as a simple and practical procedure.

Thirdly, our platform stresses nationalization. This is the necessary first step in organizing socialist production. When proposed as part of the theory of socialism, American workers find a dozen objections. Yet we have seen how readily in war-time industrial disputes the workers have taken to the idea of the "government taking over." This, of course, has usually been a farce as in the case of the railways and the mines. Yet the important fact for us to note is that striking workers have time and again, when faced with the problem, stated that they were willing to go back to work for the government but not for private employers. The hostility to "Socialism" seems suddenly to vanish when confronted with a specific situation and a specific way out. Mere government operation of plants, even when legitimately that and not a fake, is not socialism. This needs hardly to be dwelt upon. But, if this concept is linked with workers control, it becomes a mighty weapon in forging a transition to the idea of complete nationalization. If we see the Brewster stay-in repeated elsewhere during the post-war crisis, and if the workers advance to demand not only a contract but that the government take over the title to the plant, and, if the workers propose to democratically organize the operation of it, we have wedged our foot into the door of socialism and every advance pushes the door open more widely.

That is why our platform calls for conscription of all war

industries. "Nationalize the banks, big industrial monopolies, and transportation systems. No handing over of government-built and owned plants and facilities to private ownership!"

The already immediate and burning political importance of the government-owned plants indicates how vastly important this problem of nationalization will be after the war. The Baruch-Hancock report seeks to prepare public opinion for re-privatizing the plants. It is extremely important to capitalism that this be done. Yet the political repercussions among the people will be great when they see what now amounts to some 25% of our heavy industrial capacity turned over to private ownership, and that at a time when it becomes ever more evident that private ownership cannot provide work.

Related to the problem of nationalization is the demand for an annual wage. This too cannot be a workable system under capitalism. The chaotic nature of capitalist production requires a very flexible relation with wage laborers. Industry must be in a position to hire in mass when they need them and fire in mass when they don't need them. Only a planned economy can pay an annual wage. Our public education on the demand for an annual wage will prove, if we know how to use it, one of the mightiest levers in our platform. For linked up with the idea of annual wage, which proves extremely popular with workers will be government planning and nationalization. We will press for an annual wage but at all times link it with the need for planning. Without planning an annual wage will prove an illusion. But planning must be nationwide and government directed. This can only work if the government owns the key industries, banks and systems of communication, transportation and distribution. Annual wage, planned economy and nationalization under workers control will prove our three mightiest demands.

#### 11. The Workers Government as the Crowning Demand of Our Platform

None of our transitional demands appear practical without the assistance of a friendly government. The workers think that certainly a congress like the present one and even an administration as allegedly friendly to labor as Roosevelt in the height of the New Deal would oppose measures such as have been outlined. "These are all good but the politicians will never allow it."

To this we answer: "But you say the workers all agree with these ideas once they understand them. If the workers are the majority of the population, as they are, why should they tolerate a government that opposes what they want. Why can't the working class establish its own government - a workers government?"

In this way we crown all our other transitional demands with the demand that becomes a key to their realization, i. e., a workers government.

Just what kind of a government is a workers government? This is open to many possible interpretations. This is exactly as it

must be at present. What is important right now is to firmly implant in the minds of the American workers the idea that they are the mass and they have a right to their own government. Until workers agree to this concept it is useless to discuss with them the exact form and structure of a workers government. They will in all probability first conceive of a workers government in very narrow parliamentary channels, i.e. the election of a workers administration in contest with capitalist representatives. Such a conception is, of course, a tremendous leap forward in the thinking of the American workers.

However, our scientific program of Socialism is based upon the concept that the state is an instrument of oppression in the hands of the ruling class, that the capitalist state is built and designed for the purposes of maintaining capitalism, that the lessons of every social revolution have shown that the new ruling class destroys the old forms and provides its own class structure. We understand that the victory of the working class in the struggle for power will establish the working class as the ruling class (dictatorship of the proletariat). The factory committees, trade unions, and workers and farmers councils will be the base upon which such rule will rest. The slogan of "A Workers Government" does not mean some sort of government different from and in addition to this. For us, a workers government, to be truly that, must be a dictatorship of the proletariat. However, we use the slogan of "A Workers Government" to instill the idea of workers controlling their own destiny. They may interpret the exact form of such a government differently at each successive stage of the struggle. We aim, of course, to help them draw lessons from their political experiences so that in the end they will agree with us that a workers government means working class rule based upon the class institutions and organizations of the workers. In this sense we say that the slogan "A Workers Government" is algebra and a dictatorship of the proletariat is arithmetic. We aim in time to concretize the algebraic formula with our more specific formulation.

## 12. The Labor Party as a Means to Fight for the Transitional Demands

"But how can we get a workers government," the workers will ask. We say that the first thing we need is a party - a party of the working class. "We must have our own working class party - a Labor party independent of all capitalist parties."

As with the concept of a Workers Government, the workers will conceive of a working class party - i.e. a Labor Party - in very general and usually reformist terms. But that does not mean that we should help him think that way. Our main job is to make him think about the indispensable need of a party of his own - a class party. This too is algebra. We pour one content into it and the workers, still very backward as yet, pour a different content into it. Our point of agreement is upon the need of an independent party of the class to establish the voice of the working class in control of government.

It is our task to tell the workers the truth. We must always base ourselves upon the objective situation as we analyze it and understand that sooner or later developments will press our solution upon the mass of workers. That is why we call for demands that are an economic and political transition to Socialism. We frankly and bluntly say that short of these demands there will be no serious dealing with economic breakdown after the war. We also frankly say that if the workers want to achieve these demands they must have a workers government. And we are equally frank in telling the working class that the first step toward a workers government is the organization of its own class party dedicated to this program. That is why our Workers Party platform is also a platform for the coming Labor Party. That is why we propose it in part, and sometimes in total, for adoption by the Labor Party movement.

Will we succeed in this? This is quite unlikely at present. However, here and there aspects of our ideas will find their way into the thinking of groups of workers and through them into the platforms of Labor Parties. As time goes by, particularly after the war, the validity of our ideas will be more and more widely accepted.

But if the Labor Party is not organized with our platform demands? If it is organized with very mild, reformist demands? Shall we shun it? Shall we stand aside and say we will not soil ourselves with it until it is prepared to accept our advice? Of course not. A party is alive in reality as to produce our platform will hardly be that sectarian. If the Labor Party is organized on a reformist platform, we will support it provided it is genuinely based upon the working class and is independent of capitalist parties. But in giving it our support we do not give it our blind confidence. We take part in its work but we also take part in its deliberations and discussions. We take part and constantly strive to gain more and more adherents for our transitional demands, for we know that the Labor Party must come to accept that way out if it is to prove a worthwhile instrument.