

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

NO. 2

*Socialist Workers Party*

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NOTE BY THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE

The Resolution published herein has been drafted and adopted by the Political Committee on instructions of the Plenum of the N.C. to draft a concrete program of action (transitional demands) applicable to the United States in the light of the general International Thesis on "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International".

This material is now submitted to the membership for study and discussion.

As per the decision of the Plenum, a referendum vote of the membership will be taken at the conclusion of the discussion.

The labor party resolution is included as a section of the general resolution. The P.C. recommends, however, that this section be discussed and voted on separately.

THE DECLINE  
OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM AND  
THE REVOLUTIONARY TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE  
NEXT PERIOD

(With A Special Section On The Labor Party Question)

I.

1. American capitalist economy, now passing thru a fresh period of economic crisis and depression following the 1933-1937 upturn, has definitely entered its phase of general decline. For the first time in its history, the top of the boom cycle, measured by all significant indices, was substantially below the top of the preceeding boom. (1929). This central fact unmistakeably demonstrates the falsity of any theory of American "exceptionalism" and the truth of the Marxist contention in our International Draft Thesis, that the United States along with the entire capitalist world has exhausted its progressive potentialities.

2. The economic crisis in the United States is thus no cyclical fluctuation preceding a further advance of production, but a stage in the development of a permanent and general crisis in the economic and social relations of American capitalism. This general crisis of the social order itself does not of course exclude the possibility and even probability of temporary periods of revival. But every such upturn in the future will be feverish, brief, uneven and yield to deeper crisis and more gridding depression on a lower level. Mass unemployment, increasing insecurity and lowering of the general standard of

living have become chronic and inseparable features of American economy and insurmountable without the destruction of capitalism itself.

3. The gigantic technical development of the United States, its enormous material resources, and the fact that this country has risen to the relatively dominant position in world capitalism during the period when world capitalism had entered the epoch of decline, only accentuates the impact of the crisis. The roots of the American crisis are international and the fate of the United States was never more closely linked up with the destiny of world capitalism as a whole. Economic rise and slump in the United States are sharper and more devastating than in any other country; and the attempt to extricate itself from the crisis by means of the redistribution of the world market, is driving American capitalism to play a leading part in the preparations for the new imperialist war.

4. The effect of the 1929-33 economic crisis, and even more the impact of the new crisis before the completion of a recovery cycle comparable to the previous boom period, produce an uneven but ever deepening and all-embracing social crisis, the continuing character of which is made certain by the insoluble nature of the economic crisis. Confronted by the ravages of the economic crisis in their own lives, the masses seek a way out. The unprecedented sweep to the New Deal was one abortive attempt to find such a way. But the realities of capitalist decline are shattering the illusions of the New Deal no less ruthlessly than they dissipated the dream of the "New Era" (1923-1929). The New Deal expenditures served temporarily

to prop up the sagging foundations of capitalism and "stabilize" decay by "planned" sabotage of production. Despite billions of dollars of government pump priming, however, the boasted economic gains of three years of the New Deal were wiped out in three months of the most precipitate decline in American economic history. The army of the unemployed has once more risen to thirteen million. The national organization of Labor's Non-Partisan League and the formation of La Follette's National Progressive Party are events of the greatest symptomatic importance as indicating the pressure of the masses trying to find their road beyond the collapsing framework of the traditional two party system.

## II.

5. As yet the discontent of the masses has not found clear and explicit expression. Nowhere in the world is there a greater gap than in the United States between the which have fully matured for the socialist revolution, technical and material organization of economy, and the backwardness of political consciousness of the masses which still revolves within bourgeois limits. At the same time nowhere is there a greater gap between political backwardness and implicitly revolutionary anti-capitalist action of the masses, (the sit--in strikes.) In these circumstances, to which must be added the approach of a new world war, the prospect of long drawn out, comparatively stable tendencies such as once characterized many of the older European countries, must be ruled out.

6. This situation is fertile for the rapid and stormy

political development of the masses. At the same time it provides the soil for radical and pseudo-radical middle class movements, and an unprecedentedly rapid growth of an American fascist movement, which might be a consequence of such third party movements. To ward off the historical danger of fascism, the revolutionary party must immediately find a way of actively intervening in these developments, directing them toward the organized class political action of the workers, drawing into the struggle the lower middle classes and carrying through the struggle to the workers revolution which alone can solve the problems of the crisis.

7. From these considerations follows the urgent need of a transitional program to facilitate bridging the gap between the objectively matured revolutionary conditions and the lagging political consciousness of the masses. If in the period of capitalist expansion the welfare of the masses continually lagged behind the development of the productive forces, then under the conditions of capitalist decline resistance to exploitation is impossible without coming into conflict with the very foundations of capitalism. Under the conditions of the social crisis the old forms of revolutionary agitation and propaganda for the socialist goal combined with daily agitation for immediate demands more or less realizable within the framework of capitalism have become inadequate. Even the struggle for the so-called immediate demands is compelled to take on the character of a struggle against the confines of capitalist law-and-order (sit-down). The function of the transitional

program is to bridge the gap between the program of immediate demands and the full program of the proletarian revolution.

8. The transitional program must be bold, decisive and resolute. It must at every stage deepen the class consciousness of the workers and enhance their confidence in their own class organizations and political action. It must provide positive and militant answers to the burning problems with which decaying capitalism and the social crisis relentlessly confront the workers; problems arising from the contrast between the enormous productive capacity of the United States and the increasing pauperization and misery of the masses; problems of the growing danger, as the class struggle sharpens, of the rise of a fascist movement, problems of the struggle against the imminent approach of imperialist war. In the very nature of a transitional program, of course, it cannot in advance be given final and finished form. With the changes in the mass movement and in the state of mind of the workers, the transitional program must correspondingly change, to advance or on occasion to retreat, altering the emphasis and utilization of slogans and shifting tactics through which the program is presented.

9. For the Socialist Workers Party to orient its activity around a transitional program means to enter a decisively new phase in the development of a revolutionary party in this country. It means to concentrate attention and activity principally on the mass movement. It means striving to transform the party from an enlarged propaganda

group to a genuine party of action in the class struggle. It means that the entire work of the party for the next period must revolve around the objective of making our program known to the American masses. It must be carried into the unions and all mass organizations, public meetings, and street corner demonstrations, labor party organizations and Labor's Non-Partisan League. It is primarily a program of agitation and mass action around the agitation.

### III.

Without relinquishing our support also of the struggle for the immediate demands (shorter hours, higher wages, higher relief, social insurance, democratic rights, etc.) but the more effectively to mobilize the workers against the burden of the economic crisis, the danger of fascist violence, and the imminence of imperialist war, the Socialist Workers Party proposes the following as a program of transitional demands for the next period:

#### A: - Struggle Against the Economic Crisis

##### (1) Workers Control of Industry

The capitalist offensive takes the form of wage cutting, ruthless speed-up, the shutting down of plants, the monopolist rise of prices; State-capitalist and bureaucratic schemes of industrial regulation and "planning" threaten the workers with economic serfdom. To counter this capitalist drive and to prepare for their own future management of industry under social ownership - the workers must extend the implications of the sit-down by demanding the right of their own independent audits ~~and~~



and inspection of the corporation books, disclosure of business "secrets", and exposure of all other monopolistic and fraudulent methods whereby Big Business operates for the purpose to shift the costs of the depression and crisis on the workers.

The organizations best fitted to cope with the problems of workers control at the point of production are the shop-committees. Every effort must be exerted to organize the shop committees, which may become organs of dual power in the factory and the nucleus of soviets, as the crisis takes on a revolutionary character in the future. Where these committees already exist as union organs in organized shops, they must be broadened out and infused with militant class consciousness and leadership. It is also necessary to guard against the setting up or transformation of existent shop-committees into substitutes for trade unions as well as against the danger of fake company union employee shop-committees.

(2) Reopen idle Plants

Thousands of plants, mines and factories in the United States are closed or running at small fractions of capacity, thus depriving the workers of the jobs which are their right and products which the masses need. We therefore propose that all idle factories, plants, and mines shall be re-opened and operated under the control of the workers within the given field of industry; the payment of all rent, interest and profit, and provision of capital reserves shall be suspended during such operation; wages shall be paid with the trade union scale as a minimum;

and any necessary financing shall be carried out through the provision of Federal funds.

(3) Expropriation of Separate Industries

Expropriation of the railroads and their operation under workers control without the payment of rent, interest or profit. Expropriation of separate gigantic monopolies in industry and public utilities (gas, electricity, communications) and their operation likewise under workers control, without payment of rent, interest or profit.

(4) Public Works

Both to provide jobs to all those unable to find work in ordinary industry and to supply the needs of the masses, we propose the immediate allotment of twenty billion dollars (one-half the cost to the U.S. of the last war) for a large scale program of useful public works and for low rental modern housing, such rental to be at a figure to cover the cost of upkeep alone, with all other costs covered by public funds; all work done on the public works program to be governed by union standards of hours and wages, not to be less than \$30 per week.

(5) Sliding Scale of Wages

Against increases in the cost of living, we propose to fight under the slogan of a sliding scale of wages. Wage agreements, under a strictly specified minimum, must provide for automatic increase of wages to correspond with increases in prices of consumer goods.

(6) Sliding Scale of Hours

In the struggle against mounting unemployment which has already plunged not less than fifteen million workers

and their families into the abyss of pauperism, the Socialist Workers Party raises the demand for a job and a decent living for every worker. Along with the development of a program of public works and the reopening of closed factories, mines and plants as a part of this program, we propose a sliding scale of hours in public and private industry; that is, the reduction of hours to the point which will permit the assimilation of all the unemployed into public or private industry; the equal division of working hours; and weekly wages for all at not less than the present full-time union rates. Arguments that such a demand cannot be reconciled with the book-keeping system of capitalist industry and the payment of interest, profit and rent, have no validity whatever. What is at stake is the life or death of the million-masses of the workers, the only creative and progressive class in modern society. The "book-keeping" must be reconciled with the life interests of the working class, come what may.

