

Discussion **B**ulletin

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ENGELS ON THE AMERICAN QUESTION

Letter from J.P. Cannon to V.R. Dunne

Los Angeles, Calif.
January 14, 1955

Minneapolis,

Dear Vincent,

... I have been spending a lot of time with Engels. Previously, some of his letters to Sorge and others in the United States were included in the SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE OF MARX AND ENGELS. They are now all brought together in the new volume, LETTERS TO AMERICANS BY Marx and Engels, published last year by International Publishers. During this lull in production I have taken advantage of the opportunity to make a thorough study of them. This volume really should be required reading for all party activists, including especially the students of the Trotsky School.

Engels' letters are the original and best prescription against sectarianism. They are more than that, however. Engels, in his letters to Sorge, combined his pot-shots against the sectarian socialists in the United States and Britain with withering blasts against the British Fabians and the petty-bourgeois opportunists in the German party. The innovators and neo-liquidationists - who are all referring to Engels these days - quote only the first part and ignore the second.

I can see a big controversy blowing up around this volume of letters and I intend to take a hand in it. It seems that all the ex-revolutionists, reformed Trotskyists, backsliders and runaways are leaning on Engels. They didn't get their impulse to capitulate from him; that originated in their own bones, and they are seeking corroboration from Engels after the fact.

They claim his support for their contention - the one thing they all agree on - that it is wrong to try to create a revolutionary party under the present conditions when the number of conscious revolutionists is so limited. This, they all say, is sectarian - not merely the policy and practice of such a party, but a small party's claim of the right to exist, regardless of its aims and actions.

The Shactmanites, as well as the Cochranites, refer to Engels on this point. I also noticed an article in the same sense in the

new literary - political magazine called DISSENT, published by a group of graduate Shactmanites, professional abstainers, homeless socialists and other political vagabonds who call themselves intellectuals. These birds of passage vary the theme by quoting Marx, having first checked to make sure he is safely dead and unable to take them by the throat.

* * * * *

Well, as you know, I am on the warpath against any sign or symptom of sectarianism myself. I intend to write about it too, in a "preventative" way, and to appeal to Engels for help. I know that sectarianism - in one form or another - is an ever-present danger to any small organization of revolutionists condemned to isolation by circumstances beyond their control, regardless of their original wishes and intentions. The moment such an organization ceases to think of itself as a part of the working class, which can realize its aims only with and through the working class, and to conduct itself accordingly, it is done for.

The key to Engels' thought is his striking expression that the conscious socialists should act as a "leaven" in the instinctive and spontaneous movement of the working class. Those are winged words that every party member should memorize. The leaven can help the dough to rise and eventually become a loaf of bread, but can never be a loaf of bread itself.

Every tendency, direct or indirect, of a small revolutionary party to construct a world of its own, outside and apart from the real movement of the workers in the class struggle, is sectarian. Such tendencies can take many forms, and we should not delude ourselves that the well known illustrations exhaust the possibilities.

We have come a long way, I think, from the adventures of the earliest American socialists with separate, self-sufficient colonies of their own outside the prevailing economy, and the experiments of the SLP with pure socialist unions outside the existing labor movement, with all its imperfections. But a self-perfecting "political colony", attempting to live a life of its own in a world of its own devising, would not be any better.

Engels' words of wisdom on this subject deserve discussion and application to modern conditions. But when I enter the controversy around Engels' letters, I am not going to limit myself to the question of

sectarianism. The real issue, as it is evolving, is the attempt to use the authority of Engels to liquidate the conception of a party of socialists, based on a definite program - a party which under present conditions can only be a small one - in favor of some prospective "big" party, to be constructed some time in the future by some people whose names and addresses are unknown, as a result of further development of the spontaneous process. That is dead wrong because the very idea of a party - large or small - presupposes a program and therefore *consciousness*.

Incidentally, this misunderstanding and misuse of Engels is not new. It is a striking commentary on the belatedness of American political thought that Engels' letters to Sorge, which were published in Germany 49 years ago and translated into Russian a year later - and became the subject of controversy in the Russian movement as far back as 1907 - are only now available in full in this country, and are now becoming a factor in the same controversy here!

Lenin's introduction to the 1907 Russian edition of these letters (reprinted as an appendix to the new American edition) is a sustained polemic against the opportunists who cited the authority of Engels for their proposal to liquidate the Social Democratic Party, based on a strictly defined program, in favor of an amorphous "Labor Congress". That in essence is what all the assorted ex-es and revolutionists-turned-opportunists are trying to do in the United States today.

My polemics against the present-day liquidators will restore Lenin's defense of Engels against the Russian liquidators of half a century ago, but will not stop there. Engels did not say the last word on the question of the party, and neither did Lenin in 1907. A great deal happened since, and if one wishes to be true to the spirit and method of Engels, these events of living history must be noticed and appraised; and the appraisal should add something to what was said then.

Sixty years have elapsed since Engels laid down his pen. From what he saw and knew at the time he thought the German party of Bebel was good enough, by and large. On the other side, Lenin, in 1907, was content to take the Bebel party for a model. He said - in ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK - that he was "not creating any special variety of Bolshevik tendency" but simply adapting "the viewpoint

of the revolutionary Social Democracy", as represented in the Second International, to Russian conditions.

But the German Social Democratic Party proved inadequate to its historical task and collapsed ignominiously in the test of 1914. Can there be any doubt that Engels would have drawn some radical conclusions from this catastrophe? Lenin, for his part, was compelled later to recognize that his concept of the vanguard party, which he had originally intended as nothing more than a Russian version of the German party, was in fact something new - a development and application of the Marxist theory of the party in the epoch of the actual struggle for power.

This conception was vindicated positively in the Russian Revolution, and negatively by the defeat of the revolution in other countries where the old forms held sway. The leit-motif of Trotsky's great struggle in the post-Lenin epoch, summed up and restated in his thesis on the crisis of leadership in the Transitional Program of 1938, was precisely this Leninist contribution and extension of Marxism in the theory and practice of the party.

If one merely wants a "big" party, just to have a party, then any kind of a party will do; but nothing less than a Bolshevik party is good enough for war and revolution. That, I think, is the conclusive verdict of historical experience. Moreover, the construction of such a party cannot be postponed until everybody recognizes its necessity. The project has to be started by those who are ready, willing and able. That's the way it was done in Russia, and nobody has yet discovered a better way.

We have plenty of ammunition for polemical warfare against the liquidators in the controversy around Engels' letters to Sorge, and the subject should certainly have an absorbing interest for the new generation entering the movement at a time when theory and practice have a good chance of being telescoped. It may be that our projected *THESES ON THE PARTY* will gradually evolve first in controversy before they are formally codified. That is certainly the most interesting and perhaps the most effective way to prepare the Theses. I wonder if this subject could not be profitably added to the curriculum of the Trotsky School.

As ever,

J.P. Cannon

THE McMANUS THIRD PARTY PROPOSAL

Letter from J.P. Cannon to M. Weiss

Letter from M. Weiss to J.P. Cannon

Los Angeles, Calif.
March 4, 1955

New York N.Y.

Dear Murry:

I was glad to see that THE MILITANT took notice of the National Guardian's call for an independent party ticket in the next elections and the Cochranites endorsement of this call. I have been watching the policy of the second-rate Stalinists of the Guardian and the Monthly Review, and the general evolution of the relations between them and the Cochranites, and have felt that we should soon begin to make some pertinent comments.

I believe the Militant editorial strikes the right note in its criticism of the Guardian's policy and in its side-swipes against the Cochranites. I disagree, however, with the last paragraph from a tactical standpoint. It seems to close the door to intervention on our part in any small movement which the Guardian proposal may stir up.

