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SPEECH AT THE 16TH CONVENTION OF THE SWP

by James P. Cannon

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In the intervals between sessions a number of comrades have spoken to me about this convention in comparison with others I have seen in the past, which are quite a few. All conventions are important. They are all milestones in the history of the movement. Conventions are the place where the party comes together and brings its collective thought to bear on the problems of the struggle. There is no substitute for that.

Each convention is like a separate personality; each is different from the others. In the pioneer days of American communism the conventions preoccupied themselves with programmatic questions. For days, sometimes for weeks, in continuous sessions the conventions discussed nothing but the program. The program was considered and debated line by line. There was a reason for that. The program is what you begin with, and there is no point in discussing secondary questions until the program is agreed on.

I recall conventions which ended in splits and others which marked unifications and healing of previous splits. Other conventions were devoted to special questions which had arisen in the course of the struggle, such as the Russian question, trade union question, Negro question. We had a convention two years ago in which the dominant feature was the undertone of a coming struggle which hadn't yet broken through to the surface. The real debate began after the convention and was concluded by the 25th Anniversary Plenum.

THE SPECIFIC TASK OF THE CONVENTION

The present convention has its own special characteristics as a convention with a strictly limited aim and purpose. There is no question of program because there are no differences between us on basic program. There are no strategical questions -- our strategical road is marked out and agreed on. As far as the discussion has disclosed, there are no real differences among us on any important question of the class struggle. This is a convention of orientation in a new situation -- no more than that. It has been devoted to an analysis of the present conjuncture, to an examination of what is really taking place just now at this moment and what we can foresee in the next period. From that, we have tried to arrive at a precise estimation of the party tasks which flow from our analysis.

As has been decided, we are not finishing the exploration of the subject here, but we have made a very good beginning. The motion you have adopted provides that the draft resolution -- the second resolution, not the first -- is to be edited and amended by the Political Committee in the light of the discussion. Then the draft is to be submitted to the party for further discussion, for further clarification. The adopted motion further provides that the final resolution, which will undertake to fix the analysis of the conjuncture and the definition of our tasks more precisely, is to be approved by the next plenum of the National Committee.

In the meantime, all amendments and improvements will be duly considered. But the main line has been established here. It follows that the discussion in the party in the ensuing period will

be even more restricted, limited to the analysis of the perspective and the precise definition of the tasks, as already outlined in the adopted resolution. This coming discussion in the party will be a political discussion in the narrow sense of the term, dealing specifically not with program, not with separate questions, however important and interesting they may be, but with the political conjuncture right now before us and the next perspectives.

The outlook of every revolutionary party, including our own, is conditioned by the premise that we live in the epoch of the death agony of capitalism and the birth pangs of a new socialist world order. In such an epoch there can be no real stability anywhere; explosions are liable to occur at any time. Our strategical concepts anticipate them. But we do not map our tactical course for the immediate period before us on the calculation of explosions which we cannot foresee at the moment. We are always ready for sharp changes, but we regulate our work by what we see now.

In the final resolution we will make it clear that we are laying down a perspective for what we see directly ahead. The situation may be changed in days or months or in a year or two. That must be stated in the resolution more clearly. But, at the same time, we cannot leave open the question of what's going to happen in the period immediately before us and drift without a policy. We have to base our tactical prescriptions on present realities. We cannot allow the party to stumble along, without any direction from the convention as to what our press should say in the next period.

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You have noticed that the second draft resolution calls for a moderation of our campaigning activities, a restriction of our immediate aims, and a regulation of our actions in accordance with the slowing down of the class struggle as we see it. Is that the same program the Cochranites advanced? Not at all, although there are some superficial resemblances.

It is quite true that the main burden of our work in the next period will be propagandistic rather than agitational. We will not plunge into actions, or even into campaigns of agitation, for which the present development of the class struggle does not provide the conditions. But we conduct propaganda as a party, with the object of developing it into a party of agitation and eventually of action. The Cochranites wanted to liquidate the party. That's the difference.

A mere propaganda group can continue to revolve in a circle for 50 years and never once get out of it. The difference between the founders of American Communism, and other tendencies of the movement at the time was not that we Leninists were a party of great political action and others were propaganda groups. That wasn't the difference. We were all propaganda groups; the primary activity of all of us was propaganda. But the Leninists were a party of propaganda that was determined to become a party of agitation and action. The SWP is such a party today. It is not the nature of its activity at the moment that determines the character of a party but what it is striving to become. We are striving to become a party fit to lead a revolution, and if we begin with the simplest tasks of propaganda it is designed as preparation for the next steps and the next steps after them.

I have heard that some comrades feel a little uneasy about the admission of error made by the reporters. To be sure, that is an inconvenient business. In the 26 years of our party's existence we haven't had many errors to admit. If we have failed to become a mass party yet it was because of objective difficulties and in no case because of our own political mistakes. It sort of hurts our pride to admit one now -- even though the mistake wasn't so great and didn't do enough damage for the party members as a whole to notice it. The party leaders had to detect just the slightest error in direction, and to catch it in time, and to call it to the attention of the party, in order for it to become a subject of discussion here.

We're not concerned with the glossing over of errors in the Stalinist fashion. You know, the Stalinists make more changes, and more rapid and drastic changes, than any party in history. But they never say: "We made a mistake." They always say: "The situation has changed." We should be more precise and more honest. We might explain things by saying there has been a change in the conjuncture. That is obviously the case, and if we wanted to be slick and dishonest we could probably get away with just that. But the full truth is, there has been a change in the conjuncture which we were a little slow to recognize, and we have to correct ourselves accordingly. That's about the size of the mistake. And we should define the mistake precisely, without exaggerating it and making too much out of it.