(7) The Farm Problem

Nearly half of all working farmers in the United States have today the status of tenants or sharecroppers, subject to exorbitant rents and to eviction. To protect these farmers against the ravages of the depression and the insecurities of the crisis, we propose a moratorium on all rent payments of any type, the prohibition of evictions, cancellation or tax indebtedness. We further propose expropriation of all lands held by non-operators and their transfer to tenants and sharecroppers. The small farmers on owner operated farms are oppressed by heavy mortgages

owned by the great banks and insurance companies. We therefore propose cancellation of all mortgage indebtedness on all such owner-operated farms.

B \* Struggle Against Fascism

(1) Workers Defense Guard (Workers Militia)

The experience of the class struggle the world over demonstrates that under conditions of the social crisis, the capitalist class increasingly resorts to naked and despotic violence of vigilantism and fascism. If the American working class is not to fall victim to the supine parliamentary cretinism and "constitutional" illusions that overwhelmed large sections of the European labor movement, it can no longer postpone with impunity the tasks of organizing its own militant Workers Defense Guards. Workers Defense Groups are developments of the picket lines, "flying squads", etc. which spontaneously characterize strikes in this country. But the Workers Defense Guards must be permanent units, strongly disciplined with duties extending beyond the strike situation, and progressively assuming the more pronounced political character of a workers militia. Workers Defense groups are the first organized nuclei of the future workers' army.

Systematic organization of Defense Groups can and must begin with the party itself and especially the YPSL. But every effort should be made to draw in sympathetic non-members. The groups organized on party initiative (for defense of party and YPSL public meetings, demonstrations, leaflet distribution, and other working class meetings against fascist, vigilante or Stalinist provocation).

These groups are not a substitute for Workers Defense Guards having a broad mass labor support, but a nucleus, the organization of which the revolutionary party must assume as an immediate task.

C. - Struggle Against War Preparations

The object of the present enormous military and naval budgets of the United States can only be to fight a war in defense and extension of the imperialist interest of American capitalism. We therefore propose (a) the transfer of all war funds to the maintenance of the unemployed (b) that the decision with reference to military or naval action against any other country shall rest with a popular referendum, with all those from the age of eighteen upward eligible to vote (c) immediate withdrawal of all armed forces of the United States from the Far East (d) immediate freedom for all colonies and possessions of the United States (e) abolition of secret diplomacy (f) nationalization under workers control of the armament and munitions industry.

D. - Workers Government

The most general form of the campaign of agitation for the program of transitional demands is the propaganda for the slogan of the Workers Government, a slogan dictated by the catastrophic character of the whole political development of our epoch. The aim of the transitional program is to break the masses away from support of the traditional parties of capitalism, to lead them to independent class politics and the conquest of power. The slogan of the Workers Government summarizes the goal of

the transitional program, the objective of independent class political action, and constitutes the answer to the Stalinist and social-democratic politics of support of the New Deal, the Popular (or "Democratic") Front. We always stress our basic position of principle that only the power of a Soviet government can abolish capitalism and institute planned Socialist economy. We never fail to point to the calamitous failure of the Labor, Social-Democratic and Popular Front Governments as merely forms for the administration of the Capitalist state. We raise the slogan of the Workers Government, in the sense given it by the Bolsheviks in 1917, as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan to assist the experience of the masses.

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Our party alone fully comprehends the depth and scope of the crisis and its revolutionary implications. Our party alone proposes a revolutionary solution of the crisis by our generation. All other political parties either support capitalism or postpone its end to the distant future. Our party is fully aware that on the action of the American working class may rest the whole fate of world civilization.

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AMENDMENT BY CANNON: I propose to change the above slogan of "Workers Government" to "Workers and Farmers Government", as formulated in the general thesis on "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International", and adopted by the Plenum of the National Committee.

THE PROBLEM OF THE LABOR PARTY

THE DECLINE of American capitalism and the social crisis ensuing therefrom have already called forth the greatest trade union organizing campaign in American history, which brought with it a wave of strike struggles unprecedented in scope and revolutionary implications (the sit-down strikes). At the same time the experiences and results of these herculean efforts of the American proletariat have demonstrated the inadequacy of the purely economic struggle to solve even the most pressing immediate problems of the workers. The precipitous decline in economy, as a result of the new crisis, adds new millions to the ranks of the unemployed, cancels out the gains of the strike victories and even threatens the existence of the newly built trade unions. Instinctively sensing the inadequacy of trade unionism alone under these circumstances, the workers have begun to turn in million-masses toward political action. The further development of the crisis is certain to strengthen this tendency.

THE ORGANIZED participation of the workers in politics under the aegis of Labor's Non Partisan League represents a profound departure from the old Gompers school of labor politics, although on the surface the two may appear to be identical. In the past the labor bureaucracy confined itself to "endorsing" this or that "friend of labor" on the capitalist party tickets. In the 1936 presidential elections, and in virtually all municipal and state elections since, we have seen for the first time a systematic and increasingly determined effort to organize and mobilize the political strength of the

workers as a single unit. This new movement, represented by the L.N.P.L., must be characterized as a stage in the development of the labor movement from complete subservience to the political parties of big capital to an independent party of the workers.

THE FACT that the movement as yet remains within the formal framework of the Democratic Party is in part due to the conscious restrictions placed upon it by the bureaucracy and in part to the as yet unclear aims of the masses. On the other hand, the increasing aggressiveness of this movement on the political field, and its mounting demands for more concessions and representation for labor -- an attitude which has already impelled the workers in important local instances to put up independent or semi-independent tickets -- testify to the profound impulse of the masses of the workers toward completely independent political action. This impulse is progressive and must consciously and deliberately be aided at every step by the Socialist Workers Party.

PARALLEL WITH the developing sentiment for an independent party of the workers, and in large measure interfused with it, there is a powerful trend in the direction of a new bourgeois liberal party designed to include and swallow up the incipient movement of the workers for independent labor political action. Under further pressure of the social crisis this trend can and most likely will also gain strength, the present Democratic Party may be split wide open and a new party of the democratic bourgeois front emerge, with the labor bureaucracy occupying a prominent though politically subordinate place. Against such a development, as against the present attempts of the bureaucracy



to subordinate the workers to the Democratic Party, we counterpose the slogan of independent labor political action through a labor party.

At the time of our national convention, we took insufficient account of the new developments in the labor movement, especially in their political aspects, and fell into the error of repeating abstract formulas on the question of the labor party which, in the light of great new developments, had become obsolete. It is necessary now to reconsider the question and to make a radical change in our tactics in regard to the developing labor party movement. Over a period of years we have discussed and debated this question with the opportunists only in the abstract. That could not be otherwise, because neither a labor party nor a formidable movement for its creation was anywhere to be seen. In these discussions we saw only two aspects of the question -- a labor party which did not exist in reality, but which the opportunists sought to suck out of their fingers, or a possible fully developed labor party some time in the future. We now have to gear our practical activity toward a third and hitherto insufficiently appreciated aspect of the question -- namely, a powerful mass movement in the direction of the labor party which has not yet taken a clearly defined shape. We have always said that, confronted with a fully developed labor party, based on the trade unions, we would take a positive attitude toward it and most likely participate in it. We are now confronted with the necessity of concretizing this general point of view and of taking a direct part in the present developing movement for a labor party and of working with all our strength to push it on the road of independence.

THE QUESTION of the attitude toward an existing labor party has never been a question of principle for revolutionary Marxists. No more should our attitude toward a genuine mass movement for a labor party be so considered. In our tactics we have always taken our point of departure from the concrete political situation and the tendencies of its development. Several years ago, before the crisis of 1929 and even later, until the appearance of the CIO, we could have hoped that the revolutionary, that is, the Bolshevick party would develop in the United States parallel to the radicalization of the working class and succeed eventually in becoming the head of it. Under these conditions it would have been absurd to occupy oneself with abstract propaganda in favor of an unheralded "Labor Party."

THE SITUATION since that time, however, has radically changed and it would be inexcusable to close our eyes to it. The powerfully developing trade unions under the conditions of a deepening crisis of capitalism will project themselves all the more irresistibly upon the road of political struggle and upon the road of crystallization into a labor party.

IF THE OFFICIAL leaders of the trade unions in spite of the imperious voice of the situation and the growing pressure of the masses preserve a reserved position on the question of a labor party, it is precisely because the deep social crisis of bourgeois society now imparts to the question of the labor party a considerably greater sharpness than in all preceding periods.

NEVERTHELESS WE can with sufficient assurance predict that the resistance of the bureaucracy will be broken. The movement

in favor of a labor party will continue to grow. A revolutionary organization occupying in relation to this progressive movement a negative or neutrally expectant position will doom itself to isolation and sectarian degeneration.

The Socialist Workers Party, section of the Fourth International, clearly realizes the fact that in virtue of unfavorable historical reasons its own development lagged behind the radicalization of wide layers of the American proletariat and precisely because of this the problem of creating a labor party is placed upon the order of the day through the whole course of development.

CONSEQUENTLY, THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY gives positive and unambiguous support to the labor party movement in general and to all its local manifestations. It supports the affiliation of trade unions to Labor's Non-Partisan League as well as to local units of the movement having an independent or semi-independent form (Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota, American Labor Party, etc.) and, in favorable circumstances, the National Committee authorizes its members to join branches of these bodies based on individual membership.

WHILE THE Social Democrats, Lovestonites, etc. advocate a labor or farmer-labor party with a purely reformist program and more or less confine themselves to unprincipled top combinations under cover of this slogan, -- the Socialist Workers Party advances its program of transitional demands in order to fructify the mass movement in favor of a labor party and lead it in a revolutionary direction.

PRESERVING ITS OWN full organizational and political independence, the Socialist Workers Party carries on systematic

and irreconcilable struggle against the trade union bureaucracy which resists the creation of a labor party, or attempts to convert it into an auxiliary weapon of one of the bourgeois parties. Explaining and propagandizing its program of transitional demands in the trade unions, at meetings, and so forth, the Socialist Workers Party indefatigably exposes on the basis of the living experience of the masses the reformist and pacifist illusions of the trade union bureaucracy and its Social Democratic and Stalinist allies.