The editorial says: "We reject the McManus proposal". We do that, to be sure, as the proposal now stands, but we don't have to say so yet. Our approach should be a little more subtle and flexible, and we should not exclude the idea of participating in conferences which might take shape in response to the McManus call. We ought to leave ourselves some elbow-room to probe the remnants of this Progressive Party-ALP which the Stalinists are so rudely abandoning, to see if there are any young people among them who are simply attracted by the idea of an independent party and are not yet fatally contaminated by the "fall out" of Stalinism.

If we take the formal position that we are for independent political action without waiting for the trade unions, and that we are willing to discuss questions of the program with others who have the same inclination, it would serve to open the door for us. The flat rejection of the proposal seems to close it at the start.

* * * * *

I recall that the Old Man took this line in the Thirties when the question of new parties and a new international was under

discussion in other circles besides our own in America. For example, our first approach to the Musteites combined a statement of agreement with their proposal to launch a new party with criticisms of their first proposals for a program. At the same time we did not present our own program in an ultimatic take-it-or-leave-it fashion. We stated that we were ready to discuss any proposals which might be brought forward by others. By this formula we involved the AWP in discussion and negotiations which eventually culminated in the fusion. Our method of approach to the Musteites at that time, which was repeated a little later in our approach to the left socialists in the SP, yielded rich results both in terms of new recruits and in political experience. None of this would have been possible if we had taken a flatly ultimatic stand at the beginning.

* * * * *

Of course, the present developments are not the same as those of 1934-1936 and the prospects are much skimpier. The big difference is that the Musteite movement and the left wing of the SP were essentially progressive, even if somewhat confused, break-aways from the *ideology* of the labor bureaucracy, the old guard right wing socialists and the Stalinists. Organization questions played a secondary role.

The American Guardian Monthly Review outfit, as far as I know, does not object to the general ideology of Stalinism on any important point. They are willing to endorse everything from the Moscow Trials to the Second World War and the pacifist ballyhoo for co-existence, if only they are allowed to do it as an independent party. The adherence of the Cochranite renegades gives a further stamp of degeneration to the general combination. On the whole it can be said with assurance that this dissident little movement is a retrograde rather than a progressive manifestation.

The great bulk of these dissident Stalinists are worn-out people, incurably corrupted by Stalinist ideology, who haven't the slightest intention or capacity to do anything but grumble at the official CP and to demand a stagnant little pond of their own to splash in. It would be worse than stupid to entertain any illusions about a revolutionary party emerging from this Stalinist backwater. Nevertheless, it may be possible -- I don't have enough information to say -- that there may be a few earnest young people around these circles

who have been attracted by the slogan of an independent party. If so, it might be useful for us to try to establish contact with them.

* * * * *

We take it for granted that the first signs of serious dislocation in the economic conjuncture, or new developments in the international situation, or both of them together, will produce a new sentiment for a labor party based on the unions. But that is only one side of prospective development. We should not forget that a concomitant prospect - of the most vital importance for us and for the workers' movement in general - will be the emergence of a new selection of rebel youth who will be attracted, as individuals, to the idea of an independent revolutionary party. Such precious elements are apt to make their first appearances in all kinds of places. We should be alert to prevent the Guardian-Monthly Review-Cochranite combination from roping them in with their proposal for an "independent ticket in 1955" without specifications as to its program. If we devise the right tactical formula it seems to me it would open up the road for an educational-polemical campaign which would enable us to reach some of the worthwhile people in this movement as well as to solidify our own forces.

* * * * *

I have also been thinking for some time that we should subject the policy of the Cochranites, as it has developed since the split, to a critical examination. They can't stand much of that. A clinical analysis of the evolution of Cochranism could also be useful in the international movement. I believe an exchange of views on these questions in the NC would be timely now.

Fraternally,
J.P. Cannon

March 26, 1955

Dear Jim,

I delayed answering your letter of March 4 in the hope that we would be able to have some discussions on the ideas you presented. But this hasn't taken place and so I will give you my personal opinion for the time being.

We have had some organizational difficulties

in the N.O. which have hampered political functioning. Farrell has been on tour with brief returns to New York. A few breakdowns in health among staff members also slowed us down considerably. The basic routine is being maintained and with the return of Farrell I am sure we will get things rolling again. This is by way of an explanation for the tardiness of our response to your communications. Yesterday I talked to Morris, who has been keeping things going under these difficult conditions, and he said he was writing to you; so you should hear from him in a few days. Morris and Usick have been working on the International Resolution, which has kept them tied up.

I agree with your criticism of the Militant editorial on the Guardian's Third Party proposal. Actually the categorical formulation tends to lock us out of conducting an educational literary struggle, let alone any possible minor tactical moves designed to explore for serious young people.

I don't think an analogy with the Thirties is correct, precisely for the reasons you indicate; the Musteites and the left wing of the S.P. had a leftward moving section of their membership, receptive to our ideas, while the Guardian-Monthly Review membership remain ideologically imprisoned in Stalinism. In your letter to Morris you expand this idea and correctly conclude that the future cadres will not come from these sources.

Of course ultimatism, even when manifested in rigid editorial formulations, is a deadly disease that we should guard against at all times. It is wrong to take an ultimatic attitude toward any development. In that sense I can see the point of drawing on the examples of the Thirties.

The most important point you raise is the prospect of a revolutionary tendency emerging among the youth and what importance this has for the future of our movement. It is entirely correct to envision that a contest will take place for the allegiance of these youth. Our task in this process is to connect these youth with the rich traditions and ideology of international and American Marxism and to defeat the counterfeiters. This task is a current one. It must take place today in the form of ideological preparation of our own ranks and in struggle with other tendencies in the radical movement.

In this respect I think we should combat

all inclinations to regard our struggles with the revisionists of all forms as a finished chapter belonging to the dead past. We will be badly mistaken if we think we can "by-pass" even the Shachtmanites, as well as the Cochranites, in ideological battles. The awakening youth will examine all programs and tendencies. They will not take our word for anything. We will have to review and bring up to date all the great faction fights. These fights, after all, were not factional brawls. Nor were they concerned over obscure doctrinal fine points of interest only to a sect. They were ever the great programmatic issues of our epoch and they have burning meaning in the world today.

Take our work on the college campus. In my opinion both the Shachtmanites and the Cochranites are important opponents to our movement in this arena. Any attitude that we can turn our backs on them and work in unploughed territory is a dangerous half truth.

This does not mean that we are interested in any fusion or entry maneuvers with these people. Our only interest is how to smash them. But this must be done at every stage anew. And it must be done with ideological weapons.

I am worried that our student work will not get to first base until we've taken off our coats and done a job on the Shachtmanites. The brutal fact is that they have more on the campus than we do. And much more important, they stand in a position to disorient and demoralize awakening elements that are looking for a radical solution.

We ought to sail into this treacherous gang where they are in our way and show them up for what they are - would-be "left" advisors of the State Department. Instead, I must say that I detect a certain inadequacy and defensiveness among our people when they are confronted by some verbose Shachtmanite social patriot.

The same thing is true in a more important sense about the Sweezy-Cochranite bloc. We have to subject it to a merciless scrutiny. They are getting away with murder, because of our silence. The Cochranites are walking on air because the Monthly Review editors have paid them a left-handed compliment. In return the Cochranites praise these Moscow Trial Stalinists as "Marxists" with a "grasp of world realities".