THE ANTI-McCARTHY CAMPAIGN

From this standpoint, certain aspects of the anti-McCarthy campaign require criticism and correction. Was the campaign against McCarthyism right or wrong? Well, here I think it is best to give a "dialectical" answer. It was both right and wrong. The analysis of McCarthyism was correct. The second resolution which is before you contains the same analysis as that originally made by the party leadership. That is the correct analysis of the McCarthy movement as it has manifested itself in recent times as incipient American fascism.

As a campaign of propaganda, explaining what was developing in the country at great length and in detail, fortified and illustrated by the historical experience of the European movement, it was a great progressive work by the party. The publication and distribution of pamphlets, the explanations in the press, the speaking tours -- all that side of the campaign must be put down to the credit of the party. As a campaign of propaganda, of explanation of new political phenomena, it was certainly one hundred per cent correct or very close to it.

But in attempting to extend this campaign of propaganda into a campaign of agitation, I believe we overshot the mark a bit. Insofar as agitation is carried on with the anticipation of setting a big movement on foot and leading to action, the campaign misfired. The consciousness of the working class of this country was not ready for a big agitational movement on the issue of McCarthyism.

Now we can retreat and say we didn't mean agitation, we just meant propaganda. But that's not entirely correct. There was a certain indefiniteness and ambiguity in some of the slogans of the

campaign, and the big lesson we must derive from this is that when we go into another campaign we must clearly define for ourselves the nature of the campaign and what we expect to accomplish by it.

As a campaign of propaganda our McCarthy campaign was a great achievement. But the tone in which it was carried on, and some of the slogans and some of the proposals, seemed to indicate that we expected to develop it into a big movement of agitation, and possibly action. There it failed. Not a single trade union in the whole United States, as far as I know, did a damn thing about McCarthyism in response to our campaign. There was not a single mass meeting or demonstration or picket line or any kind of eruption.

Our propagandistic explanations aroused the interest of a wide circle of workers; they now have a clearer idea of the nature of McCarthyism and its menacing potentialities. But as an agitational campaign it did not succeed. Moreover, in the midst of our campaign, the McCarthy movement was dealt some heavy blows by the ruling powers and was pushed into a corner. The party was tardy in recognizing this radical change in the political situation.

I've discussed the McCarthy campaign as a campaign of propaganda. Then as a campaign of agitation. Now was it a campaign of action? You may say: "Oh no, we never meant that." Is that true? Then what did we mean by that slogan "Smash McCarthyism before it smashes us"? If that means anything to the ordinary person, it means action right now. It could be taken as a call for action. And it fell flat.

I don't say that the slogan was designed exactly as a slogan of action, but to the extent that it had the connotation that we were calling on the workers to stop McCarthyism right now -- before it smashes us -- it was an over-estimation of the tempo of development and of the possibilities inherent in the situation. Therefore it was incorrect. Construed as a campaign of action -- and I am afraid some comrades so construed it -- we have to admit that the anti-McCarthy campaign was misdirected.

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And what do we do now? We just slow down a little. We don't change our analysis of McCarthyism, and we don't stop talking about it. We don't even discontinue the anti-McCarthy campaign. We just slow it down and put it in its proper place for the next period as a campaign of propaganda, which as I'll explain later, takes a secondary position to another campaign of propaganda dealing with the pro-capitalist policy of the labor bureaucracy.

The mistake was not one of principle, but merely a mistake in the estimation of tempo and of urgency in the situation. But even such errors, which are limited in their scope and by no means comparable to principled or strategical errors -- even such errors could be dangerous if not corrected in time. There is nothing to fear from that in the present instance. The convention discussion has shown that this error, which was secondary in character, is being corrected in good time by the collective thought of the party, without any demoralization or disruption either in the ranks or in the leadership.

In the course of the discussion the question was raised: What caused the set-back of the McCarthy movement? Was it the elections? No, McCarthy began to run into real trouble before the elections. The elections registered the set-back and made it more decisive. The elections registered the relative strength of the McCarthyites, as well as that of the other tendencies in American politics, in the most emphatic manner. They showed most indisputably that McCarthyism is by no means on the verge of taking power in this country, is not a majority, but is a minority of the minority party. A very noisy and vigorous minority, with plenty of fanatical followers, but still a minority of a minority party. That's the way we have to look at it from now on. The elections recorded that. The Senate proceedings have recorded the same thing.

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The party leadership, in estimating the causes of the tumultuous rise of McCarthyism, fixed the main factor in the international situation of American imperialism, the fears and frustrations arising from the advance of the anti-capitalist movement throughout the world, and the defeats, set-backs and other misfortunes of American foreign policy. But these same causes, the international tensions, which were the main factor in triggering the beginning of the McCarthy movement, has undergone a certain change in the recent period.

There is a new orientation of American foreign policy. We have been a little slow in recognizing that too, but the new orientation is already clearly indicated. This change in the foreign policy of the imperialists is a change toward a temporary balance of power deal with the Soviet-China bloc. For reasons of their own the top ruling circles of American capitalism have obviously decided to slow down the war drive. From that has followed a deliberate decision to preserve the democratic forms, which are most useful to them as long as there is a semblance of stability at home.

Monopoly capitalism, as shown in recent developments, is by no means ready to turn to fascism in this country. It has at least two other resources before that. It has, first, the Eisenhower regime which is serving it quite well. Then it has the alternative of the Democratic-labor coalition which can serve it even better. All indications are that both of them will have their day in the government in this country; and other combinations and experiments in government are possible before the last desperate turn to fascist rule. Fascism is the resort of the bourgeoisie only when they are confronted with the threat of the workers taking power. That threat is not here yet. At least that's my opinion.