WHEN AND HOW the labor party will be formed, what scope and mass base it will acquire in the period ahead and through what stages and splits it will pass, the future will disclose. Defending the labor party from the attack of the bourgeoisie, the Socialist Workers Party does not and will not, however, take upon itself any responsibility for this party. In relation to the labor party in all stages of its development, the Socialist Workers Party occupies a critical position, supports the progressive tendencies against the reactionary, and at the same time irreconcilably criticizes the half-way character of these progressive tendencies. For the Socialist Workers Party the labor party should on the one hand become the arena for recruiting revolutionary elements, on the other a transmissive mechanism for influencing ever wider circles of workers. In its very essence the labor party can preserve progressive significance only during a comparatively short transitional period. The further sharpening of the revolutionary situation will inevitably break the shell of the labor party and permit the SWP to rally around the banner of the Fourth International the revolutionary vanguard of the American proletariat.

## FOR A REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY

By GLEN TRIMBLE

A year and a half ago in September 1936, Comrade Burnham wrote an article for the Socialist Appeal entitled, "For a Revolutionary Socialist Party". A year and a half later he has written another article, this time for the New International, entitled "The Labor Party, 1938".

Before examining the current model, let us look through Comrade Burnham's eyes at the labor party problem of late 1936.

"How do revolutionary Marxists solve such a problem as that of the Labor Party ...? The solution is two fold. We must, first, start with and clarify the fundamental issues of political theory which are involved - theory itself being conceived as simply the generalized experience of the revolutionary movement. Following this, we must apply our theory to the concrete, specific circumstances which confront us.

"Tyler employs another method," says Comrade Burnham. This method is based, among other undesirable things, on "a wish to find a magic shortcut to the revolutionary party". Tyler is thoroughly demolished in the course of the article (and properly so!), but I am here more interested in the positive argument.

Comrade Burnham lays down two "basic considerations" from "the point of view of fundamental theory...first, the nature of the state; and second, the role and function of the revolutionary party." These two points are amplified correctly. The role of the state is that of the "executive committee of the dominant class in society"; that of the revolutionary party "is to act as the conscious, independent, autonomous leader and vanguard of the working class in accomplishing the conquest of power, the overthrow of the bourgeois state, the establishment of the new workers' state and the transition to socialism".

Acceptance or rejection of these two fundamentals is the "decisive dividing line between revolutionary Marxism and reformism," and "applying this test we can readily enough conclude that a Labor Party - any Labor Party - is a reformist party" (emphasis in the original).

"Now, the fundamental position of Marxists toward a Labor Party is determined in the light of its basic, defining nature - by the fact that it is a reformist party. The specific tactics of Marxists toward a Labor party, however, take into account also its special characteristics - namely that it comprises the bulk of the trade unions ... Marxists ... base their interest in Labor parties on the presence of organized labor within them and are not particularly worried over the exact shade of reformism which their programs represent. (emphasis, this time, mine). From this follows the far greater flexibility of the Marxist tactics which permit critical support, affiliation or head on opposition, depending on the concrete circumstances and the given relationship of forces."

Comrade Burnham establishes the propositions that all reformist parties support imperialism; are powerless to defeat war and fascism;

are, in the decline of capitalism, powerless even to secure reforms "of any dimensions"; are anti-revolutionary. Since these things are true, the revolutionary party must "say them, in the trade unions as elsewhere;" it must "if possible, head off and prevent the growth of a Labor party - that is, of one more obstacle in the revolutionary path."

Comrade Burnham is especially anxious to clear up Tyler's pre-occupation with the dangers of isolation and the programmatic errors of Labor parties unrescued by the Marxists. He explains carefully that "a program three-quarters revolutionary is not at all necessarily better than one which is one-half revolutionary; the former may well be more difficult to expose, may look much more like the real thing and therefore constitute a greater obstacle to revolutionary development. If by chance socialists were participating in a programmatic convention of a Labor party, their only duty would be to put forward the full program of revolutionary socialism and, if this were rejected, their task so far as program went would be over."

In the concluding paragraph the Marxist reply to "isolation" is given, "Revolutionists can avoid isolation only through their real strength, the depth of the influence of their ideas, their actual penetration of the mass organizations... all short cuts are more illusion... it is toward this end, and this end alone - the deepening of the influence of the idea of revolutionary socialism and the building of its party - that the energies of every Marxist must be intransigently directed."

Now, before turning from what in truth the "fundamental issues of political theory" to the concretes of 1936 and 1938, there is an aspect of fundamental theory that requires amplification. Comrade Burnham has told us, correctly, that the Marxist position is one of principled opposition to non-Marxist and, therefore, enemy parties, but that that does not preclude certain tactical relationships under certain circumstances. These tactical relations are known in the Marxist movement as maneuvers. Comrade Burnham himself - in 1936 - uses this designation and touches on the conditions justifying the particular maneuvers in question. He says that "under the given conditions (of 1936) - the undeveloped stage of the Labor Party, the lack of preparation of the Socialist Party itself for complex and dangerous maneuvers, the opportunity to expose the methods of reformism by showing how (in this case openly) it works for the preservation of capitalism, etc. - under these conditions the S.P. stands to gain more and risk losing less by a direct independent campaign."

Since now, in 1938, it is precisely complex and dangerous maneuvers which Comrade Burnham places foremost on the immediate agenda of the new born Socialist Workers Party, it is our obligation as Marxists to approach the problem from the point of view of fundamental theory. Let us turn to the "generalized experience", the theoretical conclusions drawn from a full lifetime of experience, by Comrade Trotsky.

#### THE LAWS OF MANEUVERS

The section of THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL AFTER LENIN dealing with "The Maneuverist Character of Revolutionary Strategy" applies

in full to the present problems. That considerations of time, space and personal health prevent my submitting the entire text should not diminish in the slightest the obligation of every serious Marxist to read and reread the text in the light of the present choice before us. I shall cite only the most generalized conclusions and leave the examination and reexamination of the supporting evidence as an absolute responsibility of serious comrades!

"All attempts to apply the method of bureaucratic combinations as being 'more economic' in comparison with the revolutionary struggles in order to solve great questions, have led invariably to disgraceful failures, in addition to which combinationism .... each time broke the spine of the young parties and the young revolutions."

"Once and for all it must be grasped that a maneuver can never decide anything in great matters."

"Every maneuver is by its nature only an episode in relation to the fundamental strategical line of the struggle."

"The import and the limits of a maneuver must always be clearly considered and demarcated. A concession must be called a concession, and a retreat a retreat. It is infinitely less dangerous to exaggerate one's own concessions and retreats than to underestimate them. The vigilance of the class and the organized distrust of our own party must be maintained and not lulled."

"Nothing is so calculated to disintegrate the revolutionary spirit of the proletarian party as unprincipled maneuvering and combinationism behind its back."

"The most important, best established, and most unalterable rule to apply in every maneuver reads: you must never dare to merge, mix, or combine your own party organization with an alien one, even though the latter be most 'sympathetic' today. Undertake no such steps as lead directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination of your party to other parties, or to organizations of other classes, or to constrict the freedom of your own agitation, or your responsibility, even if only in part, for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, let alone kneel before another banner."

"It is the worst and most dangerous thing if a maneuver arises out of the impatient opportunistic endeavor to outstrip the development of one's own party and to leap over the necessary stages of its development (it is precisely here that no stages must be leaped over), by binding, combining, and uniting superficially, fraudulently, diplomatically, through combinations and trickery, organizations and elements that pull in opposite directions. Such experiments, always dangerous, are fatal to young and weak parties."

"In a maneuver, as in a battle, what decides is not strategical wisdom alone (still less the cunning of combinationists) but the relationship of forces. Even a correctly contrived maneuver is, generally speaking, all the more dangerous for a revolutionary party, the younger and weaker the latter is in relation to its enemies, allies and semi-allies. That is why - and we arrive here at a

point which is of paramount importance for the Comintern - the Bolshevik party did not at all begin with maneuvering as a panacea but came to it, grew into it in the measure that it sunk its roots deeply into the working class, became strong politically and matured ideologically." ....

"Not blissful 'optimism' but intransigence, vigilance, revolutionary distrust, and the struggle for every hand's breadth of independence - these are the essential traits of Bolshevism. This is what the communist parties of both the West and the East must begin with. They must first gain the right to carry out great maneuvers by preparing the political and material possibility for realizing them, that is, the strength, the solidity, the firmness of their own organization." ....

"They (the authors of the 1927 draft program for the Comintern) prefer to remain silent on the favorite theme and to leave the leadership of the Comintern a free hand. And this is precisely what must not be permitted. It is necessary to tie the hands of the combinationists and their candidates. This is precisely the purpose the program should serve. Otherwise, it would be superfluous."

The publication of Comrade Burnham's 1938 article in the New International forces me to the conclusion that our Chicago political resolution was at fault in precisely the same respect as was the 1927 program of the Comintern. But I am getting ahead of myself - I have attempted to establish the theoretical postulates upon which a Marxist judgement of the contemporary American Labor Party question must be made. Let us look now at the "concrete, specific circumstances" which confronted us in 1936 and confront us today.

The testimony on 1936 is unanimous, so far as our tendency was concerned. The S.P. was so weak that a Labor Party maneuver would be absurd and suicidal. Appeal articles by Comrades Shachtman, Burnham, myself and others all emphasized that "prospects for a national labor party" were practically nil. Comrade Shachtman cited the blunt refusal of the Minnesota F.L.P. to assume national leadership, the hostility of Labor's Non Partisan League to independent working class political action as instanced in a statement by J.B.S. Hardman, and the decision of what he termed the "privately owned" American Labor Party in New York to bar party affiliations other than those to the A.L.P. All agreed that the sole purpose of such phoney movements as were current was historically reactionary. Comrade Burnham asked in 1936, "For what possible reasons will a Labor Party be started here?" He answers, "It will be - or rather it has been - started precisely to stave off the growth of revolutionary class consciousness, to keep the allegiance of the masses for capitalism when the two old ~~assurances~~ <sup>parties</sup> are wearing out their facility in doing so. Its purpose, both in the minds of its leaders and in its objective social effects, cannot be anything else than to try to stave off the development of revolutionary class consciousness" - and, we might add, the development of the revolutionary party. This was 1936-37.

What of 1938? Comrade Trotsky poses the relationship of forces as a decisive factor. Comrade Burnham omits this consideration entirely from his 1938 article which (omitting the somewhat ambigu-



ous inferences of far more extended maneuvers) clearly and unequivocally calls for the Socialist Workers Party to "sympathetically and critically go through" the Labor party "experience with the workers" -- IN NEW YORK! This is the concrete and immediate NEW proposal which is the heart of Comrade Burnham's article.

