

# INTERNAL BULLETIN

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## COMRADE HANSEN'S DEPARTURE FROM MARXIST MATERIALISM

By Marvin Towns

Here in Flint we looked forward with particular eagerness to the document by Comrade Hansen. We received the documents by Stevens and Ring among others, but none of them developed a rounded position or represented the thinking of a responsible political personality of the leadership. What made our eagerness extremely sharp was our thinking on the problem of how America fits into the general world scene in view of the tremendous changes that have occurred since World War II and in view of the rearmament and reorientation of the world movement.

Comrade Hansen says nothing about these problems; either he doesn't know that they exist or he chose to ignore them. Instead we received this juridical concoction. He feels that a tendency has developed in the party that is (a) pessimistic about the American proletariat; (b) that sees something progressive in Stalinism. Hansen seeks to "defend Trotskyism," particularly Trotsky's appreciation of Stalinism, from the "conciliationists." He also seeks to defend the orientation of the Third World Congress from the "opportunists." In reality Comrade Hansen's efforts are of such a nature that he reveals much more than he desired to reveal.

In his alleged defense of Trotskyism against this "talk" about a basic revision he quotes liberally from everywhere to prove that nothing warrants a revision, that nothing has changed. Comrade Hansen totally ignores the fact that a fundamental change has occurred, not in our analysis of the nature of Stalinism but in the world situation, in the relationship of class forces on a world wide scale. Comrade Hansen in reality ignores the essence of the political orientation of the world movement. What Hansen sees as a new subjective appreciation of the political nature of Stalinism is in reality a new appreciation of the objective world situation.

That this confusion exists in Comrade Hansen's mind is by no means accidental, because counterposed to the materialist orientation of the world movement he expresses a political view that is idealistic to the core. The difference reveals itself as one of philosophical method: materialism versus idealism.

Idealists are people who do not use the material world as the starting point of an analysis. On the contrary they have inherent in their subjective appreciation of a situation a pre-conceived idea, and try to fit all their observations of the material world into the pattern of that idea. For the idealist it is the consciousness of the brain that is essential for the existence of everything external to the brain; if the brain did not exist, the world would not exist. Materialists on the other hand proceed in an entirely different manner. They begin their analysis by carefully examining the elements of the material world that they live in, and on the basis of this analysis form an idea of a given situation. From the earliest days of the working class movement it has been necessary to fight against idealists who have cropped up inside and outside its ranks. Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky all had to spend much of their time fighting against this disease so fatal to a working class party.

The documents of the Third World Congress develop a number of ideas that are most relevant to the problem at hand. I arbitrarily present them as four points:

1. The new world situation is characterized by a fundamental shift, favorable to the world proletariat, in the equilibrium of class forces.

2. The tendency will be in the direction of an aggravation of the shift during the first period of the final struggle between the two social systems. (The factors causing the shift, the developing revolution in China, the anti-imperialist struggles in the Far East, Middle East, Africa and South America, the advanced decomposition of world capitalism, etc. will all tend to accentuate the shift).

3. The international mass revolutionary pressure can no longer be maintained within the framework of narrow bureaucratic limitations.

4. The relationship between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Stalinist parties on the one hand and between the Stalinist parties and the proletariat on the other hand tend to be less characterized by their static content and more by their dynamic content.

Comrade Hansen in his alleged struggle against opportunism seeks to take refuge behind the opening phrase of the following quotation from the Third Congress: "Under certain exceptional conditions Stalinist parties under the impact of mass upsurges may project a revolutionary orientation, i.e., of seeing themselves obliged to undertake a struggle for power." However, for those comrades who are more concerned with the essence of a political orientation rather than with a particular quotation to prove a point, it follows from the thesis of the Third World Congress and most particularly from its analysis of the nature of the coming war, that these exceptional conditions will become more generalized.

That should be our starting point in seeking to orient ourselves politically in the next period. Comrade Pablo, for example, sees in this development, the tendency for these exceptional conditions to become more generalized, a fundamental factor for guiding the tactical orientation of our sections in a number of countries ("World Trotskyism Rearms"). It is also for this reason that Comrade Pablo made the prediction that the first phase of the revolution in France during the course of the coming international civil war will take place under the leadership of the Stalinists.