The high road to the mass movement of the American workers will not be reached by some political helicopter which will land us right in the middle of a leftward moving mass of

workers. We are compelled to take tortuous side paths and engage in many a skirmish before we can reach the high road.

The fact is that the general ideological backwash in the U.S. has affected our movement. The whole anti-theoretical, a political, reactionary atmosphere causes even our own ranks to manifest indifference towards our past ideological struggles. The base of the party doesn't stand fully on the assimilated lessons of these struggles, ready to do battle with any and all comers. Notwithstanding the fight with Cochranism and Pabloism our people are politically apathetic. Such is the enormous weight of the alien pressure on the movement.

Perhaps I exaggerate, but I prefer to look at the situation cold bloodedly. You may remember that during the interim period in the fight with the Cochranites I told you that my impression was that you couldn't state a single proposition of American Trotskyism without being challenged on all sides within our own movement. This was the mood that formed the basis of a split. Today the situation has altered considerably. Every proposition of American Trotskyism can be stated unchallenged within the S.W.P. - but there aren't very many comrades who actively concern themselves with theoretical, historical and programmatic questions.

I'm in favor of opening a sustained polemical attack against all our opponents. I think the Cochranite-Sweezyite combination should be high on our list. The Shachtmanites a close second, particularly in the student field.

The next year should witness a double offensive on our part. On the one hand, our own analysis of the international situation, the colonial revolution, the defense of the historic correctness of Trotskyism on the Soviet Union, the conception of the combat party of the vanguard, must be brought up to date and sharpened. The internal logic of the Trotskyist theory must be restored and brought into harmony with the gigantic events of the post-war epoch. At the same time we must wage a tireless war against the servants of American imperialism and Stalinism. Particularly against the once removed servants, like the Cochranites and the Shachtmanites.

Trotskyism must again become dangerous to its opponents. And all that is required is that we activate our army of ideas. This will activate our movement on the right path.

I look forward to hearing more from you on the questions you have been writing about. I am convinced it is along the road of such thinking that we will find our next steps. I wish I was out there to participate in the discussions you will have with Farrell. Those discussions should serve to give our N.C. life a new lift and direction.

Fraternally,
Murry Weiss

RECRUITMENT PROBLEMS

Letter from J.P. Cannon to M. Stein
Letter from J.P. Cannon to M. Weiss

Los Angeles, Calif.
March 11, 1955

New York City.

Dear Morris:

... I was amused to see an ad in the Nation of February 26, page 188, for a publication called TURNING POINT which announces an "exposure" of the Cochranites. Tom sent for a copy and I have just looked it over. TURNING POINT - a mimeographed bulletin - is put out by a group of unofficial Stalinists who think the Cochranites have not recanted enough yet...

There are all kinds of little groupings of unofficial and dissident Stalinists around the country. Normally, such developments would provide a certain milieu for activity aimed at a revolutionary regroupment. This was the case, for example, 26 years ago when Trotsky began his work in exile after his deportation to Turkey. The first cadres of the Left Opposition were fished out of those dissident groupings, although very few of them were ever completely assimilated. However, in the process they provided a sort of bridge to newer, fresher and better elements.

The Cochranites are apparently concentrating on this milieu in the hope of finding the material for a new party. This represents a change from Cochran's original orientation toward the lower ranks of the CIO bureaucracy in favor of the more pronounced pro-Stalinist line of Clarke, Bartell and Frankel.

Whether he knows it or not, Cochran is a practicing disciple of the Deweyite school of "experimentalism". He is ready to try anything

once, and hopes to find the right formula in a process of trial and error. It is now becoming quite clear what he meant when he began to talk about "Americanizing" Marxism. Old-fashioned Trotskyism teaches that the program creates the party. The main idea of the Cochranite magazine - if it can be called an idea and not merely a gambler's hunch - is first to find some people for a new party, wherever they can be found, and then to find the program. That's "American" all right, but it certainly is not Marxist.

As I see it, there are two main differences between the present adventure of the Cochranites and the Trotskyist procedure of a quarter of a century ago.

First, the splinter splits of the earlier time were implicitly progressive. The present dissident groupings represent mainly a retreat and withdrawal, under pretext of minor disagreements with the American leadership of the CP, without rejecting the basic Stalinist ideology and practice on any point.

Second, Trotsky began his work by drawing a sharp line of programmatic demarcation, rejecting any compromise or conciliation with such dissident groups as the Brandlerites, Lovestoneites, etc., which clung to any part of the Stalinist line. The Cochranites are seeking to ingratiate themselves with the unofficial Stalinists by a deliberate policy of conciliation and adaptation.

From this point of view, the Militant editorial on the subject of the National Guardian's call for an independent ticket in 1956 was basically correct. I think, however, that we should bestir ourselves to get some accurate information about the situation in these stagnant circles of unofficial Stalinism preparatory to a systematic work of explanation and polemic on the general theme of revolutionary regroupment.

From what sources can the human material for a revolutionary party be expected to come in the next period, and on what basis can they be united? I think it would pay us to speculate over this question, with the object of concentrating our agitation in a certain definite direction. I don't think many forces, if any, will come from the stagnant pools of unofficial Stalinism. Another big difference in the present situation from that of the Thirties, is that there is no Social Democratic movement in existence which might be expected to throw up

a left wing. So there's nothing there either.

Worn-out and disillusioned radicals of any stripe, who really don't want to do anything but talk and complain, are poor prospects for a serious party. The same holds true, in the main, for routinized trade unionists. New people, primarily the young, who have nothing to lose, who have not been exhausted or mis-educated by other parties, who are capable of responding to a great ideal, are the best prospects.

I am inclined to believe that the most fertile field for preliminary recruiting will be found among the unemployed, the discriminated minorities, and the students who are beginning to graduate into the labor force without finding any jobs open. From that point of view such branches as Detroit, for example, should make Militant distributions on the lines at the unemployment compensation offices and on the campus of Wayne University. (I assume they are already doing this.)

Many sons and daughters of auto workers, who have been able to go to college during the lush times of full employment and over-time pay of their parents, will be finishing or dropping out of college without even being able to get a job on the assembly line; to say nothing of more preferred occupations which their education has presumably prepared them for. Such elements should be receptive to the idea of a drastic solution for an intolerable situation.

* * * * *

I am reviewing the history of the I.W.W. now, preparatory to writing a fundamental article on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, which comes up this summer. The I.W.W. did not recruit its main forces from the working class at large, although that was the original design. Circumstances of the time compelled the organization to direct its appeals and activities more and more toward those sections suffering from the most bitter deprivations at the time - the unskilled, the foreign born, and especially the western migratory workers who were unemployed half the time. From these sources, especially from the youth among them, the main cadres were assembled.

It was only later that the great idea of industrial unionism, popularized by the I.W.W. and the Debsian socialists, penetrated the broader mass of the proletariat and found explosive expression in the rise of the CIO.

In reconsidering the history of the I.W.W. it is essential, I think, to remember that it scored its first successes on the fringes of the main mass of the industrial proletariat and got its first recruits there. In the time-lag between the formulation of the program and its fusion with the mass, these fringe elements, who were actually the vanguard of the class at the time, served as carriers of the idea. They maintained the continuity of the movement and put enough flesh on its bones to keep it alive.

The history of early American communism shows somewhat the same picture in the role of the foreign born of the time. During the first ten years of the CP, its "English" branches never comprised more than 10 percent of the total membership, and at least 50 percent of the members of these "English" branches, as you know, were Americanized foreign born, mainly Jews. The foreigners and the Jews, with only a sprinkling of natives, were the carriers of the Communist idea in the pioneer days.