### THE RELATION OF FORCES

Surely the relationship of forces is sufficiently relevant to this proposal to merit some sort of consideration from its author. Yet there is none. In 1936 he was convinced that isolation could be avoided only through "real strength", the depth of influence of our ideas, our actual penetration of the mass organizations." Comrade Trotsky measures the justification for even a correct maneuver by the depth of Bolshevik roots in the working class yet this essential question is not even raised, let alone answered!

What, actually, is our party strength - is our spine sufficiently toughened to execute the inevitable twists and turns of an extended labor party maneuver without excess strain or cracking? That is an essential question. The 1938 political resolution estimates that we are engaged in the "transition from a propaganda group to a mass party." That "only in certain localities - and they are not numerous - our party has firm contacts in the labor movement." This estimate is repeated and itemized in both this resolution and that on trade unions. It is essentially correct for our national organization. What of New York? At no time in writing or in discussion in the trade union commission or on the convention floor was New York singled out as one of those localities where trade union roots were substantial. On the contrary it was frankly admitted that in proportion to the size of our own party and of the New York Labor movement our trade union numbers and influence were woefully meagre. Yet it is precisely in New York that Comrade Burnham proposes active participation in the "privately owned" A.L.P. How can such an experiment, in view of the relationship of forces, have any other character than that of unprincipled and destructive attempts at combinationism not only from the top but from the outside? Comrade Burnham does not attempt to answer this question, yet it must be answered.

One thing more needs saying on the matter of relationship of forces. There is no justified parallel on this score between the entry into the S.P. and the proposed entry into any and all Labor or quasi-Labor parties which have a mass following. By definition the latter are both larger and, because they are in large part composed of trade union organizations, have, in the present non-revolutionary situation, definite and substantial ties to the capitalist order. These factors cannot be ignored. Experience proved our ability to meet on more than equal terms the rootless petty bureaucrats of the S.P. Only the most frivolous and superficial approach could place an attempt to wrest the trade union workers from their reformist leaders on the same level.

There is in this connection what seems to me a fundamentally erroneous approach by Comrade Burnham, even so early as 1936 - an error somewhat reflected in the statement of the Minneapolis comrades. Put simply and clearly by Comrade Burnham in 1936 it is as follows. "If the revolutionary party is sufficiently cohesive and also sufficiently large, it would not need to give any kind of support to the Labor party, but could combat it openly and directly in the organizational as

well as the political plane." The converse of this follows obviously, the revolutionary party NOT being sufficient<sup>ly</sup> large or sufficiently cohesive MUST give some kind of support to Labor party! This approach is directly opposite to that of Comrade Trotsky who finds one of the great CRIMES of the Comintern was the loading of complex and dangerous maneuvers on the undeveloped shoulders of the young and small parties. Bluntly, Trotsky sees justification for CORRECT maneuvers for strong and experienced parties but not for weak and inexperienced ones; Burnham sees compulsion for maneuvers for precisely the weak and inexperienced parties. There is no reconciliation of these two points of view. The latter concept is sufficiently widely held in our ranks to deserve a far more extended and adequate discussion than is possible here. It is my conviction that this error stems from failure to understand the vanguard character of the revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation and the total impossibility of any "mass party" save a reformist one in such objective circumstances. In this respect I can find, after earnest and serious search, no essential difference between the approach of Burnham and the approach of Tyler; both are, in Comrade Trotsky's words "attempts to leap over the necessary stages of" the revolutionary party's development.

#### THE APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM

Comrade Burnham's 1936 article is devoted to the APPROACH of Marxists to the Labor party question. His present article neglects the very sound rules he himself laid down and which are quoted at the beginning of this statement. It is true that there are certain vestigial remains of the old propositions but they have, unfortunately, as little relation to the body and destination of his article as have the vestigial toes of a horse to his present means of locomotion. Where they appear they are either unused or serve as the vehicles of "butts" and "thoughts" which end up at the opposite pole.

He begins with the proposition that the present Labor party movement "differs in decisive respects from all the earlier movements", His first reason for this is quite orthodox, "capitalism has entered its stage of decay." Thousands of times Marxists have pointed out that reformism can play a partially progressive role and wrest certain substantial reforms and concessions from a rising and expanding capitalism; but that a declining capitalism makes the revolutionary course and the revolutionary party the only one capable of a progressive role or of wresting substantial concessions - as the "by-products of revolutionary struggle". This, however, is not the conclusion that Comrade Burnham draws. Instead he maintains that rising capitalism provided a base only for "traditional capitalist politics" and that only in decay does it provide the foundations for - a Labor Party. This is an American approach with a vengeance! It was not rising capitalism but the open frontier which delayed the crystallization of class forces in the United States. There was, in other words, an escape to pre-capitalist modes of life. In Europe where this escape was absent or much more difficult, rising capitalism and mass reformist working class parties rose side by side. The latter played a partially progressive role until the ebb of capitalist tide carried them with it into reaction. It is true that there is a base for reformism in decaying capitalism - the role of the defender of decay and betrayal of the working class. But this is not a "different" role, it is a stage so often repeated that glossing it over or aiding it to the slightest degree can only be betrayal. The task and obligation of the revolutionary party is to concentrate all energy on

educating and rallying the working class to "skip over" the quicksand in which the workers mass parties of western Europe have foundered. Yet Comrade Burnham's "approach" is an attempted historical justification so as to make more palatable his subsequent proposal that we "go through" the quicksand with the workers. There is no guarantee or even likelihood that they or we would reach the other side.

He adds two more reasons for "difference" - that the role of the farmers is diminishing and that the workers in the U.S. are beginning to consolidate as a class. True, true - and what mountainous obligations these truths put on the revolutionary party to expand its independent influence, advance its full program, prepare for the revolutionary tasks which these developments draw toward the head of the agenda! Comrade Burnham, however, finds in them justification for an estimate of a serious and deep rooted reformist development which we must prepare to go through with the workers.

### THE ESTIMATE

This is all of the approach. The twofold test - theoretical and applied - of 1936 is omitted entirely. Comrade Burnham now proceeds to an estimate of the current labor party movement. It is hardly surprising that the vast difference in approach leads to a decidedly different estimate. Whereas in 1936 the reactionary label covered the field, now we are told that the movement "from the point of view of the mass of the workers is unequivocally progressive". We are not told whether this categorical decision is arrived at by an historical Marxist, an internationalist, criteria or by a purely atomistic judgement on the individual worker - before and after!

Whereas in 1936 the movement was a transparent device for corraling Communist and Socialist votes for Roosevelt, now this same device - presumably for these same ex-communists and ex-socialists - is a "genuine advance toward fuller class consciousness."

This new view (novel at least for our tendency) is buttressed by the assertion that Labor's Non-Partisan League marks a "radical departure" from the "old Gompers neutrality policy" since it is "one form of labor political action, intermediate between the neutrality policy and a clear-cut reformist labor party". Perhaps the word "old" is the best chosen in this quotation. Comrade Burnham seems unaware that the A.F. of L. abandoned neutrality for the "reward your friends and defeat your enemies" non-partisan (i.e. capitalist partisan) form of labor political action in 1906. If the departure was indeed radical, it was made 32 years ago and hardly justifies a tactical about face between 1936 and 1938. Perhaps it may be argued that the L.N.P.L. is more ambitious, more aggressive, more thoroughly organized. Perhaps, though that requires proof and even then would not constitute either a radical departure or a difference in kind. The actual fact is that the California version of the A.F. of L. apparatus excels the C.I.O. in all these departments, has a knack for picking the winning horses and obtaining minor concessions and favors. It has been doing so for thirty years while radicals remained unimpressed by its radical departure. Just incidentally, Comrade Burnham neglects to tell us WHICH variety of reformist experience, among unfortunately contradictory brands, we should choose when the California comrades embark with the workers to see it through.

To my knowledge the only difference between the L.N.P.L. of 1936 and that of 1938 is that its identity with the traditional A.F. of L. political policy has become clearer with time, experience and the conclusion of the task of coralling "communists" and "socialists" so that the bait of "independent working class political action" is now superfluous and has been largely abandoned. The statements of the leaders of the organization no longer leave any room for illusions on that score. It constitutes a crystallization of class forces only in that it constitutes a recementing under new labels of the alliance between the capitalist class and its labor lieutenants.

Certainly if Comrade Burnham's estimate is true we owe ourselves a confession of grave and stubborn error and other working class parties humble and extended apologies. All of us rejected the progressive estimate and bitterly condemned those who made it. We criticized the Old Guard, the Lovestoneites, the C.P., the Altman and "Clarity" Socialists not only because of other political differences but precisely because of the estimate of the Labor Party as "progressive for the backward workers" and the tactical conclusion of entry as a rallying center for these "leftward moving elements". We used strong and bitter language in condemning this treacherous catering to suicidal illusions. Entry in New York was the occasion for more than one break between tendencies formerly able to live under the same political roof. If for the rank and file workers the A.L.P. was "unequivocally" progressive that fact and the conclusions from it were as true at the inception of the movement as they are now. On this point the others were right, and the Old Guard rightest of all because it made the estimate and acted on it first; we were sadly mistaken. Or were we? The farcical nature of this estimate should be obvious if we come down out of the clouds and look at the actual A.L.P. and the L.N.P.L. under discussion. Who are the left wing elements, some of them so "left" that the "private owners" get quite upset over their "disruption"? Leave out the C.P. and you have them listed in the fourth line of this paragraph. It is their hands we would be holding while we went through the experience of reformism. Comrade Burnham proposes that we hire out as teachers of the unteachable!