What does this mean? Does it indicate that our co-thinkers have changed their position on the nature of Stalinism? Quite the contrary, their appreciation of the nature of Stalinism remains unaltered; but they understand fully the changes that have occurred in the relationship of class forces, the full revolutionary potential of the developing war situation and the dynamics of the contradictory role that it imposes upon Stalinism.

Comrade Hansen's idealistic approach to those elements of the contradictory nature of Stalinism, which have revealed themselves in progressive developments, and which he seeks to obscure with the cry of exceptionalism have blinded him to an appreciation of those fundamental material changes that will be decisive in the next phase of the class struggle.

Comrade Hansen's preoccupation with idealistic criteria governs his approach to every problem. On the question of foreign policy,

for example, he tells us, "The contradiction in the Kremlin's foreign policy resides in the antagonistic need for the caste to maintain the status quo while still appearing as the banner bearer of the socialist revolution in order to attract the necessary following of masses desirous of changing the status quo by ending capitalism." From this observation he derives the contradiction that gives birth to the perfidious role of Stalinism. He even reminds us that Trotsky labelled Stalinism the syphillitis of the working class. With this need of the Kremlin in mind, the need for the Kremlin to maintain the status quo which it does by perfidy, etc., Comrade Hansen seeks to establish a fixed point of observation. It is through this lens of the "status quo" that everyone must look in order to get a correct historical view of the caste reigning in the Kremlin.

Comrade Hansen falls into the pit common to all idealists. Solely occupied with the idea of the "perfidious caste" he ignores a whole series of fundamental material changes that alter the material basis of the Kremlin's foreign policy. Those factors that must constitute a new framework for our analysis are the advanced decomposition of capitalism and the rupture of the equilibrium between imperialism and the world proletariat in favor of the latter. If Comrade Hansen has failed to learn some lessons from the developments in China, the Kremlin has not. In the countries of Eastern Europe and most particularly in China the importance of these factors can be easily demonstrated.

For example, the vacuum created by the decomposition of the Kuomintang (the organ of a comprador bourgeoisie) was a decisive factor in the rapid victory of the Chinese Communist Party. The extreme rapidity of the flow of events after the fall of Yen-an limited in both time and space the area of maneuverability of the Kremlin. History placed the Kremlin face to face with an accomplished fact. Furthermore this new situation contains within itself certain broader theoretical implications. The characterization of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a Bonapartist caste basing itself (among other factors) upon an equilibrium between the proletariat and world imperialism has been classic in our movement. A radical rupture in this equilibrium, and such is constituted by the advancing decomposition of capitalism, alters the area of maneuverability of the bureaucracy in any situation, inside or outside the borders of the Soviet Union. The development of the Chinese Revolution gives us an interesting indication of the probable evolution of events in the Far East and in Europe in the coming international civil war.

All of this in no way indicates that the Kremlin has not played a perfidious role, or is not playing a perfidious role, or that it is any the less "syphillitic." However if we are to play a key role in the ultimate destruction of Stalinism we must guide our perspective not on the basis of a preconceived idea devoid of material content but on the basis of Stalinism being an organic element of the living scene. To do otherwise would be to lose our revolutionary potential in the mire of sectarianism.

Comrade Hansen reveals the same type of sterile thinking in his discussion on the politics of the bureaucracy. He tells us, "The objective frame of Stalin's politics is determined by the interests of the caste. The limits are set by the new social relations in the Soviet Union. It is extremely important to note this well." He ob-

viously seeks to demonstrate that Stalinism is an immutable phenomenon, and that it represents a fixed category in society. It follows of course from this line of reasoning, that the role of Stalinism is also fixed and immutable.

However a few problems pose themselves. What are the interests of the caste? One has always been and remains fundamental, the drive for self preservation. This drive expresses itself in a myriad of contradictory forms and interests that vary from situation to situation and from period to period. It is evident for example that the interests of the Kremlin expressed themselves in an entirely different manner before and after the fall of Yanan. Similarly, the interests of the Kremlin in Eastern Europe expressed themselves in an abrupt change in policy after the inauguration of the Marshall Plan and again with the establishment of the "Atlantic Community."