Then, in the next five years of the depression, the CP got its recruits mainly from the unemployed and the "lost generation" of students whose prospects for professional careers were closed off. In the last half of the Thirties, with the rise of the economic conjuncture, those cadres assembled in the unemployed councils and the youth movement, were sent into the factories and in many sections easily became the leaders of the tumultuous CIO movement.

These historical examples are worth pondering over. We can expect some sort of repetition of the process. But this time - the state of the world being what it is - the time-lag between the first large-scale recruitment from the most responsive elements and the explosion of the program into mass action should be what the convicts call "short time".

I would like to hear your thoughts on this subject.

Fraternally,
J.P. Cannon

Los Angeles, Calif.

June 2, 1955

New York City.

Dear Murry:

Now that I have the I.W.W. piece out of the way I am trying to catch up on some neglected correspondence, which includes your letter of March 26.

It is unfortunate that material and technical difficulties of the overloaded staff at the center, and their preoccupation with day to day tasks, have somewhat interfered with the necessary discussion and consideration of general questions of orientation. I was glad to note from recent minutes of the PC that steps are being taken to overcome this difficulty and make a better provision for the leading staff to cope with its political as well as its administrative functions.

If the daily routine is neglected the party machine slows down and grinds to a stop. We all know that. But, at the same time, we must not forget that the day to day work of a revolutionary political party is really meaningful only when it proceeds from a general view, which takes into account everything that has happened in the past and is constantly brought up to date by the recognition and assimilation of what is happening in the present. This takes time too. It requires occasional meetings freed from routine business and devoted only to the discussion of general questions, special meetings, not to take decisions on the spot but to bring out collective thinking and discussion preparatory to later decisions.

I believe that occasional thinking and discussion sessions of this sort are just as necessary in the branches as in the center; but of course the lead should come from the center, so that the branch discussions do not ramble in all directions without a focal point.

Edited transcripts of special sessions of the PC devoted to the discussion of general questions might be published in the Internal Bulletin to stimulate and direct the branch discussions of the same questions. Farrell's report on his tour, and the correspondence I have had with the center and a number of leading comrades, might also be published in the Internal Bulletin, so that we can share

our thoughts with the party membership and encourage them to make their own contributions.

* * * * *

It is important, I think for all the party members to get a clear view of the party as it is today, from all sides; to see its strength as well as its weakness in comparison with the movement which preceded it and out of which it arose; and to form a definite opinion of where our best prospects lie.

The organization of the revolutionary vanguard, as it is today, should not be judged merely by its size, but also by the acquisitions of thought represented by its program. The decisive importance of this consideration is strikingly emphasized when one takes some time to study and think about the past history of the American movement. This history is rich in what might be called "negative" lessons. There was a tremendous expenditure of energy in the old days, and much of it was unfruitful.

I have had occasion to delve into this subject in the course of preparing my pamphlet on the I.W.W. I found the documented studies already in print very useful in rounding out the views and conclusions even of one who participated in the old movements. Such a study can be even more instructive to the newer generation of party militants who have not yet fully related their own present movement to its ancestral beginnings.

The three most important books, which together give a fairly connected account, are:

- 1) THE FORGING OF AMERICAN SOCIALISM: ORIGINS OF THE MODERN MOVEMENT by Howard H. Quint; University of South Carolina Press, 1953. (This takes the movement up to the Unity Convention launching the Socialist Party in 1901.)
- 2) THE I.W.W.: A STUDY OF AMERICAN SYNDICALISM by Paul F. Brissenden; Columbia University Press 1920. (From 1905 to 1917.)
- 3) THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT, 1897-1912 by Ira Kipnis; Columbia University Press, 1952.

(There is nothing of any importance yet on the history of the Communist Party, except what we have written.)

These books reveal some very important differences in the movement which began to take shape half-century ago from the movement of the present. They strikingly illustrate the diverse and irregular roads along which the various sections of the working class movement have travelled toward their destined unification

on a revolutionary basis.

* * * * *

In the first two decades of the present century there was a teeming movement of the socialist vanguard, such as it was at the time. Socialist organizations ran ahead of trade union development, and were stronger numerically than they have ever been since. Long before the basic proletariat had attained the most elementary form of workers' organization into unions, the Socialist Party had over a hundred thousand members and received close to a million votes; and the I.W.W. had about ten thousand class conscious militants. At that time the entire membership of the trade union movement in all its branches was less than two million; and those unions were primarily organizations of skilled and privileged workers existing on fringe of modern basic industry where the real power lies.

Today we have an organized union movement about ten times as strong as in the old days, and it is rooted in basic industry, while the socialist political organization represented by the S.W.P. has far less than one-tenth as many members as the left wing of the Socialist Party and the I.W.W. (which was more a revolutionary party than a union).

At first glance one could draw the conclusion that the class movement of the workers is much stronger today while its organized vanguard is much weaker. This statistical approach to the problem has even led some superficial thinkers to conclude that the trade unions, and such politics as they may officially participate in as unions, are the whole movement, and that a separate party organization of the vanguard has no future.

But the figures tell only one side of the story. The history of American radicalism underlines the fact that the significance of the organization of the vanguard section of the class is determined not only by its numerical strength but also by its thought, and that the thought of the vanguard has a decisive influence on the evolution of the broader mass movement.

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The fatal weakness of the left-socialist and I.W.W. movement, as we can see it clearly today, was its inadequate and partly incorrect theory. It took the First World War and the Russian Revolution to reveal the full scope of

this fault, and then the terrible experience of Stalinism to confirm it once again.

The past is useful to us, or ought to be, for what it teaches. The past history of American radicalism has shown most convincingly that numbers, important as they are in and of themselves, cannot compensate for programmatic weakness. Incomplete and incorrect theories wrecked all the earlier attempts to build a revolutionary organization of the socialist vanguard. It ought to be clear by now that a numerically smaller vanguard movement with a better theoretical equipment would have been better and stronger. Numerical quantity is very important for a socialist organization, but programmatic quality is even more important. There has been plenty of experience in this country alone to convince us of that.

Our party today has the benefit of all the previous experience and its generalization in our program. We should judge the movement of today not only by its small size - a weakness which should never be discounted - but even more by the generalizing thought which it has acquired, in part by inheritance and in part by its own efforts.

This last acquisition is not to be underestimated, for it is the real strength of our party. It shows that we ourselves, since the death of Trotsky, have learned to think a little and to generalize experiences. But we can't go to sleep on our past attainments. We will go the way of all the others unless we keep on thinking; keep on looking at the whole picture as it evolves and changes, and relating our party work to it.

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The question of where to look for recruits is one that cannot be evaded; a party can break its neck by fumbling with this question. And it makes a big difference whether a party sees the best field clearly, and consciously steers toward it, or merely stumbles into it after costly detours. As I have said before, my own conclusion, from all the experiences up to date, is that all the old movements in this country are exhausted - not only in their own revolutionary potential, but also as primary sources of recruiting for a new revolutionary party.

Except for isolated individuals, the new troops for a radical revival in this country will come from fresh elements who have not gone through the experiences of Stalinist and

social reformist organizations; who will be pushed onto the road of radicalism by the conditions of their lives; and who will get their first introduction to revolutionary theory and politics from us.
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If we examine past history a little more closely we will see that every new revolutionary movement developed in this way. The new movements started out from the old, but at a certain stage of development had to turn to new fields. The I.W.W., which was a new movement and a big step forward when it started, got all of its initiating cadres from the older movements. The leaders of the Western Federation of Miners, for example, the most solid force in the original formation of the I.W.W., were all socialists—members of the Socialist Party. All the members of the first General Executive Board of the I.W.W. were members of the Socialist Party. The Socialist Labor Party contributed some contingents.
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But once the original cadres of the I.W.W. had straightened themselves out and settled accounts with the reformist socialist and the S.L.P. sectarians, they were compelled to turn their efforts outward. Thereafter, the I.W.W. recruited all its main troops from new, fresh elements who came into the revolutionary movement directly by way of the I.W.W.