#### THE PROPOSAL

And what is it that we are to teach them? "To realize to the maximum its (the Labor Party's) progressive potentialities and minimize so far as possible those that are reactionary." Having begun with a non-Marxist approach, advanced a false estimate, now we arrive at a series of wrong answers. Our task is to make a half revolutionary Labor Party three quarters so. Shades of 1936! As if to dispel all doubts as to the "radical difference" between the 1936 lack of worry over exact shades of reformism and the 1938 preoccupation with just this problem, Comrade Burnham unfolds a whole list of items which should interest us. We are to demand independent candidates "as a conditions for adherence", a "broad, democratic organizational set up," we fight against reactionary planks and push for "specific progressive planks on such questions as war, labor legislation and other social measures", we want criticism and check on elected officials and candidates, we want extension of activities to the non-parliamentary field, we want the trade unions to run the show. This list is painfully familiar to me. I used to call it the conditions or basis of definition of a "genuine" labor party and the pig headed

Trotskyites would tell me I was utopian and that, even if I got what I wanted, the result would mean years of confusion and energy expended in eliminating the obstacles to the revolutionary party which I had helped to create. Now I have learned the sound, solid reasons for that "pig-headedness" and I see no reason for reverting to the errors I have outgrown. Comrade Burnham corrected Tyler on just these points; how can he possibly make the same errors?

His 1936 article is sufficient general answer but I want to take up the question of our advocacy of "independent working class political action" for the Labor party because Comrade Widick also advances this plank. Comrade Burnham in the current article says, correctly, that "the revolutionists are not the originators or initiators of any labor or any other kind of reformist party." I am sure that he would be willing to include "or the builders" of such a party. Yet just three paragraphs later he declares that "Where the Labor Party or Labors Non-Partisan League is up for consideration in the trade unions the job of the revolutionists will be to press for a provision against all support of old party candidates as a condition of adherence." Where then is the opposition to the union's launching into reformist politics? (And exactly this question has arisen in San Francisco). practically this means dropping head-on opposition and FROM THE OUTSET assuming a position of conditional and critical support. For that union you are an originator, and initiator, a builder of the labor party. But this reversal of our Convention position is not all. A Labor Party organizationally (though by no means politically) independent of the capitalist parties is considerably more difficult to expose. Success in your amendment would mean a great service to reformist illusions and a greater disservice to the revolutionary party, Actually you would have originated a Labor Party where only an "inter mediate" - and comparatively transparent - form existed before. Our alternative to all reformist political forms is REVOLUTIONARY independent working class political action through the Socialist Workers Party. To offer anything less is to offer and take the responsibility for less than enough; to inevitably and despite the best intentions mix and confuse both the banners and the workers.

#### CALIFORNIA

This criticism applies with at least equal force to Comrade Burnham's recommendation that "under some circumstances, such as for instance occurred recently in California, it would be correct to support sentiment for a 'trade union candidate' in a local election as against union support for an old party candidate". What are the California circumstances? In Torrance, a small town near Los Angeles dominated by one steel mill, the steel workers were organized as a by product of eastern C.I.O. success in steel. For the first time they got "feel" of their numbers as they looked at each other in union meetings. It occurred to them that they and their families were the majority in the community - why shouldn't they run it? Our one comrade, G. Osborn, didn't know the answer and was inclined toward a rather uncritical sort of support. the Los Angeles comrades were more critical but still for support. The union decided to try and, lo and behold, there was more than aspirant for the various soft town jobs. Each aspirant rallied a personal faction for his candidacy. The union selected a slate. The rejected candidates decided it was a free country and filed anyway. The union was torn by bitter wrangling between purely personal cliques. The election has not yet been held

but already Comrade Osborne is strongly doubtful of the position which Comrade Burnham is confident is correct. It takes no great Marxist to predict the outcome, the "labor" candidates will knock each other off and the capitalists will still run Torrance. Even if they were elected, their new born class consciousness would fade before the practical problems of collecting gravy and getting set for the next time and the capitalists would still run Torrance. In the meanwhile the unequivocally progressive rank and file would have their illusions shattered, the revolutionists have seen no farther than they, so they revert to apathy or aversion to politics in general.

Truly the phenomena of American Labor politics is as old as 1828 and the story of Torrance is just as old. It has been repeated literally thousands of times with unvarying tragedy and monotony. It is the unvariable first reaction of newly organized workers. It was this primitive sort of futile labor politics which led Gompers and thousands of other labor men before and since to disgusted neutrality. Yet Comrade Burnham sees this as a lesser evil to the L.N.P.L. support of capitalist candidates and proposes that we support it. Yet Comrade Osborne and apparently the entire, or at least the majority, group of Los Angeles comrades hold the same position. The most elementary sort of knowledge of the history of the American Labor movement, let alone a genuine Marxist understanding, would have provided a basis for accurate predictions of the result and flat opposition on the basis of that prediction. It seems that we must live through even the most primitive and oftenest repeated working class errors because even we do not have sufficient experience to know that they are errors. And this is the party which Comrade Burnham proposes to launch on complex and infinitely more dangerous maneuvers.

#### OUR AGENDA

So far I have attempted to demonstrate that Comrade Burnham's article and recommendations neglect the decisive question of the relation of forces on which the sanction of even a correct maneuver hinges; that Comrade Burnham's approach, estimate and proposals are in any case not correct; now let us return to a fundamental proposition laid down by Comrade Trotsky, "once and for all it must be grasped that a maneuver can never decide anything in great matters". What are the matters confronting our party in the American section of the world scene? The deepening of the "recession" that is in fact a gigantic and catastrophic paroxysm of capitalism at its heart in the contemporary world. The breathtaking plunge of the nations rulers toward new imperialist war - a matter already preempting first place on the capitalist agenda and on our own. So rapid is this development that there is serious ground for reevaluating even the short term peace perspective advanced in our January resolutions. It now appears certain that even if the 1940 elections do not actually find us in the midst of war, the process will be so far advanced that "national defense", i.e. imperialist war, will overshadow all other political issues. We will be confronted - in truth, are we not ALREADY confronted - with a unanimous rallying of the "labor" and reformist groups in the war camp of Roosevelt. Our banner alone will be raised for revolutionary internationalism. It is necessary to reiterate TODAY this process is already so far advanced that entry into any of the existing "labor" groupings is entry into organizations ALREADY committed to the essentials of capitalist war preparations. The rush toward imperialist war inevitably and inexorably telescopes

the interval remaining for preparation for the . . . first task of our party. An objective revolutionary situation is maturing in the womb of time. Unless we are prepared it will pass and can be reap- proached only through untold tragedy for the American and world's workers.

These are the matters confronting our party. Are they great or small? Are they capable of solution by maneuvers? Will the party reach its vanguard post in the international working class battle line by detours or by the clear revolutionary road? The time is terribly short. Our party is woefully light in the scales of historical responsibility. Our choice on this question will go far toward determining whether we will even begin to measure up. It is not a choice to be made lightly or without the fullest participation of the entire party. The question was not before the party in the pre-convention period. It has not been submitted since. As a member of the national committee I propose that it authorize and instruct the political committee to conduct a thorough party discussion on the basis of all positions now before them or submitted within a definite interval subsequent to the plenum. Under the circumstances decision now by the national committee could only be characterized as unauthorized and demoralizing maneuverism behind the back of the party. I am confident that no such proposal will be advanced or sanctioned by our committee. Let us, all of us, face this issue squarely and in all its aspects. The future health of our party, its responsibility to its class demands no less.

#### ALTERNATIVES

Perhaps from a narrowly pragmatic view of immediate results I should have closed with the last line. However no permanent gain is made through rejection of incorrect proposals. We must attempt to arrive at correct alternatives. I am convinced that the present development is a consequence of a serious weakness in our party work. Since the beginning of the Opposition, the tendency in this country has not succeeded in, or bluntly speaking, seriously undertaken the task of presenting a national face in the parliamentary field. Is this necessary? Lenin thought that it was. It is too often forgotten that this was the MAIN thesis of his advice to the British Communists (his suggestions to them on tactical relations with the Labor Party were distinctly subordinate and vastly different both in content and circumstances to those of Comrade Burnham - but that is another article). Over and over again he stresses the fact that the Bolsheviks considered the parliamentary front so absolutely essential that even during and after the seizure of power they were actively engaged in an all-Russian campaign in that field. He lays down as a fixed rule for all revolutionary parties consistent and serious utilization of all available parliamentary machinery. Now it is true that on paper we have never shared the position held at that time by the British communists. We solemnly declare that election periods provide a major forum for our position and the legislative bodies a tribune for our elected candidates.

Yet in actuality what practical application of these declarations has been made? A few scattered, local campaigns mostly of the write in variety and taken none too seriously either by our own comrades or by the few workers who heard of them. For practical purposes despite our own statements to the contrary, we have conducted ourselves

as did the anti-parliamentary British communists or as do the Woblies in this country. Perhaps our forces in the past made this the only possible course. Perhaps, but that cannot be allowed to continue to be true if we are to pretend to the role of the revolutionary PARTY of the proletariat. As between practicing syndicalism and participating in Labor parties, the latter is the lesser evil - and an evil to which we will succumb either now or later unless we seriously and immediately undertake the real alternative, the arduous task of building our own parliamentary front in the United States.

This involves many difficulties. Many, very many, of our own comrades are as contemptuous of this "extraneous" task as were the British communists. A considerable education and obligation on leadership is involved. The American parliamentary system is geared against success for working class parties. Every means is employed to mechanically guarantee the "eternity of the two (capitalist) party system." So true is this, that I, who made a fairly exhaustive study of this problem some years ago, am convinced that NO WORKING CLASS PARTY can now or in the future gain a national place on the ballot (i.e. in the key states and in the majority of the states) under capitalism. This applies to Labor Parties as well as our own. Does this, then, absolve us from our responsibility? Unfortunately or fortunately it does not. We must face the question of utilization of those party names now on the ballot nationally. With the recent internal sabotage of the Communist Party it has eliminated itself as a national factor on the ballot. There remain the two capitalist parties and the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party leaders are preparing to follow the Communist Party lead unless they can use their place on the ballot as a saleable commodity to the "labor party movement". So far they remain on the ballot in most of the key states, but left to them this will not be true for long. Is this none of our business? Undoubtedly many of our comrades will think so. I do not, and I propose that we prepare serious and adequate plans for contesting the Socialist primaries and attempting to preempt their place on the ballot. I am aware that this proposal is so "radical" a departure that it deserves much fuller argument. However the date of the plenum and my own health demand that I postpone this task. I state my reasons arbitrarily. This will have the negative advantage of PREVENTING independent reformist political action for both the S.P. and the Labor Party, should it turn in that direction, in many key states (providing, of course, that it is successful). This, not the creation or encouragement of obstacles to the revolutionary party, is one of our tasks. Positively and immediately it would provide a far more effective basis for serious campaigning than other alternatives available in the immediate period. If successful it would provide us with the parliamentary face essential to the accomplishment of all our tasks (this abridged handling leaves me open to the charge of reversion to ballot-box socialism. I will have to let Lenin's Left Wing Communism answer). It would finally, open at least the possibility of a legal face in the coming period of war and reaction when much of our work will be forced underground.