The workers are pretty solidly against McCarthyism, even if they are not excited about it. That was shown in the elections. If you doubt it, take the vote in the places where labor unions are organized most strongly and participated most directly, especially in those few places where McCarthyism was a real election issue. In Milwaukee, Kersten, an outspoken McCarthyite, was defeated for re-election to Congress. Busbey, a McCarthyite Congressman,

had the same bad luck in Illinois. So did Meek, the more or less outspoken McCarthyite candidate for U.S. Senator in Illinois. Every single one of them got the axe, and primarily by the votes of the workers.

The workers are against McCarthyism, even if not in the total comprehensive sense that we are. That doesn't mean there are not some workers who support McCarthy. There are. But some workers will be supporting McCarthy or others like him, on the eve of the revolution in this country. Do you know that in England today, after all these years of the development of the Labor Party, after there has been almost, you may say, a complete polarization of classes on the electoral field, many workers still support the Tories? An article I read in the New Leader after one of the last elections, by Morrison, one of the top right wing leaders of the British Labor Party, said that 25% of the British workers still vote Tory.

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The discussion in the party ranks should aim to define our error precisely -- not to exaggerate, but to see just what it was -- a mistake of tempo, a mistake of urgency, a mixing up of our slogans in such a way that it wasn't quite clear whether it was a campaign of propaganda, or of agitation, or of action, or of all three rolled together. In any case, our error was not as great as that of the pioneer communists in the United States.

I can be more nonchalant about this limited mistake than most of you, because I lived through the movement when it made much more serious mistakes and still survived. The mistakes made in the old days were perhaps similar to ours in kind, but greater, more serious. They sprang from revolutionary impatience, from the mixing up of strategical aims with tactical necessities of the moment. That's a common mistake of revolutionists -- to mix up strategy and tactics. Strategy is a long range proposition requiring propagandistic approaches. Tactics deal with immediate aims and agitation leading to action.

The pioneer communists assimilated the Bolshevik idea of revolutionary mass action organized by means of workers' councils or soviets, and -- without stopping to consider that it was a long-term strategical concept -- some of them decided to put it into practice right away. Telescoping strategical and programmatic aims with immediate tactics, they published a paper in New York called "The Communist", with the banner slogan across the top of the front page: "Organize Workers' Councils!" Right away! Such mixing up of strategic aims with immediate objectives dominated the first years of American communism, with the result that much of its activity was sterile. It had no immediate application to the tempo of the class struggle as it was developing at the time.

That is only one illustration of many. But even such a mistake as calling for the organization of workers' councils, when the workers in the United States had not yet got around to organizing trade unions, to say nothing of organizing an independent labor party, was corrected in time by the pioneer communists. I believe we will correct our much smaller error more easily and all the sooner, without any convulsions at all. The important thing is not to mope over the limited error, but just simply to recognize it and correct it without delay.

TRADE UNION TACTICS

The political resolution also implies a check-up on our trade union tactics. That has been made clear in the Trade Union Resolution and the report of comrade Dobbs. The times call for a certain change and correction, a slower pace in the trade unions. Can there be any doubt about that? The correction must be made right now, today, without any more delay. Trade union tactics have to flow from the political analysis in the resolution, and must be changed accordingly. That correction is primarily the task of the party leadership, national and local. The party must not drift on this question, not permit comrades, in their impatience and their own personal militancy, to jeopardize their jobs and their positions in the unions.

The situation is this: The prosperity has generated a passivity in the ranks -- we've been saying that for a long while. The witch hunt intimidation works in the same direction. We've been saying that a long while too. That's nothing new. This combined passivity of the workers and the intimidation of the witch hunt isolates the militants and deprives them of rank and file support in action. We've been saying all that right along, but we haven't been doing enough about it.

This passivity of the ranks and the intimidation of the witch hunt strengthens the position of the bureaucracy. As a matter of fact, the trade union bureaucrats are the chief beneficiaries of this whole witch hunt. The witch hunt has been the weapon they have used to free themselves from all criticism from militants, and even to free themselves from the presence of militants in the unions. They use it for that purpose and will continue to use it to pry the militants out of the unions and out of the plants.

We must not facilitate their game by reckless tactics. There has been a little too much of this already. Impatient comrades in one union or another say: "We're being pressed by the rank and file to take office to help them fight their grievances." Then the party leadership, if it is weak-kneed and inclined to dodge its responsibilities, says: "All right, go ahead." And the comrades take office in the union local. Then, the minute an issue comes up and they're put on the spot between the company and the top bureaucrats of the union they find that the workers who elect them are not ready to back them up in action. The result is that the militants are thrown out of the plant and out of the union.

Right at this time we have to say to our comrades in the unions: "Your trade union activity has to be regulated by the tempo of the class struggle and not by your own impatience." The party leadership, nationally and locally, has to protect our comrades from themselves if they get too impatient. When the next upsurge comes we want to have some people in the unions, not all on the outside as a result of premature demonstrations which could not elicit rank and file support.

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Such decisions are rather hard to make. Some leaders prefer to avoid them. With only a slight provocation I could give a lecture on the delinquencies of leadership, one of the worst of

which is the tendency to dodge responsibility, to let things drift and to pass the buck. The function of leaders is to lead. People who want to pass the buck should go and play poker. That is where this maneuver fits.

It is the duty of the party leaders, nationally and locally, to help our trade union comrades to stay in the unions in this next period in anticipation of the future. In the early days before the CIO, militants in unorganized plants had to work carefully. If they were too free and open in their agitation, if they got impatient for a strike before the workers were ready to go all the way with them, they were out on the street, out of the plant when the upsurge came.