The evolution of the early communist movement shows a similar pattern. As is known, the original cadres came from the left wing socialist movement, and few of them from syndicalism. But after the first few years of the mopping up operation in the Socialist Party, and of picking up individuals from the I.W.W., the Communist Party was compelled to break new ground. Thereafter the bulk of its subsequent recruits were new people who had never had any experience with the old movements.
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In the case of our movement, our preoccupation with the Communist Party, from which we sprang, was more protracted because the betrayal of Stalinism was not conclusively demonstrated in action. We had to rely on theoretical argument which anticipated future betrayals. Most of our recruits in the first five years of our existence came from the C.P., from people whom we were able to influence by ideas alone, without a convincing practical demonstration of the falsity of the Stalinist program.
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It took the fascist catastrophe of 1933, and the growth of a new radical movement generated by the economic crisis of the Thirties, and repelled by Stalinism, before we could turn our main efforts outward. If we look back on the record now it will show that the Stalinist movement ceased to be our main recruiting ground as long ago as 1933-1934. It would be hard to find anyone in the leading cadres of our party who came over to us from Stalinism after that time.

The policy of the C.P. in the ensuing 20 years produced wholesale defections, but it is a significant fact that more than 99 and nine-tenths percent of them either fell into demoralization and inactivity or went over openly as renegades to the bourgeois camp. This reveals the real character of American Stalinism most strikingly. Stalinism after 1933 produced candidates, not for a step forward to a more advanced organization, but just the contrary. The C.P., as a potentially revolutionary organization, and even as a primary source of recruits for a revolutionary party, was definitively finished 20 years ago.

If we had not recognized this from 1933 onward where would our movement be today? The answer to that is obvious. It would not exist. It would have been sunk without a trace. And deservedly so, for a party that doesn't know where to look and what to do is fit only to perish. We owe the survival and development of our party under all the pressures of the past 20 years to the fact that we never made one conciliatory gesture toward Stalinism, but waged an irreconcilable war against it and recruited out newer cadres in the course of that war.
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And where would our party be today if it had accepted the counsel of the Cochranites in 1952 and tried to snuggle up to Stalinism, either in the official or unofficial version? The answer to that is quite obvious too. The S.W.P. would have ceased to offer any convincing reason why any militant who mistakes Stalinism for communism should join us. He would prefer the original article to the shame-faced substitute and join the Stalinists. Or if he is already a member of the C.P., or one of its unofficial satellites, our conciliatory capitulation would only encourage him to stay there.
* * * * *

Los Angeles, Calif.
June 6, 1955

The principal errors of the Cochranites are nothing but traditional opportunism, which has played such a sorry role in the past. They began, like all opportunists before them, with the assumption that numbers are more important than program; that a group can travel faster if it travels light if the baggage of principle is discarded.

The Cochranites adopted the opportunist notion that a political grouping can grow by adaptation to others. This is a time-tested, get-rich-quick scheme that never worked yet. The net result has always been, and always will be, that the conciliatory adapter serves not the aims and interests which he presumably started with - they soon get lost in the shuffle - but the aims and interests of those to whom he adapts himself. This is glaringly illustrated already in the sycophantic genuflections of the Cochranites in the direction of the unofficial Stalinists.

Hit-and-miss experimentalism has always had fatal consequences for small political groups in the past. This result was made doubly certain for the Cochranites by their experimental jump into the wrong milieu, by their delusion that at least the dissident and unofficial Stalinists are all right, barring their endorsement of a few dozen or a few hundred crimes, murders and betrayals - and that they represent the future.

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I have related these latter considerations which are known, or which ought to be known, to all our comrades, merely to illustrate the points I began with - namely, that it pays to think and take stock of the whole situation, and then to get a clear picture of where the party's future prospects lie and move in that direction despite all obstacles.

Fraternally,
J.P. Cannon

Dear Farrell

This morning's radio carried the first flash report of the Ford settlement. Details were not given but the general outline is clear. Although the union compromised its original demands, it is evident that the company made some fairly substantial concessions which are to be written into a three-year contract. This settlement will probably set a pattern. The most important thing for us is to recognize the implications of this settlement with regard to the policy of both the big capitalists and the workers.

It is evident that the Ford Company has made some concessions which cost money, because it feels it can afford it. It is reasonable to conclude that the policy of big capital for the next period is to favor class peace as long as it does not interfere with big profits. That arrangement is far better and cheaper for them than fascism. They will not make a real assault on the unions until they feel the need to cut wages in order to maintain profits. They evidently feel that that time has not arrived. Consequently we can see in the Ford settlement further evidence of a deliberate shift away from open support of McCarthyism in the next period.

From the workers' side the Ford settlement and the pattern it will probably set, can be expected to strengthen the conservative trend in the union ranks and the control of the bureaucracy. If the bosses prefer to buy class peace with concessions, as long as they do not interfere with big profits, the workers also prefer the policy of peaceful reformism as long as it pays off in small concessions, or even if it only maintains existing standards.

The policy of reformism encounters opposition from the workers only when the capitalists can no longer afford to grant concessions and begin a deliberate policy of encroachment on the living standards previously attained by the workers. The policy of reformism becomes bankrupt in the labor movement only when it begins to produce losses in place of the previous gains. Then and only then can we expect the beginning of a new radicalization.

We have plenty of historical experience to prove this. The German example is classical. There, in the period before the First World War, the opportunist bureaucracy of both the unions and the party drew its support from the workers' satisfaction with steady improvement of their conditions in the general prosperity of the time. The workers prefer to improve their conditions without fighting as long as that appears to be possible.

In the deteriorated economic situation of Germany after the war, the conciliatory reformism of the right wing bureaucracy could not produce any more reforms or concessions. It could not even maintain those previously secured. That's when German communism began to grow and become a mass movement. This was not accomplished, however, simply by opposing revolution to reform, but rather by convincing the workers that a fighting revolutionary policy is the only way to defend and improve existing standards in the face of a genuine resistance from the capitalists. The communist movement grew in the fight for the daily needs of the workers, after it became fairly clear that a policy of peaceful reformism could no longer produce any results in this domain.

The German example is only one of many. The experience of the alternation of the workers' sentiments between peaceful class collaboration and revolutionary radicalism is universal. We have to keep this in mind in estimating American prospects, and remember that we can't force a change in the workers' attitude until conditions come to our aid. A serious movement of radicalization will be postponed as long as big capital feels able to grant even small concessions, and as long as the workers, even though mistakenly, give the opportunist policy of the bureaucracy credit for them.

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The enclosed clipping from the Los Angeles Times of June 5, supplies further interesting material on the current policy of American capitalism. The Los Angeles Times speaks for an important sector of the big money in this country, particularly the right wing. For that reason its policy is worth watching.

For a long time this paper supported McCarthyism, to the extent of at least 90 percent. The Los Angeles Times hung onto McCarthyism even after the big shift against it, as noted at the time of our last party convention, led up to the Senate censure. The Times editorial sharply opposed the censure motion.

But right after that, this paper also got in line with the new policy and disavowed McCarthy when he openly clashed with Eisenhower. That, to me, was one of the surest signs of the isolation of McCarthy in the top circles of American power.