Perhaps there is another alternative better than my proposal. My only insistence is that the Labor Party question is bound up with that of the form of our own party's parliamentary work and cannot be settled in any sense permanently without a frank and serious confronting of the latter problem. We must not continue to be practicing syndicalists, we should not take the "easier" Labor party blind alley, we must find the road.



MINORITY STATEMENT

Substitute for section on Labor Party in Thesis of P.C. Majority  
Hal Draper

1. The present social crisis of American capitalism and the revolutionary perspectives which it opens before our party, makes more imperative than ever the presentation of the revolutionary way out to the working class and the building of the revolutionary party in order to bring to its fruition "the rapid and stormy political development of the American masses." Less than ever can any other than the Socialist Workers Party present an answer even to the most immediately pressing needs of the workers. As the crisis sharpens and the looming class battles unroll, the line-up increasingly becomes: the revolutionary party against the field.

2. At the same time, the precipitous decline of American economy tears away the very basis of reform labor politics, brings out in the open its character as an adjunct of capitalism and demonstrates its impotence. Our position on the labor party question has been that in the period of capitalist decline, a labor party can fulfill no progressive role, can solve none of the problems before the workers and merely serves as a means to channelize the workers' aspiration for labor political action back into the fold of capitalist politics and to mobilize the workers behind the coming imperialist war. This applies with especial force at the present juncture when the capitalist decline takes ever more concrete forms. While the movement towards independent political action on the part of large sections of the workers (which to them means a labor party) is a progressive development for those workers, the crystallization of this sentiment in the form of a labor party can only be considered as a reactionary development which will act as a break upon further advancement. There is no long-term perspective of development before the labor party movement; it must too soon--immediately--meet the harsh alternatives which are placed before it: For or against capitalism. At most it can only be a transient phenomenon, ending in disorientation and disillusionment for the masses.

3. It is not at all inevitable that the present political ferment will take the shape of anything which may be called an "independent labor party" even for purposes of labelling. It is even more probable that the outcome will be more in the nature of a bourgeois democratic front, a third-party movement of some type--perhaps through a split in the Democratic Party ranks and a coalition with the LNPL, perhaps through a growth of the LaFollette movement, and it is indeed such a development which is the perspective of the LNPL leaders themselves. Even if the LNPL leaders form an independent party, the tendency will be towards it having all the relevant characteristics of a third party, rather than an independent party of the working class. The perspective of the labor party movement is some variety of reform labor politics to tie the workers to the capitalist kite in one organizational form or another. Nor can we exclude the possibility that the LNPL will continue its present course as a tail to the bourgeois parties, for the coming period (and beyond the coming period lie developments in which the labor party can play still less of a role). In this regard it would be inexcusable to omit from the consideration of our perspectives the factor of the coming imperialist war, and even before its outbreak, of the effect of an approaching war crisis on the growth of chauvinism and the impulse toward national unity.

4. The crystallization of the present politicalization of the workers into the form of a labor party would be essentially a reactionary step. Even if on a local scale or even on a national scale the workers insist on going through this experience on the road of their political education, it is not our business to advocate its formation. The entire energies of the party must be devoted to putting forward the revolutionary way out, not interposing half-way houses and telling the workers to stop over (temporarily) in order to convince themselves that the roof is leaky, the foundations crumbling and that the roof will shortly fall in upon them.

5. This does not mean that we turn our backs upon the pro-labor-party workers in order to punish them for their short-sightedness, that we isolate ourselves entirely from the pro-labor-party workers. It is true, in a certain sense, that a party of extreme revolutionary opposition necessarily "isolates" itself from the mass of politically backward workers by the very revolutionary character of its position. This is precisely why reformists and centrists are wont to call revolutionary Marxists in general, and the Trotskyists in particular, sectarian, because of the "fanatical" intransigence with which they insist on clinging to their revolutionary principles and speaking the truth to the workers even when the current is against them. Thus the outbreak of the next war may find us even more "isolated" from the patriotic masses, deceived by social-chauvinist propaganda. But a Marxist workers party cannot "go along" with the masses at the cost of tabling its political ideas. There is no such short cut to mass revolutionary influence, and in the long run, whatever illusory mass support it may gain immediately, it means the alienation of the best militants, the most class-conscious workers.

6. It is false to believe that the party can advocate a labor party one day in order to get what it can out of it, and then, when the tide turns, reverse its stand without harming its position and authority before the masses. There is a difference between flexibility in tactics based upon an unwavering political line, and the belief that one can swing the working class about behind the seemingly arbitrary turns of a central committee. One cannot advocate a labor party now (i.e., tell the workers that a labor party will do them good in one way or another--this is what advocacy means whether our theses say so or not) and then, when the workers find in practice that this is not true, turn and say that we never believed it anyhow.

7. Among those who favor advocating a labor party, one section refutes the other. Some say: a labor party is inevitable (the majority thesis), therefore we advocate it too in order to go along with the movement to develop it and raise it to a revolutionary political level. Another section says: the labor bureaucrats will (probably) block the formation of an independent labor party because they want to play around with the capitalist politicians; therefore we advocate a labor party in order to set the workers in opposition to their official leadership, by raising a demand which while it cannot actually be achieved, seems practicable to the masses. This argument could just as well have been made five years ago (and it was, but not by us--see Gus Tylor's articles on the labor party question). One might just as well put forward the slogan raised by the French centrists (Pivert): For a People's Front...of Action, without the Radical Socialists. And it is true that this slogan put the centrists partially in opposition to the official labor factors; but their propaganda merely served to strengthen the hold of the People's Front idea and

confused the essential issues. But Pivert's slogan at least had the "advantage" that it was organically impossible for it to be realized, being a contradiction in terms; while it is not at all excluded that the Lowises and Hillmans (especially if sufficiently pressed from below and in order to maintain their hold upon workers disillusioned by capitalist party politics and pressing ahead to independent political action) may themselves run around in front of the workers and place themselves at the head of an independent "labor" party. It would not be the Lowises and Hillmans who would be left holding the bag.

8. What concretely should the line of the party be in meeting the labor party issue as it is raised today?

(1) The party must, in its press, in its general agitation and propaganda, concentrate upon proving concretely how the labor parties and LNPL act contrary to the interests of the working class, fight the illusion that the labor party will benefit the masses in any way. By posing our transitional program and immediate demands before the labor parties and labor-party movements, it must demonstrate how these labor politicians refuse to meet the most crying immediate interests of the working class. The lessons it must draw are the need for the mass action of the workers to realize the transitional program, and flowing from this, the need for revolutionary organization. It is 100% correct to utilize our immediate program for this transitional period in order to push the pro-labor-party workers into collision with their loaders, and for this we utilize not only the general agitation of our party but also every vantage point within the labor party movement; but for this it is not necessary to commit the party to advocating a labor party.

(2) Within the trade unions, where we face great or even overwhelming labor party sentiment (remember: we may soon have to face overwhelming pro-war sentiment from the same elements), we do not cease to tell the truth: i.e., we state our opinion of the labor party and warn the workers of the futility and disillusionment which it will bring. But they do not agree with us? they believe a labor party will help them get what they want? Very well, then let us go together through the experience of trying to use it as an instrument of working-class struggle. Let us insist that it put forward independent labor candidates in opposition to the two old parties (and to such candidates the SWP may give critical support), there is the transitional program, etc. The Lowises want to endorse the Democratic candidates in Pennsylvania? Let us run Kennedy independently, since you do ~~not~~ believe us, and see what happens.

It is here that the matter of flexible tactics in concrete situations becomes relevant--as long as our basic position on the labor party remains in the clear. It is impossible to shape a thesis-formula to meet all situations. That is the business of a leadership which has not been overtaken by the very crisis it analyzes.

---To all this, someone will say: This approach is ineffective; it won't get us anywhere; that's what we've been doing and look where we are. Without taking up the question of how effective it can be, we regret that we can give no magic formulas to those seekers of the philosopher's stone. It is a hard fact, there is no substitute for building a revolutionary party.

(NOTE: This resolution was necessarily elaborated hurriedly and without any discussion with other comrades who hold similar views, due to my absence from New York and inability to keep in touch with developments in the P.C. It is a rough draft on the basis of which matters of omission and formulation can be further elaborated.--H.D.)

DISCUSSION WITH CRUX ON "THE DEATH AGONY OF CAPITALISM"

(Stenographer's note: This is an extremely rough draft of a conversation with Crux. Due to the press of his other interests, he was unable to correct his statements as he usually does before mailing them.)

Crux: It is very important to make precise some points of view concerning the program in general. How can a program be built consistently? Some comrades say that this program draft in some parts is not sufficiently adequate to the state of mentality, the mood of the American workers. Here we must ask ourselves if the program should be adapted to the mentality of the workers or to the present objective economic and social conditions of the country. This is the most important question. We know that the mentality of every class of society is determined by objective conditions, by the productive forces, by the economic state of the country, but this determination is not immediately reflected. The mentality is in general backward, delayed, in relation to the economic development. This delay can be short or long. In normal times when the development is slow, in a long line, this delay cannot produce catastrophic results. To a great extent this delay signifies that the workers are not equal to the tasks put before them by objective conditions; but in times of crisis this delay may be catastrophic. In Europe, for example, it took the form of Fascism. Fascism is the punishment for the workers when they fail to take power. Now the United States enters into an analogous situation with analogous dangers of catastrophe. The objective situation of the country is in every respect and even more than in Europe ripe for Socialist Revolution and Socialism, more ripe than any other country in the world. The political backwardness of the American working class is very great. This signifies that the danger of a fascist catastrophe is very great. This is the point of departure for all our activity. The program must express the objective tasks of the working class rather than the backwardness of the workers. It must reflect society as it is and not the backwardness of the working class. It is an instrument to overcome and vanquish the backwardness. That is why we must express in our program the whole acuteness of the social crisis of the capitalist society, including in the first line the United States. We cannot postpone, mollify objective conditions which don't depend upon us. We cannot guarantee that the masses will solve the crisis, but we must express the situation as it is, and that is the task of the program.