Working in a trade union today is something like working in an unorganized plant in the days before the CIO. With this difference: In the unorganized plants the bosses had a company spy system and company thugs at their command. Now they have a government spysystem and a powerful, slick, sophisticated labor bureaucracy. That's quite an additional factor. These bureaucrats are not fighting capitalism. They are sleek and fat and satisfied with things as they are. Their main aim in life is to take advantage of the atmosphere of prosperity and the witch hunt to get rid of all opposition in the unions.

We must not facilitate that game. And we must state frankly here that we have had too many victims already. And we'll have more no matter what we do. But we must try to limit the number. Only a real upsurge will free the hands of the trade union militants for open, undisguised action. We have to wait patiently for a rise of the class struggle and try to prepare for it.

Meantime, comrades, we must see what is. I believe that sentence describes the main function of this convention: To see what **is** -- not what we want to see, but what is really there. We must not be carried away by isolated incidents that seem to show a different picture. Sporadic struggles must not be taken for the main trend.

We have had wonderful reports here on the activities of our comrades in the Square D strike and the ASR strike. They were very interesting. But are these two small strikes signs of an upsurge -- as some comrades may be inclined to say, seeing what they want to see? Just the contrary. Both strikes were desperate defensive actions. That's the way we have to understand them.

The main mass of the labor movement moved very slowly and hesitantly, dragging its feet, to give a little help to the Square D strike. That's all. The square D strike was precipitated by the bosses and not by the workers. The ASR strike was a desperate, last-ditch stand against a company decision to pick up and move the plant to the South in order to put an end to unionism altogether. Both strikes showed an offensive of the employers and not of the workers.

It was certainly correct to jump into such strikes, to make the most of the opportunity. We ought to be proud of the work the party did in the Square D strike and ASR strike. I'm sorry we didn't have a more detailed report here of what the party did in the Square D strike. It was a real demonstration of party dynamism, but the modesty of the Detroit comrades foreclosed a full account of their work.

But at the same time, while participating in every one of these defensive actions, doing all we can to help the workers and to gain some contacts and recruits for the party -- we must recognize that they are isolated exceptions to the general trend at the present time. The general trend imposes a patient and prudent course in trade union work.

It may be asked: Didn't the Cochranites say the same thing? Isn't there some similarity? Yes, there is a similarity, and also a difference. The Cochranites not only wanted a cautious, practically a do-nothing policy in the unions. They also wanted the party to do nothing and to go out of existence, so as not to embarrass the people in the unions. Our trade union policy is different; it has two sides -- caution and aggression. The more we restrain our comrades from hasty action in the unions, the more aggressively we develop the full program of the party on the trade union question in the press. In the next period the party press will be our most effective trade unionist, and it will diplomatize about nothing.

In Detroit, I would say that first class Leninist trade union tactics have been exemplified in the last period. Our comrades in unions there have been patient and careful. But they did not, like the Cochranites, play dead in the general political arena. They ran candidates for office. They jumped into the Square D strike. They started activity among the students at Wayne University. They distributed our press and made it known to thousands of new workers. They have become a political factor in the community. That combination of all-sided activity of the party is the secret of revolutionary trade unionism in the present period.

The party press will be our chief instrument to recruit new cadres of revolutionary trade unionists from a new generation. Don't forget that. And don't ever think for a minute that the main cadres of the coming revolutionary trade union movement are going to come out of the bureaucracy or any important section of it. Some individual bureaucrats will follow the tide, but they will not lead it. Neither will the dynamic forces in the new upsurge come out of the routinized local officials and rank and file trade unionists who have gained privileged positions. The new cadres will come out of the new generation who have no privileges and nothing to lose, the same way the original cadres of the CIO came.

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Some of them will also come from the student youth. I was over-joyed when I heard the report that our comrades in Detroit, despite their preoccupation with the Square D strike and the election campaign, got a nucleus established at Wayne University.

By virtue of the fact that they were running candidates for public office and not playing dead like the Cochranites, they came in under a ruling that gave them a right to have a socialist political club on the campus.

As such, they presented our candidates at regular forums on the campus; started some arguments, and got into a ruckus with the editor of the student paper and stirred up a big hullabaloo; and interested some students and got them down to attend party meetings, and recruited a few of them into the party. That, I say, is revolutionary trade union work of the highest significance. For it can be said with assurance that not a few of the future leaders of the mass movement in Detroit are going to come from the campus of Wayne University.

Nobody knows how many of the Stalinist cadres in the early CIO movement originally were recruited out of the student movement. Certainly the number was large. Turned into political by a party which they took to be revolutionary, these eager youth then were sent into the fluid mass movement which was surging and sweeping over the old trade union forms. Young people learn fast when mass action is on the order of the day. Many of these students, fresh out of college, became more skillful and effective trade unionists than the old office bureaucrats and others who thought trade unionism consisted of routine.

As Farrell explained the other day, he came into the union movement, without previous experience, in a period of upsurge. He fused his own natural militancy with the conscious program of the party, and inside of six months he knew more about practical trade unionism as an engine of mass action than all the business agents of the Central Labor Union in Minneapolis put together. That's the literal truth, and it will be repeated by hundreds of new people in times to come.

In the early days of the CIO it was these cadres -- not entirely but to a very large extent -- these cadres recruited out of the student movement, who had no economic prospects in life, who became radicalized and politicalized and then went into the mass movement and became leaders and functionaries in the upsurging CIO.