Another problem poses itself. What are the limits set by the new social relations in the Soviet Union? For an interesting discussion of certain aspects of this problem I refer the comrades to the excellent articles by Comrades Germain and Pablo in the last issue of the magazine. In these articles Comrades Germain and Pablo demonstrate that all the recent developments inside the Soviet Union confirm once more Trotsky's appreciation of the nature of the bureaucracy. However, another interesting phenomenon observed in these articles is a process of differentiation that is occurring inside the ranks of the bureaucracy. The fundamental material basis for this process lies in the tremendous achievements in industry and technology in the Soviet Union since the October Revolution.

While there are limits set by the social relations inside the Soviet Union, they are not fixed, absolute, or entirely static but are entirely subject to the dynamics of the international class struggle. Again by his sterile idealistic consideration of "limits" and "interests," Comrade Hansen places an obstacle in our path and makes the task of arming ourselves with a fuller understanding of the living reality of Stalinism infinitely more difficult. While Comrade Hansen's thinking is apparently not subject to change, living reality is, be it palatable or unpalatable.

In his study of the "origin of the differences" and the "test of recent events" Comrade Hansen demonstrates a most lamentable example of where Stalinophobic and peurile idealistic considerations can lead. The essence of these sections of his document is a warning. He warns us against drawing illicit political conclusions from the sociological changes that took place in Eastern Europe. And further he cites as evidence of the unfavorable political consequences of the "overturns" in Eastern Europe the resultant "muddiness" of the consciousness of the workers and peasants of Eastern Europe and even of certain members of the party.

For my part, a Marxian materialist approach to the problem is fundamentally different from that employed by Comrade Hansen. First of all he fails to make any distinction between the sociological and political, the line separating them and the relationship between them are left entirely undefined. Apparently confused ideas are easier to juggle than those that are well defined.

The changes that took place in Eastern Europe are of a fundamental nature. That is our starting point. These changes are characterized by the destruction of the bourgeoisie and by the introduction of new relations of production and a nationalized and planned economy. That is what is essential for our understanding of the problem. This new essence reveals itself in an episodic form characterized by bureaucratism, "muddiness" of the consciousness of the proletariat, etc. Our political consideration of the problem of Eastern Europe and the rest of the world for that matter must be governed by what is essential and not by the form in which the essence reveals itself. Hansen, the true idealist, proceeds from consciousness (form). A materialist proceeds from the changed structure (essence).

Hansen is so preoccupied with the problem of "muddiness" that he ignores a number of "incidental" aspects of the problem. Namely the fact that the revolution in Eastern Europe, plus the developing revolution in China, places one-third of the earth's population outside the orbit of imperialism; and further that the developments in China (to borrow the words of Comrade Pablo) potentially seals the fate of all of Asia; and further that these developments have precipitated world capitalism into a period of constant crisis and places it in a disadvantageous position at the outset of a war between two social systems. Hansen limited in scope by his narrow idealism also ignores the fact that the spread of the revolution outside the borders of the Soviet Union has already demonstrated overtly (Yugoslavia) and covertly (China and Eastern Europe) that many of the necessary pre-conditions exist (in nuclear form) for the revolutionary destruction of Stalinism.

Another conception that reveals the total abstraction of Hansen's idealistic contemplation of the real nature of the development of the world revolution is demonstrated in the following passage (Page 19): ". . . for counter-revolution permeates Stalinism so that everything it touches becomes contaminated, even such actions as can be considered progressive in and of themselves are infected by counter-revolution and in relation to other factors are not progressive." (Underlined in the original.)

What a manner for a revolutionary to proceed in this decisive struggle between two social systems. Considerations about the degree of "contamination" of one or another political form; concern for the degree of "infection" of everything that Stalinism has "touched." Hansen must mean a "pure revolution" as the other factors in the equation which render progressive actions "not progressive." Let Hansen spend his time looking for pure forms, uncontaminated revolutions, we nonetheless must continue to live in this world with our feet placed solidly on the ground. We must place ourselves inside the camp of the world revolution as we know it today and constantly distinguish that which is fundamental in the world revolution from the innumerable aberrations in form.