Another question is how to present this program to the workers. It is more a pedagogical task and question of terminology in presenting the actual situation to the workers. Politics must be adapted to the productive forces, that is, the high development of the productive forces, the paralyzing of these productive forces by capitalist forms of property, the increasing unemployment which is becoming deeper and deeper --

the greatest social plague. The productive forces cannot develop any longer. Scientific technology develops, but the material forces are declining. It signifies that society becomes poorer and poorer, the number of unemployed greater and greater. The misery of the masses deepens, the difficulties become greater and greater for the bourgeoisie and the workers; the bourgeoisie has no other solution except fascism, and the deepening of the crisis will force the bourgeoisie to abolish the remnants of democracy and replace them with fascism. The American proletariat will be punished for their lack of cohesion, will power, courage, by a fascist school for twenty or thirty years. With an iron whip the bourgeoisie will teach the American workers their tasks. America is only a tremendous repetition of European experience. We must understand this.

This is serious, comrades. It is the perspective for the American workers. After the victory of Hitler when Trotsky wrote a pamphlet, "Whither France?" the French social-democrats laughed. "France is not Germany." But before the victory of Hitler he wrote pamphlets warning the German workers and the social-democrats laughed, "Germany is different from Italy." They paid no attention. Now France comes nearer each day to a fascist regime. The same is absolutely true for the United States. America is fat. This fat from the past permits Roosevelt his experiments, but this is only for a time. The general situation is totally analogous; the danger is the same. It is a fact that the American working class has a potty bourgeois spirit, lacks revolutionary solidarity, is used to a high standard of life, and the mentality of the American working class corresponds not to the realities of today but to memories of yesterday.

Now the situation is radically changed. What can a revolutionary party do in this situation? In the first line give a clear honest picture of the objective situation, of the historic tasks which flow from this situation irrespective as to whether or not the workers are today ripe for this. Our tasks don't depend on the mentality of the workers. The task is to develop the mentality of the worker. That is what the program should formulate and present before the advanced workers. Some will say: good, the program is a scientific program; it corresponds to the objective situation but if the workers won't accept this program, it will be sterile. Possibly. But this signifies only that the workers will be crushed since the crisis can't be solved any other way but by the Socialist Revolution. If the American worker will not accept the program in time he will be forced to accept the program of fascism. And when we appear with our program before the working class we cannot give any guarantees that they will accept our program. We cannot take responsibility for this. . . we can only take the responsibility for ourselves. We must tell the workers the truth, then we will win the best elements. Whether these best elements will be capable of guiding the working class, leading it to power, I don't know. I hope that they will be able, but I cannot give

the guarantee. But even in the worst case, if the working class doesn't sufficiently mobilize its mind and its strength at present for the Socialist Revolution, -- even in the worst case, if this working class falls as a victim to fascism, the best elements will say, "We were warned by this party; it was a good party." And a great tradition will remain in the working class.

This is the worst variant. That is why all the arguments that we cannot present such a program because the program doesn't correspond to the mentality of the workers are false. They express only fear before the situation. Naturally if I close my eyes I can write a good rosy program that everybody will accept. But it will not correspond to the situation, and the program must correspond to the objective situation. I believe that this elementary argument is of the utmost importance. The mentality of the class of the proletariat is backward but the mentality is not such a substance as the factories, the mines, the railroads, but is more mobile and under the blows of the objective crisis, the millions of unemployed, it can change rapidly. At present the American proletariat also enjoy some advantages because of their political backwardness. It seems a bit paradoxical but nevertheless it is absolutely correct. The European workers have had a long past of social-democratic and Comintern tradition and these traditions are a conservative force. Even after different party betrayals the worker remains loyal because he has a feeling of gratitude to that party which awakened him for the first time and gave him a political education. This is a handicap for a new orientation. The American workers have the advantage that in their great majority they were not politically organized, and are only beginning now to be organized into trade unions. This gives to the revolutionary party the possibility of mobilizing them under the blows of the crisis. What will the speed be? Nobody can foresee. We can only see the direction. Nobody denies that the direction is a correct one. Then we have the question, how to present the program to the workers? It is naturally very important. We must combine politics with mass psychology and pedagogy, build the bridge to their minds. Only experience can show us how to advance in this or that part of the country. For some time we must try to concentrate the attention of the workers on one slogan: sliding scale of wages and hours.

The empiricism of the American workers has given political parties great success with one or two slogans, single tax, bi-metallism, they spread like wild fire in the masses. When they see the panacea fail then they wait for a new one. Now we can present one which is honest, part of our entire program, not demagogic, but which corresponds totally to the situation. Officially we now have 13, maybe 14 million of unemployed; in reality about 16 to 20 million, and the youth are totally abandoned to misery. Mr. Roosevelt insists on public works. But we insist that this, together with mines, railroads, etc., absorb all the people. And that every person should have the possibility to live in a decent manner not lower than now, and we ask that Mr. Roosevelt with his brain

trust propose such a program of public works that everyone capable of working can work at decent wages. This is possible with a sliding scale of wages and hours. Everywhere we must discuss how to present this idea, in all localities. Then we must begin a concentrated campaign of agitation so that everybody knows that this is the program of the Socialist Workers Party. I believe that we can concentrate the attention of the workers on this point. Naturally this is only one point. In the beginning this slogan is totally adequate for the situation. But the other can be added as the development proceeds. The bureaucrats will oppose it. Then if this slogan becomes popular with the masses, Fascist tendencies will develop in opposition. We will say that we need to develop defense squads. I think in the beginning this slogan ( Sliding Scale of Wages and Hours) will be adopted. What is this slogan? In reality it is the system of work in socialist society. The total number of workers divided into the total number of hours. But if we present the whole socialist system it will appear to the average American as Utopian, as something from Europe. We present it as a solution to this crisis which must assure their right to eat, drink, and live in decent apartments. It is the program of socialism but in very popular and simple form.

Question: How will the campaign be conducted?

Crux: The campaign will go somewhat in this fashion: You begin agitation, say in Minneapolis. You win one or two unions to the program. You send delegates to other towns to the respective unions. When you have come out with this idea from the party to the unions you have won half of the fight. You send it to New York, to Chicago, etc., to the corresponding unions. When you have some success you convoke a special congress. Then you agitate that they force the bureaucrats of the trade union to take a position for or against. A wonderful opportunity for propaganda opens up.

Question: Can we actually realize the slogan?

Crux: It is easier to overthrow capitalism than to realize this demand under capitalism. Not one of our demands will be realized under capitalism. That is why we are calling them transitional demands. It creates a bridge to the mentality of the workers and then a material bridge to the Socialist Revolution. The whole question is how to mobilize the masses for struggle. The question of the division between the employed and the unemployed comes up. We must find ways to overcome this division. The idea of a fixed class of unemployed, a class of pariahs -- such an idea is absolutely the psychological preparation for fascism. Unless this division is overcome in the trade unions, the working class is doomed.

Question: Many of our comrades fail to understand that the slogans cannot be realized.

Crux: It is a very important question. This program is not



a new invention of one man. It is derived from the long experience of the Bolsheviks. I want to emphasize that it is not one man's invention, that it comes from long collective experience of the revolutionaries. It is the application of old principles to this situation. It should not be considered as fixed like iron but flexible to the situation. The revolutionaries always consider that the reforms and acquisitions are only a by-product of the revolutionary struggle. If we say that we will only demand what they can give, the ruling class will give only one tenth or none of what we demand. When we demand more and can impose our demands, the capitalists are compelled to give the maximum. The more extended and militant the spirit of the workers, the more is demanded and won. They are not sterile slogans; they are means of pressure on the bourgeoisie, and will give the greatest possible material results immediately. In the past during an ascending period of American capital the American workers won on no more than the basis of empirical struggle, strikes, etc. They were very militant. Given the fact that capital was ascending, capitalism was interested in satisfying the American workers. Now the situation is totally different. Now the capitalists have no prospect of prosperity. They are not afraid of strikes due to the large number of unemployed. That is why the program must embrace and unite both parts of the working class. The sliding scale of wages and hours does just that.

May 19, 1938

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(Internal use of the 4th International only)

DISCUSSION WITH CRUX UPON THE LABOR PARTY -- May 31, 1938

Question: In the ranks of our party the question which seems most disputed in relation to accepting the program of Transitional Demands is that dealing with the Labor party in the United States. Some comrades maintain that it is incorrect to advocate the formation of a labor party, holding that there is no evidence to indicate any widespread sentiment for such a party, that if there were such a party in process of formation, or even widespread sentiment then we would meet it with a program that would give to this movement a revolutionary content -- but in view of the lack of such objective factors this part of the thesis is opportunistic. Could you clarify this point further?

Crux: I believe that it is necessary to remind ourselves of the most elementary facts from the history of the development of the workers' movement in general and the trade unions in particular. In this respect we find different types of development of the working class in different countries. Every country has a specific type of development but we classify them in general, and in Austria and in Russia especially.

In Russia the workers' movement began as a political movement, as a party movement. That was the first step. The Social Democracy in its first stage hoped that the socialist reconstruction of society was near but it happened that capitalism was strong enough to last for a time. A long period of prosperity passed and the Social Democracy was forced to organize trade unions. In such countries as Germany, Austria, and especially Russia where trade unions were unknown, they were initiated, constructed, and guided by a political party, the Social Democracy.

Another type of development is that disclosed in the Latin countries, in France, and especially in Spain. Here the party movement and the trade union movement are almost independent of one another and under different banners, even to a certain degree antagonistic to one another. The party is a parliamentary machine. The trade unions are to a certain degree in France -- more in Spain -- under the leadership of anarchists.

The third type is provided by Great Britain, the United States, and more or less by the dominions. England is the classic country of trade unions. They began to build trade unions at the end of the 18th century, before the French Revolution, and during the so-called industrial revolution. (In the United States during the rise of the manufacturing system.) In England the working class didn't have its independent party. The trade unions were the organizations of the working class, in reality the organization of the labor aristocrats, the higher strata. In England there was an aristocratic proletariat, at least in its upper strata, because the British bourgeoisie, enjoying almost monopoly control of the world market, could give a small part of the wealth to the working class and so absorb part of the national income. The trade unions were adequate to abstract

that from the bourgeoisie. Only after a hundred years did the trade unions begin to build up a political party. This is absolutely contrary to Germany or Austria. There the party awakened the working class and built up the trade unions. In England the trade unions after centuries of existence and struggle were forced to build up a political party.