Now comes this Times' article analyzing the results of the 1955 session of the California legislature -- which threw out a number of McCarthyite proposals -- with its matter-of-fact

introductory statement that 'what is popularly called McCarthyism is now strictly a political has-been'.

This Los Angeles Times article seems to supplement the Ford settlement, and to confirm the political trend of both classes toward maintaining the status quo and avoiding any showdown struggles. As long as the trade union bureaucracy can secure concessions, even small ones, by negotiation, the workers will not rise up against it. As long as concessions to the unions do not stop the flow of big profits the capitalist will not turn to fascist methods of frontal attack to break up the unions.

This does not improve the prospects for the expansion of our revolutionary party in the next period. But that's the way it is, as it looks from here. The lull in the class struggle gives us more time to prepare for the stormy future. That is the important thing to remember -- and make the most of.

Fraternally,
J.P. Cannon

REPORT OF NATIONAL TOUR

By Farrell Dobbs

Performance of the party in the Fund Campaign in which branches raised more than the \$15,000 quota pledged by the convention is a demonstration in total party terms of the good morale and general vitality I found in the branches on the tour. I discussed with the comrades the question of the sub campaign and found them ready to launch this action on a good practical basis.

In general there seems to be a realistic application of the convention orientation with a more or less rounded program of activities according to the particular conditions under which each branch is working. The union fractions required only a few minor corrections in policy, except for an important shift in orientation made by unanimous decision of the railroad fraction at a Twin Cities meeting in which I participated.

The shift is necessary because of new conditions arising from the merger. The fraction has been working for many years to build a left wing in the railroad unions, applying the general concepts of the transitional program

to this work. On the organization plane they advocated amalgamation of the many craft unions into a general industrial organization of the railroad workers. At one time this work was carried on around left-wing Railroad Councils working within the craft unions generally. Later a Committee for the Consolidation of Enginemen was formed as a result of new Openings to work for amalgamation of the B. of L.E. and B. of L.F. and E. That amalgamation did not go through.

At the next stage the fraction turned toward the United Railroad Operating Crafts, which had its origin on the West Coast, and then extended to other cities in the east. U.R.O.C. set out to organize an industrial union of the operating crafts, functioning as a rival union, opposing the craft unions through collective bargaining elections. U.R.O.C. developed strong opposition to the union shop because the craft union bureaucrats were able to use it against them. This led some U.R.O.C. elements who were non-political and essentially class collaborationist, into the trap of association with the *National Right to Work Committee* headed by Hartley, co-author of the Taft-Hartley law. That presented a serious problem to our people within U.R.O.C.

Meantime, as a direct result of the AFL-CIO merger process, rank and file members were dropping out of U.R.O.C. and going back into the craft brotherhoods, sensing that the motion toward amalgamation of the railroad unions could best be pushed through merging of the crafts as part of the general process of merger of AFL and CIO. Under these new conditions it was decided that the fraction should shift its orientation away from U.R.O.C. and back toward working in the craft unions and pressing for the amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial unions with a class struggle program.

On the witch hunt, there has been some easing of the attack on an over-all basis since the setback to McCarthy, but certain pressures on our people continue. There is an occasional victimization of individual comrades in their employment. A certain amount of attempted intimidation in such form as "red squad" attendance at public meetings takes place. General pattern seems to remain one of FBI harassing individual members, contacts and subscribers in an effort to scare people away from the party or out of it. Overall impression is that the party has learned to live with this situation and make the best of it, fighting back when there is realistic opportunity.

There are encouraging signs of a new youth crystallization in the party consisting of children of comrades, other young people recruited and a certain number of contacts. They include young workers and high school and college students. Branches have tended to provide special study classes and social activities for these youth and at the same time integrate them into general activities in such a way as to help spark branch work. There is no basis for a separate organization setup for them at this stage.

By an exact count, we have recruited 56 new members overall since the split. In each branch I asked what contacts they have that there is a reasonably good chance of recruiting in the next period. Answer: There is a total of 55 contacts whom the branches deem to be potential recruits. Also, the pattern of recruitment and of potential recruits is a rather general one throughout the party.

I found on the tour that the economic picture is a contradictory one. Certain industries have a definite boom which appears to be directly related to war production. In this category are such industries as aircraft, oil, electronics, chemicals. There is considerable plant expansion in these industries but there is a tendency for the increase in number of jobs to lag behind the rise in output due to automation.

There is a heavy volume of building construction. Commercially, it arises from plant expansion, from decentralization of industries and from necessity to erect new buildings for the purposes of automation. Also, it is significant that the huge insurance outfits and other financial institutions are putting up big new office buildings in many cities. General large scale building of homes continues, particularly in the suburbs.

There is a certain trend of the middle class and higher-paid workers to move into the suburbs and commute to and from their jobs in the city. This has the effect of increasing the proportion of lower paid workers and segregated minority peoples in the cities proper and creates a conservatized population belt around the cities. As a result of this suburban trend and due to a general pattern of residential expansion there is home building going on most everywhere. The down payments are generally low on new homes and there is usually a 20 or 30 year mortgage, creating an easy credit

situation. There is a little tapering off in a few places but the general pattern is one of a continued high level of building construction.

The auto production race is another big factor in general economic upturn. They are breaking all previous output records. 216,000 for last week which is 20,000 above the previous high of 196,000 reached in 1952. So far as I can judge, the present rate of production is about half again as high as the expected sales volume for the year. It would thus seem they will have filled their production quotas for the year by midsummer. Cars are not selling as fast as the papers would indicate. Signs often appearing outside car salesrooms say "Come in and make us an offer". The used car lots are jam-packed. Low down payments are asked for them and here and there a sign reads "No money down".

Auto workers in every center where I could make a direct check seem to have no confidence that present rate of employment for them will last beyond June. They are grabbing all the overtime they can get. Six days is quite common, some get in seven days a week. As auto slumps, there will be a crimp in steel production, which is now operating at 96% of capacity, and the glass industry, etc., will be adversely affected.

Some industries are in chronic slump. Coal is a very sick industry because of oil and gas competition. Introduction of Diesel engines in place of steam locomotives on railroads is robbing coal of a principal market. Textile industry show a general decline. Very low level of activity in shipyards, seems about as low as in the early 30's. Another factor depressing some sectors of industry is the monopoly big corporations are getting in war production. For instance, GM monopoly on tanks seems to put a big crimp in outfits like the Baldwin locomotive plant in Philadelphia, the heavy machinery industry around Milwaukee, etc.

Some industrial areas in state of economic decline. In Boston a chronic slump has developed. The region from Pittsburgh to Youngstown in steel is becoming depressed by the shifting of production to new plants in other places. When national steel production was down to 65% of capacity last year, Youngstown was down to 52%. Coal slump affects most of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, etc. Around Milwaukee, unemployment was 7,000 higher in February of this year than in August of last year, the month of

the highest 1954 unemployment in that city.

Employment in general in the northern industrial areas is being hit by the runaway shop and by the general process of decentralization. The decentralization of Armour will soon have reduced Chicago operations to one half the former plant area. Corporation mergers are tending to reduce employment, as did the merging of Nash and Hudson to form American Motors. Everywhere automation is cutting down employment. Through automation in the Dearborn Engine plant Ford can turn out about the same hourly output as before but with only half as many workers. Speedup is having a similar adverse affect on employment. The general picture is one of a terrible speedup in industry.