Hansen's light minded approach to concrete political problems occasionally leads him into the realm of the absurd. Take for example the passage on Page 9: "Let the comrades who believe that Stalinism is subjectively counter-revolutionary but objectively revolutionary turn back and read these questions again. Don't they imply that a force that can lead revolutions is not counter-revolutionary? Isn't the leadership the subjective factor in a revolution? Isn't Stalinism

therefore subjectively revolutionary?. . . and if Stalinism is both objectively and subjectively revolutionary isn't it revolutionary through and through?"

Posing these questions in such a fashion demonstrates a remarkably superficial view of a dialectic and materialist conception of history. The relationship between the objective and subjective is by no means a problem of simple mechanics. First of all, the leadership is only one of the subjective factors in a revolution. Other subjective factors are for example the consciousness of the masses and the degree of confidence the masses have in their leadership. Hansen here again confuses form and essence. History offers many examples of phenomena that were objectively revolutionary but led by subjectively inadequate forces. If we regard revolutions not as isolated acts but as part of an historic process, that which is most often lacking in the process of carrying out of a revolution to its necessary conclusion is the historical consciousness of the proletariat and its leadership. Therein lies the role of the Marxist party, to give objectively revolutionary phenomena their fullest content of historical consciousness. Trotsky in his "History of the Russian Revolution" found it necessary to discuss at great length the complex nature of the factors governing the relationship between the objective and subjective factors in a revolution. To pose the problem in the simple mechanical form that Hansen does is to ignore two decades of Trotskyist thinking.

In the "Strategic Concept of World Revolution" Comrade Hansen tells us that it is necessary to maintain the purity of our doctrine in order to achieve the final victory over world capitalism, and that all our tactics are subordinated to achieving that final victory. Here again Comrade Hansen unfortunately forgets an "incidental," namely, the living process of the world revolution. While our historical justification lies in the correctness of our ideology, between this ideology and the accomplishment of the world revolution there lies a gap. This gap can only be filled by our active participation in the process of world revolution as it exists, with all its impurities. For it is only in action that we will convince the world proletariat that our ideology and only our ideology will enable world revolution to be carried out to its necessary conclusion.

Further Comrade Hansen tells us "unless the international working class drives forward in the main capitalist centers under the program of revolutionary socialism, then not only will China, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union go down, but all civilization may be levelled under the impact of atomic war." Here Comrade Hansen reveals that he lives in an idealist's dream world. "To drive forward under the program of revolutionary socialism" -- what does that mean, Comrade Hansen? In England our comrades have successfully penetrated into the Social Democracy, in France they are engaged in the process of penetrating the Stalinist movement. Are our co-thinkers driving forward under the program (although not the banner) of revolutionary socialism? I believe that they are, and successfully at that, because they have rid themselves of sterile idealistic conceptions such as yours. Their strategic and tactical orientation is governed by what is and not what they would like things to be.

Hansen has said little if anything about problems of the American movement. However from the little that he does say it is evident that

his approach is one of barren idealism devoid of consideration for the real problems in America today. Comrade Hansen's use of quotations from the documents of the Third World Congress is mere lip service, for by employing a method that is foreign to the Marxist materialist orientation of the world movement it is inevitable that he fail to understand the essence of its reorientation.

Hansen's idealism marks the road of sectarian isolation. Let the warning of the disastrous experience of our Chinese comrades be heeded. Hansen's method represents an obstacle in the path of our becoming active participants in the process of world revolution. It is only by constantly identifying ourselves with those phenomena that are fundamentally progressive that we will be able to play a leading role in destroying all the deformations. That is the only way we shall succeed in interjecting ourselves as the conscious element of the historical process and effectively play our role as the gravedigger of Stalinism as well as capitalism.