THE HISTORICAL TREND TOWARD INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION

I want to go over now to the question of the Labor Party and discuss it in its broader aspect. There is an historical trend toward independent political action in this country. That's another way of saying, a trend towards the participation of the workers in politics as a class, independently. There is such a trend, deep-seated and powerful. It has a distorted direction, but the drive is there. That's what we have to see and distinguish.

The question was asked in the discussion: "What's new since 1936? Isn't what we see today in the 1954 elections the same thing as then?" Not exactly. There was something new in 1936; and 1954 shows something new again. What was new in 1936 was that for the first time in America a big section of the organized labor move-

ment set up a political action committee and undertook to mobilize the labor vote as a bloc -- to be sure, for the Democratic Party. Gompers never went that far.

The old Gompers policy was simply to recommend that "friends of labor" be supported. That's all. No political machinery in the unions, no serious campaigning, no official union endorsement of presidential candidates. CIO political action in 1936 was not different from that of Gompers in principle, but very different in method.

In 1936, after the rise of the CIO with its tremendous political implications, you remember they organized the Labor Non-Partisan League and deliberately set out to mobilize the trade union vote for Roosevelt. Isn't that what they did again this year? Yes, but again there are differences. In 1936 the CIO was still a new movement, still going through its battles to establish itself. And the workers were for Roosevelt, and would have been for Roosevelt whether the CIO said so or not. The vote in 1936 was not so much a victory for the CIO's political action committee as a victory for Roosevelt and his party. The CIO played a supporting role, and the AFL played no official role at all.

The workers gave Roosevelt credit for the WPA, for keeping them from starving to death. They gave him credit for the projected Unemployment Insurance and Social Security which hadn't been enacted yet. They gave him credit for government recognition of their right to organize and everything else. All the CIO really did in that period was simply to organize and mobilize the union members to go to the polls to vote for Roosevelt and the Democratic Party. But that was a lot; it signified something new -- the first formal alliance of the CIO officialdom with the Democratic Party.

This policy was extended and continued through the 1944 elections, but in 1948 the alliance was broken. Neither the CIO nor the AFL endorsed Truman in 1948. It was only toward the end of the campaign that they began to bestir themselves in behalf of Truman. That belated activity of the union officialdom undoubtedly decided the election in 1948. The result was due more to the political activity of union machines than to the popularity of Truman.

In 1952 the alliance of the labor bureaucracy and the Democratic Party was re-established officially and formally. And for the first time the AFL endorsed the Democratic Party. Previously, the only time the AFL ever endorsed a political candidate was in 1924, the La Follette campaign. After that, for twenty-eight years the AFL remained formally neutral in presidential elections. The AFL had no real political machinery to get out the labor vote.

But in 1952 both AFL and CIO went down the line, formally endorsed the Democratic candidates at their conventions, and really worked to mobilize the union members and bring them to the polls. The alliance of the labor bureaucracy with the Democratic Party was re-established and strengthened in 1952, even though it was not effective enough yet to win the election.

THE MEANING OF THE 1954 ELECTION

In 1954, however, the alliance scored a victory. The difference between 1952 and 1954 is one of degree, of quantity that almost becomes quality, insofar as they went into it deeper, stronger, in a more organized fashion and got out enough votes to swing the election. Moreover, in 1954 the labor votes were not, as in 1936, cast for Roosevelt or Joe Doakes or anybody else. They were cast, in the main, for the labor-endorsed candidates; the popularity of the given candidate was a secondary factor. That's something new, I think.

Look at the election returns in Detroit. Their meaning is as plain as that clock on the wall. When they cast a vote in Detroit of almost three to one for the slate endorsed by the AFL and CIO that means that labor has been mobilized for political action. Isn't that so? You can't say it was the popularity of the candidates. Soapy Williams, the Democratic candidate for Governor, has a certain popularity, but the chief thing he's popular for is the fact that he has the full support of the labor political machine.

And the other Democratic candidate -- for Senator, I forget his name -- was not even well known. He wasn't given a chance to win the senatorial nomination in the primaries. He became an accidental candidate because of the death of Senator Moody. In spite of that, he came out of Detroit with better than a two to one majority, which means almost a solid labor vote.

The election returns generally showed a strong, organized participation in politics by the labor movement. They also showed that the workers voted primarily as trade unionists, and only secondarily for the Democratic Party. They feel that they won only a limited victory in the 1954 elections. They expect to do better next time. That, in my opinion, only strengthens the trend toward all-out support of the Democrats in 1956. That's why I consider it not realistic and not very sensible to be talking about the possibility of an upsurge for a labor party in the next two years. The evidence before our eyes points the other way.

Instead of new demands for a labor party coming up in the next two years, the more likely prospect is that those locals, which in the past have called for the labor party in resolutions, will keep absolutely mum about it in the next two years, beginning with Ford Local 600. Their tendency is to stick with the Democratic Party from '54 to '56, and nothing short of a real social cataclysm can change it. We don't like it, but we have to recognize it. And we should also recognize that these developments are not all bad.

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The Political Resolution states that this organized participation of labor in politics, under the aegis of the bureaucracy, represents a distorted and indirect trend toward a labor party. It has a positive as well as a negative side. The organized action of labor in politics -- that's positive, it's a long way from Gompersism. The support of the Democratic capitalist party -- that's negative. What stand do we take on this two-sided development? We recognize the positive side and see in it implications for the future. We reject the negative side and refuse to advise the workers to vote for their class enemies in politics. Such advice would be a betrayal of their real class interests.

We recognize, however, that the workers -- here I want to emphasize, not only the bureaucrats but also the workers -- are bent on another experiment with the New Deal. They are not likely to take the next step from that to an independent labor party until they have gone through the disastrous and disillusioning experience of another labor-Democratic coalition in government. They are not likely to change their course even if the economic situation worsens in the next two years. A limited economic crisis in the next two years will not be blamed on the Democratic Party.