Technological change is also cutting into the jobs of the skilled workers. They have a plastic body in auto that they can stamp out in one stroke, after which the doors are sawed out. This eliminates skilled workers as well as production workers. In the packing industry, they have a device that automatically skins the hides off steers with less danger of cutting the hide than was the case with the highly-skilled skinners who are being replaced by the machine. Steam locomotives will soon be as rare as horses and the skilled boilermaker as rare as the horeshoer. They are rationalizing the maintenance work in plants, farming it out to subcontractors who introduce now technological devices and production line methods. Quite a number of layoffs of skilled workers will result.

Unfortunately, direct observations of the south cannot be reported, but I am sure it would be interesting and instructive. The strikes that are taking place indicate that.

Even the official national statistics show there is creeping unemployment in the country, with around 3,000,000 unemployed reported. Actually the figure is much larger. Unemployment is up and down by areas. In the so-called good areas there is still considerable unemployment. In bad areas, the job situation is sometimes very bad. There is a tendency in the poor employment areas for the younger, more aggressive elements to pull up stakes and go to cities where they hear jobs can be found. This helps to build up a "labor reserve" even though a favorable employment pattern may exist in an area.

There is an upward trend in the number of people on relief, arising in part from this migration but more importantly from the fact

that quite a number of workers are running out of unemployment compensation without finding a job. Moreover, there is the same official tendency as in the 30's to drive down the relief allowances and impose stiffer eligibility rules for relief.

The corporations are taking advantage of this "labor reserve" that results from the creeping unemployment. There is increased discrimination against minorities in hiring. This is reflected in the tendency of minorities to cling to a job even though whites are quitting because work is hard or dirty and jobs can be found elsewhere. Increased discrimination in hiring tending to drive minorities into lower paying jobs. Two-third of the people on relief in Detroit last winter were reported to be Negroes. Around 4,000 Mexican people in Chicago area were brutally deported.

There are many plants refusing to hire women, even where they have hired them before. This is generally true in auto, for example, is creeping into the electrical industry, etc. In some cases where women are now employed they shift them to work they can't stand up under physically in order to force them out. Forcing women out of industry does not resolve the fact that one wage earner is seldom enough in a family and they have to take lower paying jobs. The result is a reduction in the family income.

The speedup pressures are terrific and growing worse. Corporations are firing workers for failing to meet production quotas and have been carrying out disciplinary suspensions against workers who protest through slowdowns or mass epidemics of sickness. The union bureaucracy tends to act in effect as speedup police for the corporations.

I heard of actual cases where workers had been goaded to desperation under the speedup pressures and for want of anything else to do had physically attacked the foreman. It is a manifestation of the wrath that is building up among some elements of the working class. The conditions in some GM plants are said to be worse than they were before the UAW was organized. If there ever was a situation heading for a blowup this seems to be it.

I found in the general mood of the workers a feeling of insecurity, much apprehension and a great deal of confusion. There is a lot of concern about atomic fall-out and fear of an H-bomb war. There seems to be a general reali-

zation that the U.S. will not be spared from death and destruction at home in another major war. The "Dig and Pray" dictum added to fear of H-bomb war. At the same time there is a general tendency to favor war production as a means of employment for want of a better alternative.

Uncertain of the future, the workers try to earn all they can while they can. They try to develop a maximum family earning capacity. If they have a bit of luck in hiking the family earning capacity they tend to live a little higher, going in for installment buying on a larger scale, maybe even starting payments on a new home. At first they seem quite prosperous. But they have themselves bogged down with a debt problem, because of which loss of a week's pay thrusts them into a crisis. That is a pretty damn flimsy kind of prosperity. Meanwhile they watch the process of automation unfold and wonder, how far is it going to go, how long is my job going to last.

Another thing I perceived is a marked tendency of the family to turn inward. Concentrate on the home. Get a car, a big-screen television set. Go in heavily for "Do It Yourself" gimmicks. They become slaves to their houses, lawns and gadgets in an effort to find escape from the grim realities of an outside world torn by the contradictions of capitalism in its death agony.

In general I find confirmation of the convention evaluation of the workers illusions about the labor Democratic coalition, the belief they can solve their problems through the Democratic party. I would add only that their illusions seem to rest less on what can be done with the Democratic party as it has been and somewhat more on the hope that labor can reform the Democratic party and thus make it serve the workers needs. It seems to be the general opinion of the masses that everyone is entitled to economic security and that government should make good on that social obligation. When they fail to achieve it through the Democratic party this fact will imply to them that labor should take over the government.

The student youth, in high school and college look to a very dubious future. I asked many people about the thinking of high school students and received this general answer: They cannot make any real plans for the future. They are hampered in finding suitable jobs because they are draft bait. As a result it is

not at all unusual for them to volunteer after graduation to get it over with. Recruiting officers appear in the schools seeking such volunteers not only for the regular military forces but also for the Womens Army Corps which has some striking sociological aspects.

Among the main components of the WAC are young girls who graduate from high school, have no basis for college training and don't want to go into an office or sales job. They become attracted by the promises they will learn a skill in the WAC. The second category are girls who have run into one or another kind of personal frustration in the family, the community, etc. A third and lesser category are in the WAC to make a career of it like 30-year men in the regular army. There appears to be an above average percentage of women in the WAC who are abnormal sexually.

On the one hand this new experience draws these young women out of their narrow community life into contact with women from the country at large and if they are sent abroad they see other people, other cultures and get a certain impact of the opinion of other world peoples about the U.S. This serves to broaden their thinking some. On the other hand they pass from the first stage of frustration into a whole new pattern arising from the failure of the WAC experience to gratify their needs.

There is a high percentage of students from working class families in colleges near industrial areas. These elements are partially conscious of the class struggle because of family experience in the union movement. They tend toward an open minded approach to all political points of view and show new signs of resistance to thought-control on the campus. Some students are veterans of the Korean war and former industrial workers. After the Korean war they got jobs in industry and then they got laid off in 1953-54 slump whereupon they invoked their GI rights and went to college. Question in their minds is, what will things be like when they finish school?

The comrades in L.A. told about a very interesting poll taken by a capitalist organization among high school students. Here are the figures given on student opinion: 80% say there is no competition in business. 60% think owners of industry get too much profit. 61% reject the profit motive as necessary to maintain production. 55% accept the concept "from each according to his

ability, to each according to his needs." 66% think a worker should not produce all he can.

A number of recommendations were made by the branches regarding the paper. Comrades stress the value of material on the workers' conditions, experiences, struggles; what they think, etc. Central to the carrying of such material, of course, is cooperation from the comrades in the field. Articles are requested on socialism, what it is and how it will work, pegged to current events. Several mentioned a desire to see a revival of something like V. Grey's *SHOP TALKS ON SOCIALISM*. Need is stressed for material showing how socialism can be established without it producing Stalinism; also how the socialist alternative can provide full employment without resort to war production.

A general desire is expressed for publication on a continuing basis of a concise transitional program that will serve to orient a class-struggle left wing in the mass movement. Included should be the Labor Party slogan, which Detroit also asked be restored at the top of page 1 in suitable form; the 30-40 demand which has real cogency; nationalization of industry under workers control as applied to the problem of runaway plants, mergers, decentralization and production cutbacks; demands relating to minority people, women workers, youth; anti-war slogans, etc. Special thought should be given to the speedup issue in this general connection.

Numerous requests were made for a pamphlet on desegregation that should be published as soon as possible and a pamphlet on the H-bomb, presenting our anti-war position.

In San Francisco we have a promising development of material means to aid the general party publishing program. Jones has a veritytype machine and Bailey an offset press and the photographing setup for publishing purposes. We can get a neater job done with less paper than we use now for Bulletins. We can photograph and reproduce excerpts from books. We think we can soon envisage production of pamphlets which can be illustrated with pictures and cartoons.