Flint, Michigan  
April 12, 1953



## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

By George Breitman

Struggles in the party do not always begin with clear-cut differences; sometimes even the chief participants in a dispute cannot at the beginning properly formulate the nature and scope of differences, and find themselves groping and probing to determine the views of their opponents. This preliminary process may culminate in a clarification of issues leading either to a fight between different tendencies or to the realization that no fight is warranted. In the meantime, however, a lot of confusion can result from the raising of issues that prove to be irrelevant.

I shall never forget the confusion and dismay I felt at the July 1939 convention. Though I was an inexperienced and relatively new member, I observed general agreement on political line and was therefore amazed when the convention suddenly divided into two groups over the "org sec" question. This was a proposal to set up a special department to be headed by a secretary in charge of all organizational work, details of which can be found in Cannon's The Struggle for a Proletarian Party. It didn't seem like a bad idea to me, but I didn't think it was too important one way or another, and I couldn't understand the heat with which the proposal was defended and opposed and the sharp cleavage that took place in the convention. Could it be that this question reflected others more basic? I didn't know and couldn't tell; all I knew was that I couldn't recognize any principled differences. My confusion grew when Shachtman arose and presented a slate for the National Committee, after which Dunne presented a counter-slate (this was before we adopted the nominating commission practice), and the convention divided in two again.

I went home puzzled about the heat and the tension and the conflicting slates. The Shachtmanites were working on me, but I didn't know what they were working on me for. It was apparent that two tendencies were developing, but what did they represent and was a fight between them justified? A couple of months later the Stalin-Hitler Pact took place, the war began, and a fight broke out in the party over the Russian question. This enabled me to take a side between the two groups, which were approximately though not exactly the same as those that had arisen over the org sec and the slates at the convention, and I soon joined the majority group. I was glad that I had not made the mistake of lining up with the Shachtmanites at the convention, although my closest friends were among them and they put me on their slate; if I had done so, it would surely have been harder for me to find my way to an objective and correct position on the Russian question. It was mainly by luck that I managed to avoid a pitfall that threatens people who have not had much experience with factional fights.

The war in a matter of weeks and the fight over the Russian question cleared up my confusion. But since then I have asked myself: Suppose the war had not come as soon as it did, suppose the Stalin-Hitler Pact had not come for another year -- what would have happened in the party then? Would there have been continued disputes on secondary questions, much heat and little light, tension and friction, a groping on both sides to locate differences that would explain and

clarify the tendencies to factionalism? (Shachtman, it must be remembered, did not abandon our line on unconditional defense of the Soviet Union until the Stalin-Hitler Pact in August and nobody could have predicted how he would react to it at the July convention.) Would most of the people, including the leaders, on either side at the convention have been able to give a satisfactory explanation of what was involved in the dispute?

I recall this experience not to suggest that there were no differences either in July 1939 or today, but to show how in the early stages of a dispute the issues may remain unclear for a time, no matter how vigorously or sincerely the leading disputants may seek to clarify them, and to warn that the issues may appear in a somewhat different light after they have been fully clarified than they do today.

As one who has not yet joined either group and who has had an opportunity of watching the development of the present dispute at close range, I would like to present my views on some of the differences. I do this in the belief that a party discussion on important questions can strengthen the party, but only if the members are educated in the process -- and they can be educated only if they approach the issues objectively, consciously resisting efforts to be lined up on the basis of rumors, personal antagonisms or attachments, differences over unrelated matters, local disputes, emotional appeals or anything else that will get in the way of a cool examination of the real differences. A discussion producing genuinely educational results is difficult in a situation where people, at the start of the discussion, already have such obstacles in their ears that they can't hear what is said to them or hear it in a distorted form.

Under present conditions an appraisal of the real issues necessarily requires a rejection of those issues that are not really in dispute. If that takes up most of my article, it's not my fault.

### The World Congress and Stalinism

To begin with, I insist that the general line of the Third World Congress (with the exception of its position on the U.S.) and the general analysis of Stalinism since the end of the war are not the issues at the bottom of the present dispute. Ever since the World Congress, the story has been spread through the party that the leadership does not really agree with the analysis of the new conditions in the world or that it does not understand it even if it thinks it does agree. This is not an accurate story.