The labor bureaucrats and the Democratic liberals have their alibi for that all ready, prepared in advance. They will simply push a button and out will come a card saying: "It's not our fault because the Republicans and Dixiecrats have a majority in Congress, and we still have a Republican president. To restore prosperity we need a real majority in Congress and a Democratic president."

In such a situation the northern "liberal" Democrats can afford to make more radical proposals in Congress than they'd ever dream of adopting if they had a majority, with the full knowledge that their proposals won't be passed and that they can use them for campaign material. I believe that's the most realistic perspective. Even a limited economic crisis will not halt but rather strengthen the drive of the organized labor movement to put a Democratic administration in Washington from top to bottom.

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From this flows our policy in the next period. First, we take our position on the ground of principle. No crossing of class lines in politics or any place else. Where there are no labor candidates endorsed by the unions -- and we must recognize realistically that there will be few, if any -- we're going to run our own candidates. Not everywhere; but wherever we have the forces and the means, and there is reason to believe we can gain something from an independent campaign, we'll do it.

Certainly we'll have our own candidates for president and vice-president in 1956. In these next two years, foreseeing the prospect of another New Deal administration, we will warn the workers of their coming disappointment. That's our real duty. Tell the workers what's going to happen before it happens and remind them again when it happens. Merciless attack on the class-collaborationist policy of the labor fakers. A pedagogical explanation of the principle of the class struggle in politics.

PROPAGANDA TASKS OF THE PARTY

Our work in the next period is cut out for us, and it is primarily a work of propaganda. There are no big actions that we can initiate. If big actions are precipitated by the spontaneous eruption of the class struggle, we will, of course jump into them. But we do not see such actions shaping up in the next period ahead. We have to determine our immediate tactics by what we see before us.

That means, some of our slogans have to be modified. There is nothing to lament about that; it is simply a recognition of the current reality and an adjustment to it. We must make our adjustment to the real situation clear-headedly and not mix up the basic work of propaganda, imposed upon us by the situation, with slogans of agitation and action. If we are facing a period of slowdown of the class struggle, it follows that our main work, for the time being, is limited to propagandistic explanation. But that's a great work. What can be more exhilarating, what can give more satisfaction, than to have the time and the opportunity to explain the great principles of our movement and the historical perspectives of the working class?

If our main work in the next period is largely, primarily and almost exclusively propaganda and pedagogy, that means the slogan "Organize a Labor Congress!" is out for the immediate future. The trend is toward the mobilization of the workers by the bureaucracy for the Democratic Party in 1956. The call for a Labor Congress is a slogan of agitation leading to action. As such it was a perfectly good slogan, and it will be good again when there is a prospect of action. We don't cancel it out, repudiate it, say it was wrong. We tried it out; it found no echo in the broad mass movement; so we just lay it aside for the time being and wait for future developments.

The slogan, "Smash McCarthyism Before it Smashes Us," has to be modified. There is no prospect of an imminent showdown with McCarthyism, in the sense of a struggle for power. McCarthyism is far from that now. But again, the slogan is not to be repudiated as representing a false idea. It is a perfectly correct idea and will be a correct slogan when fascism becomes a real threat. But McCarthy's movement has been dealt some heavy blows and thrust into a corner. For that reason the slogan goes into the file awaiting further developments when the issue of McCarthy fascism becomes a real issue for the labor movement.

Finally, the slogan "Build a Labor Party Now!" has to be amended. "Build a Labor Party Now!" -- that's a slogan of action. Originally it was counterposed to the promise of such labor bureaucrats as Reuther to build a labor party "after the next election." How would it sound in the midst of an explanation, which we have already started to make in the paper, that the trend is toward the Democratic-labor coalition in 1956? Latently the sentiment for a labor party is probably stronger than ever, but there will be no action and very little, if any, talk about it in the near future.

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There is no prospect whatever, as far as we can see now -- barring some unforeseen explosion -- of the workers turning to a labor party in the next two years. If that is the reality, beyond our power to change, it requires that we change the slogan "Build a Labor Party Now!" into a pedagogical explanation that the workers ought to go into politics independently as a class and build their own party, but leaving out the implication of immediate action.

Our main task for the next two years is the patient explana-

tion of the principles of the class struggle in politics, and the recruitment of class conscious militants into the party. That's the great revolutionary work of our time. That's the work of preparation for the future. I simply can't understand anybody who regards that as a "pessimistic" perspective: Of course, if you demand the revolution in a hurry, in the richest and most conservative country in the world, you're bound to run into disappointment. But if we have a historical view; if we see the tide of history working in favor of the socialist transformation of society; and if in the midst of that development we understand that we can't jump over the head of the working class but must move at its tempo; and in the meantime have an opportunity to explain, to carry out our function as the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process; and see our work fructified by the recruitment of young people full of conviction and energy for the struggle -- I really don't see how one can be pessimistic about that.

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That's the realistic revolutionary work of the moment; nothing else is open to us, and that's enough, I think. In any case, if we're not satisfied to concentrate on this modest, preparatory work, it won't help us any. As Marxists, we must recognize the present reality, adapt ourselves to it and prepare for the future, work for the future.

I have spoken about the trend toward independent political action by the working class. That is not necessarily synonymous with the labor party. Independent working class political action in other countries has taken the form of mass socialist and communist parties. Our program is the class struggle. The program is the independent political action of the workers. We say that, from all indications, it is most likely that in this country it will take the form of a labor party based on the trade unions, because the trade unions are already big and powerful and the revolutionary party is still very small. We can hardly anticipate, realistically, that our party will simply expand and become the party of the whole working class over the head of the labor party development.