What were the reasons for this change? It was due to the complete decline of English capitalism which began very sharply. The English party is only a couple of decades old, coming into prominence especially after the World War. What is the reason for this change? It is well known that it was due to the abolishing of England's monopoly control of the world market. It began in the eighties of the 19th century with the competition of Germany and of the United States. The bourgeoisie lost its ability to give the leading strata of the proletariat a privileged position. The trade unions lost the possibility to improve the situation of the workers and they were pushed onto the road of political action because political action is the generalization of economic action. Political action generalizes the needs of the workers and addresses them not to the parts of the bourgeoisie but to the bourgeoisie as a whole organized in the state.

Now in the United States we can say that the characteristic features of English development are presented in even more concentrated form in a shorter period because the whole history of the United States is shorter. Practically, the development of the trade unions in the United States began after the Civil War but these trade unions were very backward even compared with the trade unions of Great Britain. To a great degree they were mixed trade unions of employers and employes, not fighting, militant trade unions. They were sectional and tiny. They were based on the craft system not according to industry, and we see that it is only during the last two or three years that the genuine trade unions developed in the United States. This new movement is the C.I.O.

What is the reason for the appearance of the C.I.O.? It is the decay of American capitalism. In Great Britain the beginning of the decay of the capitalist system forced the existing trade unions to unite into a political party. In the United States the same phenomenon -- the beginning of the decline -- produced only the industrial trade unions, but these trade unions appeared on the scene only in time to meet the new chapter of the decline of capitalism, or -- more correct -- we can say that the first crisis of 1929-1933 gave the push and ended in the organization of the C.I.O. But scarcely organized, the C.I.O. meets the second crisis, 1937-1938 which continues and deepens.

What does this fact signify? That it was a long time in the United States before the organization of trade unions but now that genuine trade unions exist, they must make the same evolution as the English trade unions. That is, on the basis of declining capital, they are forced to turn to political action. I believe that this is the most important fact of the whole matter.

The question reads, "there is no evidence to indicate any widespread sentiment for such a party." You will remember that when we discussed this question with other comrades there were some divergences on this question. I cannot judge whether sentiment for a Labor Party exists or not because I have no personal observations or impressions, but I do not find it decisive as to what degree the leaders of the trade unions or the rank and file are ready or inclined to build a political party. It is very difficult to establish objective information. We have no machine to take a referendum. We can measure the mood only by action if the slogan is put on the agenda. But what we can say is that the objective situation is absolutely decisive. The trade unions as trade unions can have only a defensive activity, losing members and becoming more and more weak as the crisis deepens, creating more and more unemployed. The treasury becomes poorer and poorer, the tasks bigger and bigger while their means smaller and smaller. It is a fact: we cannot change it. The trade union bureaucracy becomes more and more disoriented, the rank and file more and more dissatisfied and this dissatisfaction becomes greater and greater the higher were their hopes in the C.I.O., and especially in view of the unprecedented growth of the C.I.O. -- in two or three years 4,000,000 fresh people on the field facing objective handicaps which cannot be eliminated by the trade unions. In this situation we must give an answer. If the trade union leaders are not ready for political action we must ask them to develop a new political orientation. If they refuse we denounce them. That is the objective situation.

I say here what I said about the whole program of transitional demands. The problem is not the mood of the masses but the objective situation, and our job is to confront the backward material of the masses with the tasks which are determined by objective facts and not by psychology. The same is absolutely correct for this specific question on the Labor Party. If the class struggle is not to be crushed, replaced by demoralization then the movement must find a new channel and this channel is political. That is the fundamental argument in favor of this slogan.

We claim to have Marxism or Scientific Socialism. What does "Scientific Socialism" signify in reality. It signifies that the party which represents this social science, departs, as every science, not from subjective wishes, tendencies, or moods but from objective facts, from the material situation of the different classes and their relationships. Only by this method can we establish demands adequate to the objective situation and only after this can we adapt these demands and slogans to the given mentality of the masses. But to begin with this mentality as the fundamental fact would signify not a scientific but a conjunctural, demagogic, or adventurist policy.

One can ask why we didn't foresee this development five, six, seven years ago? Why did we declare during the past period that we were not willing to fight for this slogan of the Labor Party? The explanation is very simple. We were absolutely sure, we Marxists, the initiators of the American movement for the Fourth International, that world capitalism had entered into a period of decline. That is the period when the working class

is objectively educated and moves subjectively, preparing for the social revolution. The direction was the same in the United States, but the question of direction is not sufficient. The other question is the speed of its development; and in this respect, in view of the strength of American capitalism, some of us, and myself among them, imagined that the ability of American capitalism to resist against the destructive inner contradictions would be greater and that for a certain period American capitalism might use the decline of European capital to cover a period of prosperity before its own decline. How long a period? Ten to thirty years one could say? Anyway I personally didn't see that this sharp crisis or series of crisis would begin in the next period and become deeper and deeper. That is why eight years ago when I discussed this question with American comrades I was very cautious, I was very cautious in my prognosis. My opinion was that we couldn't foresee when the American trade unions would come into a period where they would be forced into political action. If this critical period started in ten to fifteen years, then we, the revolutionary organization, could become a great power directly influencing the trade unions and becoming the leading force. That is why it would be absolutely pedantic, abstract, artificial to proclaim the necessity for the Labor Party in 1930 and this abstract slogan would be a handicap to our own party. That was at the beginning of the preceding crisis. Then that this period would be followed by a new crisis even more deep with an influence five to ten times more profound because it is a repetition!

Now we must not reckon by our prognosis of yesterday but by the situation of today. American capitalism is very strong but its contradictions are stronger than capitalism itself. The speed of decline came at American speed and this created a new situation for the new trade unions, the C.I.O. even more than the A.F. of L. In this situation it is worse for the C.I.O. than the A. F. of L. because the A. F. of L. is more capable of resistance due to its aristocratic base. We must change our program because the objective situation is totally different from our former prognosis.

What does this signify? That we are sure the working class -- the trade unions will adhere to the slogan of the Labor Party? No, we are not sure that the workers will adhere to the slogan of the Labor Party. When we begin the fight we cannot be sure of being victorious. We can only say that our slogan corresponds to the objective situation and the best elements will understand and the most backward elements who don't understand will be compromised.

In Minneapolis we cannot say to the trade unions you should adhere to the Socialist Workers Party. It would be a joke even in Minneapolis. Why? Because the decline of capitalism develops ten -- a hundred times faster than the speed of our party. It is a new discrepancy. The necessity of a political party for the workers is given by the objective conditions, but our party is too small with too little authority in order to organize the workers into its own ranks. That is why we must say to the workers, the masses, you must have a party. But we

cannot say immediately to these masses, you must join our party. In a mass meeting 500 would agree on the need for a labor party, only 5 agree to join our party, which shows that the slogan of a Labor Party is an agitational slogan. The second slogan is for the more advanced.

Should we use both slogans or one? I say both. The first, independent Labor Party, prepares the arena for our party. The first slogan prepares and helps the workers to advance and prepares the path for our party. That is the sense of our slogan. We say that we will not be satisfied with this abstract slogan which even today is not so abstract as 10 years ago because the objective situation is different. It is not concrete enough. We must show to the workers what this party should be, an independent party, not for Roosevelt or La Follette, a machine for the workers themselves. That is why on the field of election it must have its own candidates. Then we must introduce our transitional slogans, not all at once, but as occasion arises, first one and then the other. That is why I see only a psychological reason. Our comrades in fighting against Lovestoneites wanted our own party and not this abstract party. Now it is disagreeable. Naturally the Stalinists will say we are Fascists, etc., but it is not a principled question. It is a tactical question. To Lovestone it will seem that we lose face before the Lovestoneites, but this is nothing. We orient not according to Lovestone but according to the needs of the working class. I believe that even from the point of view of our competition with the Lovestoneites it is a plus and not a minus. In a meeting against a Lovestoneite I would explain what our position was and why we changed. "At that time you Lovestoneites attacked us. Good. Now in this question which was so important to you we have changed our mind. Now what do you have against the Fourth International?" I am sure we will prepare a split in this manner among the Lovestoneites. In this sense I see no obstacles.

Before finishing -- a correction in the formulation of the question: The Labor Party proposal is not a part of the program of transitional demands but is a special motion.

Question: In a trade union does one advocate a "labor party," vote for it?

Crux: Why not? In the case of a trade union where the question comes up. I will get up and say that the need for a Labor Party is absolutely proved by all the events. It is proved that economic action is not enough. We need political action. In a union I will say what counts is the content of the Labor Party, that is why I reserve something to say about the program, but I will vote for it.

Question: The workers seem absolutely apathetic toward a labor party; their leaders are doing nothing and the Stalinists are for Roosevelt.

Crux: But this characteristic of a certain period where there is no program. Where they don't see the new road. It is abso-

\* I see absolutely no justification for not accepting this  
^ slogan.

lutely necessary to overcome this apathy. It is absolutely necessary to give a new slogan.

Question: Some comrades have even collected figures tending to prove that the labor party movement is actually declining among the workers.

Crux: There is a major line and then minor oscillations as for example the moods in the C.I.O. First aggressiveness. Now in the crisis the C.I.O. appears 1,000 times more dangerous than before to the capitalists, but the leaders are afraid to break with Roosevelt. The masses wait. They are disoriented, unemployment is increasing. It is possible to prove that the sentiment has decreased since a year ago. Possibly the Stalinist influence adds to this but this is only a secondary oscillation and it is very dangerous to base ourselves upon the secondary oscillations since in a short time the major movement becomes more imperative and this objective necessity will find its subjective expression in the heads of the workers, especially if we help them. The party is a historic instrument to help the workers.

Question: Some of the members who came from the Socialist Party complain that at that time they were for a Labor Party and were convinced in arguing with the Trotskyists that they were wrong. Now they must switch back.

Crux: Yes, it is a pedagogical question, but it is a good school for the comrades. Now they can see dialectical development better than before.

(Stenographer's note: The above transcript is a very rough draft unchecked by the participants.)

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