While in Los Angeles at the end of the tour I had a series of talks with Comrade Cannon about the objective situation and the position of the party and its perspectives. The gist of this discussion follows:

The movement as a whole has made enormous advances in the last 50 years. "As a whole", means both the unions and the politically

organized vanguard. The unions represent the mass scope and power of the workers' movement. The vanguard elements represent the consciousness of the movement. The workers as a class can be said to reach maturity only when their mass organizations which arise instinctively have acquired a consciousness of the historic goals. The great weakness and anomaly of the present labor movement is the separation of the conscious vanguard from the instinctive mass movement.

Fusion of these two aspects of the general movement of the workers should be regarded as the next stage in the evolution of the movement as a whole. It will signify the movement's approach to maturity and preparation for accomplishment of its historic mission. Fusion will probably take place as tumultuously as the rise of the CIO. The two essential elements for fusion are already prepared to a greater degree than is generally realized. 1) Organization of the workers exists on a scale not dreamed of by the industrial union pioneers. 2) The vanguard has assimilated the basic theory of Marxism, generalized all the experiences of the last half century, particularly it has absorbed the Leninist concept of the party as the indispensable element for social revolution. Thus, the vanguard has advanced ideologically in a ratio commensurate with the mass growth of the unions.

The party must always view itself as part of the working class. Development of the instinctive mass movement and the class conscious vanguard proceeds along parallel lines. Expansion of the vanguard depends on the activity of the mass movement as induced by class struggle, but this dependence is not absolute. Although both the mass movement and the vanguard arise from the same causes, they proceed at different paces and to a certain extent, independently. The mass movement can develop up to a certain point without the direction of the vanguard. The vanguard can be active even when the class struggle is relatively dormant. Its existence in such periods and even some modest growth is made possible by theoretical clarification which leads to individual recruits.

The basic test of the cadre is not its size but its development of program. A qualitative programmatic advance has been made over the immature cadre of an earlier period. The program remains the basic requisite for expansion of the revolutionary nucleus and even for maintaining its existence and self-confidence. The program and cadre have been forged by the process

of fission and fusion; polarization in the early CP, 1928 split; fusions after 1934, series of splits since 1940.

The key vanguard question of the present period is, what kind of a party? The October revolution established the hegemony of the Leninist conception of the party. Stalinism introduced an implicit but unstated revision of this concept. Trotsky defended the Leninist concept and it was accepted in the 1930's by the leftward moving elements of the AWP and SP whom we attracted to Trotskyism. But today the Leninist concept is challenged as being necessary to achieve the socialist goal by dissident Stalinists, Cochranites, Schachtmanites, Johnsonites.

Stalinism is the chief cause of the disruption of the vanguard in the post-Lenin era. Their press is getting better reception in the mass movement today with their pro-Democratic line. They are preparing to take the necessary losses in the union mergers and there are signs of new colonizations by the Stalinists to offset anticipated losses. They are seeking a de facto political bloc with the union bureaucracy, pushing their coexistence line and all that implies. Stalinism must be met squarely in programmatic differentiation in order to assemble the cadres of the vanguard party.

Yet the Cochranites are slurring over questions of program, especially the question of Stalinism. They place the question of size above that of program. They search for milieu among retrograde tendencies. They seem to be shifting away from the union bureaucracy toward the dissident Stalinists on the general idea that they must first find some people and then piece together a program. They endorsed the National Guardian's call for an independent ticket in 1956. The only viable elements such a movement can be expected to attract are those that come to that wrong address attracted by the idea of an independent party. We should explore this situation incognito and keep an eye on the Cochranites generally. At present, it is only a secondary field of attention for us and should be dealt with polemically on appropriate occasions.

We should also watch for a peg to make an attack on the Schachtmanites on two points. One, advocacy of slowing down the class struggle to aid imperialism, which is social patriotism. Two, participation in the Democratic party primaries, which is class collaboration. Their

line traces to their Russian position as does their theory of abandoning the concept of a vanguard party to function as a loyal left wing of the social democracy. The dissident Schachtmanites lean toward a new version of the Debsian SP. We should debate with the Schachtmanites only on carefully chosen occasions where they have somebody we want. It should not be made a general practice. That would divert from and obstruct our main work.

Our main source of recruits will not be among Schachtmanites, dissident Schachtmanites, Cochranites, or dissident Stalinists. The central function of our polemics against these elements is to educate and harden our own cadres, and prevent these opponents from confusing our prospective recruits. Our main arena will be among the awakening elements in the general mass movement, especially the unemployed, the minority peoples, women workers and the youth generally.

Comrade Cannon will develop this idea in an article on the 50th anniversary of the IWW, which made an attempt to fuse vanguard and mass and was essentially a revolutionary movement despite its syndicalist limitations. The IWW had a good program for basic industry but met an impasse because it was ahead of its time in this sphere. It got its main response among elements like the harvest hands who were a less significant force than the workers in basic industry, but such mass elements did help to forge cadres.

Today, the employed workers are the source of greatest power. Employment remains stabilized for a major component of the working class. There is conservatism in the unions and the workers adhere generally to Democratic party politics. The bureaucracy bases itself on the stabilized, privileged elements. But capitalism can't provide full employment. A definite series of strata are left in an unstable position.

Just as the IWW based itself on the most responsive elements in its time, we work today to recruit among the unprivileged, unstabilized strata. The unemployed have less power than the employed but they have less to lose and are more responsive to the revolutionary program, as are the minority peoples, the women workers and the youth. These elements need more than a union program. They will respond to an indictment of the system as a whole and to a broader transitional program towards socialism. We must put most weight in their direction.

There is a possibility of an anti-Reuther left wing in the UAW and also some stirring against the MacDonald regime in steel. But there is no basis for us to develop any power bloc policy in the unions. A conservative bureaucracy is consolidated against us. There is little or no local autonomy. Even grievance fights are largely checkmated by national policy. We can't do much fraction work with the small grievances. In this sphere also we can move only as the workers move. We should watch for reactions to the heavy speedup pressures but be careful not to go off half-cocked. In general, we must keep pretty quiet in the unions, strive for realistic circulation of the paper and work on individuals with our socialist program.

The paper should slash away at the union bureaucracy. It should hit them for their callous indifference to the speedup. It should bear down on incidents like the fate of the Hudson workers in the American Motors merger, which seems outwardly to represent the bad effects of competition but basically it reflects the need for fewer workers in the auto industry as a whole. We should begin to emphasize the negative aspects of the guaranteed annual wage and push 30-40 stronger. The GAW question should be raised to a sociological demand. We must be prudent on this question during the present UAW contract fight. Study it carefully and elaborate our position in the NC before projecting it in the paper.

This is a hard period for those who can function only in action. They need the inspiration of the broad historic view and awareness of the larger aspects of current political developments and of the role of the party as the conscious element in the movement as a whole. The comrades must be able to see that our work is not simply a dull, holding operation but one of solving new problems in a new historic period. One of preparing for great coming events, a scent of which is already in the air.

Nor do we have to start from scratch. We stand on the shoulders of the pioneer revolutionists. The basic cadre is already in being. Our task is to augment the cadre, to perceive change, to detect trends, project the program and be ready to move with the masses when they move.

The next Plenum should further elaborate the party orientation along the following general lines: Historic evaluation of the position of the cadre; analysis of the current

objective situation and trends. adoption of the definitive draft of the political resolution as directed by the convention; adoption of the document on international developments; and projection of a propaganda offensive in connection with the 1956 presidential campaign.

May 3, 1955