At the same time, a great upsurge of radicalism produced by a deep crisis, might leap over the labor party development. It is possible, but that's not what we see today as most probable. We explain in our press that we're for independent class political action, and will support it in the form of a labor party based on the unions; but we keep in mind the possibility that an upsurge produced by social explosions might be so powerful as to by-pass the labor party development and quickly take a revolutionary turn.

However it may be, our slogan for a labor party is a propaganda slogan at the present time. As things stand today, it cannot be a slogan of action, nor even a slogan of agitation in the next period. The real principle that we are explaining and fighting for is the principle of the class struggle, the principle of the political independence of the workers as a class.

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE

We now have a wide open opportunity, with the field all to

ourselves, to explain to the workers who may listen to us the principle of the class struggle all up and down the line; to oppose the denounce the labor bureaucracy, not simply for one mistake or another, but for their whole line of class collaboration. That used to be taken for granted in the radical movement of this country. The class struggle was what we were raised on in the old days. All revolutionary activity proceeded from that basis premise.

In the socialist and radical movement of the twentieth century, from the first presidential candidacy of Debs in 1900 up until more recent times, all factions in the socialist movement -- right, left and center -- all of them were committed to the principle of independent political action. The support of a capitalist political party was anathema. The IWW, which was more radical than the socialist party, didn't vote for its candidates only because they had a mistaken idea that elections were a waste of time. But the preamble of the IWW began with these words: "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common;" and proceeded to say: "Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system."

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It was not until 1936 that even the right wing socialists dared to support a capitalist party candidate in a presidential election. Even after the communist split of 1919, the Socialist Party continued to run its own independent candidates; it never entered their heads that it was permissible to vote for Democrats or Republicans. It was not until 1936 that the right wing socialists in New York and the officials of the needle trade unions, which had traditionally supported the Socialist Party, finally decided to support Roosevelt.

But the tradition of independent political action was so strong among the socialist workers in the needle trades in New York, that a round-about maneuver had to be devised to steer them into the Roosevelt camp. It was not yet possible to get them to vote for Roosevelt on the Democratic ticket. That's how and why the American Labor Party of New York, this illegitimate labor party, which in Shakesperian language would be called a bastard, which now in its last days of decomposition has become a rest-home of the Cochranites, came into existence.

The American Labor Party of New York was organized in 1936 by Sydney Hillman, Dubinsky, the right wing socialists -- with undercover support from the Stalinists -- in order to corral the vote of the socialist and radical workers of New York for Roosevelt. They didn't think they could get the radical workers of New York to vote for Roosevelt on the Democratic ticket; they were afraid they would vote as they had been traditionally voting for the Socialist Party. So these clever shysters organized the American Labor Party, with Roosevelt as its endorsed candidate. They made the transition from independent workers' political action to participation in capitalist politics by this in-between move of the

American Labor Party. It has been admitted openly, in Hillman's biography, that that was the purpose. Hillman was commissioned, with the authorization of Roosevelt, to organize this party to corral the socialist votes in New York in 1936.

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Up till then the Communist Party had always run its own candidates. In 1936 they also went over to class collaboration in politics in a characteristically treacherous double-talking manner. They did not yet dare to come out openly in support of Roosevelt on the Democratic ticket. They nominated Browder for president, ostensibly as the candidate of communism against the capitalist parties. Then they put out the slogan, which was the main slogan of their campaign: "Defeat Landon at all costs." "Are you for Roosevelt?" they were asked. They answered, as if they hadn't heard the question: "Defeat Landon!" And they passed the word to their fractions in the unions to support the American Labor Party, whose candidate just happened to be Roosevelt. By this double-talk and duplicity they made the transition to later open support of the Democratic Party.

Leaving aside the SLP which doesn't count, all the other parties and political groups -- all of them except our party -- have eventually abandoned the simple principle of the class struggle in politics in recent years. It took the right wing social democrats until 1936 and the Norman Thomas SP until 1952, but eventually they both got around to it. Stalinists began to sneak across the class line in 1936, crossed it openly in 1944, and have been doing the same thing in a shamefaced manner ever since.

The Shachtmanites are slower and weaker and it took them longer, but they arrived in 1954. In their recent convention the decision was made by a majority to advise the workers to support "labor-endorsed" candidates in the Democratic Party primaries and then to follow up and vote for them in the general elections. That puts the Shachtmanites themselves in the Democratic Party. They have been splashing their toes in the river Rubicon for a long time and finally decided to cross it. In common decency the "Independent Socialist League" should strike out the first two words from their name, for the policy they have now adopted is neither independent nor socialist.

The Cochranites are still weaker than the Shachtmanites, but they are jumpier, in a bigger hurry to reach their destination. It took them less than a year, after they left the SWP, to betray the principle of the class struggle in politics. In the recent election in New York they opposed the SWP with its socialist program and supported the miserable remnant of the Stalinoid American Labor Party with its program of "progressive capitalism." In Detroit they supported Digges, a Negro candidate for Congress on the Democratic ticket, on the pretext that the Negro community is entitled to have representation. The fact that Digges is a Democrat and therefore a political representative of capitalism is a mere trifle to these traitors. Their real purpose was to make a trial step into the UAW-Democratic Party class collaboration swindle.

The Cochranites are determined, at all costs, not to be "sectarian," and not to be "dogmatic" about such things as socialist principle. How often have we heard and seen that before? That is the time-worn formula of ex-radicals sliding down to renegacy. The "trend" of the Cochranites leads directly into the "labor wing" of the Democratic Party.

THE PROSPECTS OF THE NEW GENERATION

It comes around to the point that we are the only party, faction, tendency or group in the whole labor movement that stands on the old-fashioned, simple, fundamental program of the class struggle in politics. And that certainly is a good place to stand. That principle sustained the movement in the early days when the workers' conquest of political power was only a promise and a hope, with nothing to prove it by. Your prospects are better and brighter today, and they have a firm foundation in present-day world reality.

The pioneers of American socialism and communism were inspired by the idea that the capitalist system could be overthrown; that it was only necessary for the workers to recognize their class position in society, and then to organize their struggle to take power and reconstruct society on socialist foundations. But we couldn't prove it. "It can't be done, you're wasting your time" -- that was the strongest argument against revolutionary socialist propaganda in the early days.

What's the situation confronting you, when you talk now about the principle of the class struggle, and about the advisability of the workers taking power and reorganizing society on a more rational basis for the benefit of all? You have the great Russian Revolution behind you -- the revolution that has built a mighty industrial power out of a backward country, second now only to the United States. In the Second World War you have had the proof that this new economy, based on the achievements of a revolution, gave the Soviet Union the strength to prevail in the war. After these demonstrations, workers' power no longer appears as an unrealizable goal, but as a practical proposition. The capitalists, at least, so recognize it even though they don't like it.

And now you have China and the ever-expanding colonial revolution on your side. In the early days, China was only a place where the marines landed and "took the situation in hand." There were big disagreements and diplomatic debates over "China policy" in those days, but China had nothing to say about it. The powers disputed over who had the right to exploit China. Britain and Japan had a narrow policy. They said China should be open only for them, for their exploitation, and closed to other powers. America came out with a broad, "democratic" slogan -- the "Open Door" in China. That simply meant that the door of China should be opened wider to let American imperialism in too. What's the slogan now? The door of China has been closed by a great revolution. All the imperialist powers are up against the closed door in China, and they're debating among themselves whether they can make a deal with China for some trade on terms that will be agreeable to China.

In the early days people used to tell us that the workers in the mass production industries could never be organized. "We

tried it and we broke our hands on it, we broke our heads on it. The companies are too strong; You can't organize workers in steel and automobile, you can't organize Standard Oil. It's a wonderful idea, boy. I'm sympathizing with you. But it can never be done. You can never build industrial unions in the mass production industries. The only place you can have unions is in the light industries, in the crafts." And that's about all the trade union movement amounted to in that time.

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But look what has happened in your time, while most of you were growing up. You have worked all your adult lives under union conditions, and some of you don't even know what an unorganized shop means. Most of you who have enjoyed the conditions and protection of a union, limited as it is today, do not know what a hell on earth it was to work in a rubber factory, or an auto factory, or a steel mill before the unions came. Great things have been accomplished since the early days, and all that is in your favor.

In those days the Negro people were not a subject of politics but merely an object. They had no power. They were atomized, pushed aside, their wishes and most elementary rights disregarded. In recent times there has been a great awakening of the Negro people. They have become a new revolutionary potential of such dynamic power that it cannot be estimated. About 15 to 17 million Negroes, who have very little to lose and a great deal to gain, have begun to fight for their rights.

They have just won a tremendous victory in the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in the schools. This was gained with the support, even if it was not a hundred per cent, of a strong labor movement. In addition, they had the power of the colonial revolution on their side, which may have been the deciding factor. Of course, the Supreme Court decision, that Negro children shall have equal rights in schools, doesn't end segregation. But the court decision gives the Negro people a legal basis to continue the fight with the advantage on their side.

You have seen that the organized labor movement, all up and down, supports the Negroes on this issue. That was not the case in the old days. Then, the Negroes were Jim Crowed in the Gompers trade unions as much as any place else. The awakening Negro people are mighty battalions on our side, on the side of the coming revolution. In the early days of the movement we could hardly foresee that.

In your time, millions of women have been drawn out of the narrow confines of the kitchen and have learned the facts of modern life in industry. They have joined unions and become another dynamic power of incalculable measure on the side of the coming revolution.

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Our situation of the moment is difficult, but it should be seen in its true light as an historical interlude. The great trend

of history is working inexorably for the realization of our ideals. We have to be patient and confident in working with the trend. The American capitalists are the ones who should really be pessimistic, and in fact they are. United States capitalism, on a world scale, is fighting a rear guard action; that is the essence of the situation. The recent change in foreign policy is above all a recognition of the fact that they have to step back and try to do some maneuvering. The trend of history is against them.

On the national scale, we revolutionary socialists are fighting as a small minority, but ours is not a rear guard action. It is the preliminary and preparatory action of a mighty working class that has never been defeated and does not know its own strength. It gave preliminary intimations of its power in the Thirties, in the rise of the CIO. And that was only a down payment on future actions of this American working class, which is the greatest power in the whole world, bar none.

The task of realistic revolutionists is to keep a clear view of the great historical perspective -- to see the perspective and the trend and let it guide and inspire us through the difficulties of the moment, whatever they may be, and apply ourselves to the immediate task in hand, whatever it may be. The most revolutionary action that we can take in the next period is to provide for the maintenance of our press. This will be done without any trouble as you have already demonstrated by your decision at this convention

It has been a great convention. We are all richer, and the party is stronger for it. It is a great thing for the party activists to "convene," to meet each other and to think and discuss collectively. We can confidently go back to work now, not only with conviction in our program and our ideals, but also with the inspiration of fellow fighters for the great cause.

The convention has given us all a clearer view of the present situation and the perspectives for the future, and will help us all to work better and more effectively in the present as the representatives of the future.

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