Everyone with any experience in the party, even on a branch level, knows that when a shift in orientation or tactics is proposed, different people respond to it at different rates of speed, depending on their level of understanding, the clarity with which the proposal is made, their estimation of the necessity or advantages (or disadvantages) of the shift, etc. This is wholly natural; the surprising thing would be instantaneous or simultaneous acceptance, especially among a body of independent-thinking revolutionists. It is different in Stalinist parties, of course; there when a shift is ordained, everybody must move at once and in unison, like soldiers marching in a parade. The difference may appear to have disadvantages for us, but that's the overhead price of democratic centralism and a tradition

where everyone is supposed to think things out for himself and not vote for something until he is fairly sure of what he is doing.

The pre-Congress Theses on International Perspectives were presented around the beginning of 1951. There was some misunderstanding at the start about some of the things written in support of the Theses, which were later shown to be personal opinions rather than a component part of the ideas of the Theses. There were varying degrees of acceptance and doubt expressed by members of our leadership. There was discussion in the Political Committee, exchange of opinion and attempts at clarification. By June 1951 a PC subcommittee sent the NC a discussion draft expressing complete agreement with eight propositions in the Theses and proposing expansion and strengthening of eight other points.

As every member of the NC knew, this draft marked a long step toward acceptance of the Theses. As every member can see for himself by reading this draft objectively (reprinted in the present Minority's document, Vol. 15, No. 8) it expresses agreement on most of the basic points in the Theses; there was no real disagreement on some of the second eight points, as Clarke himself admitted in his reply; and the total effect was to considerably narrow the range of the discussion. The attempt made now by the Minority to use this draft as evidence of present disagreements over the Congress line is misleading and does a disservice to the present discussion. If the draft shows anything, it shows that agreement was being reached, not the opposite.

This is not only my estimate today; it was the estimate of E. R. Frank in July, 1951 ("Notes On Our Discussion," Bulletin, Vol. 13, No. 1). Writing one month after that PC subcommittee draft, Frank said: "The discussion has accomplished very much. We are approaching solid agreement on our evaluation of Stalinism, on the specific character of the present period, on our general world perspectives, on the broad tactical lines of work. We have a common viewpoint on the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, which we have now incorporated into our political analysis. We have agreement on the nature of the colonial revolutions, and our attitude towards them. We are arriving at agreement on the line-ups and character of the coming war, and our strategic positions and tasks. We are apparently in rough agreement on what has happened and what is happening in the Kremlin's Satellites in Eastern Europe, although the question of the correct definition, as well as a number of subordinate points, remain to be cleared up."

Frank did not agree with everything in the draft, and expressed his disagreements with some points and his opinions on a number of questions "still left dangling in the discussion." Clearly enough, in the context of the discussion at that point, the subcommittee's draft was regarded and could only be regarded as a sign of growing agreement. The fact that it made proposals for changes, whether right or wrong, was only a sign that the discussion had not reached its end. (Frank himself, who was among the first to accept the line of the Theses, suggested in the same document quoted above that they be "rounded out with a number of amendments," and as everyone knows the Theses were amplified and further clarified before being adopted.)

By the time of our plenum in September 1951, the area of agreement had grown still wider, thanks to further thought, discussion and in part to Clarke's reply to the draft. A few members were still uncertain, but the great majority had reached the point where the only difference they had was on the designation for Eastern Europe. This was hardly a basic point, since there was agreement on everything else about Eastern Europe by this time.

The Minority document ("The Roots of the Party Crisis") talks about "a round of objections" with which Clarke was met when he gave the PC a report on the line of the Congress. What this refers to are questions and requests for clarification of formulations which were asked of him by people who had not yet had a chance to read the documents of the Congress. It is true that one or two members expressed disagreements, one of them of a basic character. It is true that there was a generally unfavorable reaction to his statement that the reorientation was associated with the view that world war was probable in 18 months or so. Perhaps Clarke himself was partly responsible for the atmosphere of this meeting. His attitude was that of a man among people who were unpardonably backward and slow. Why should questions seeking clarification be classed with objections?

The PC voted to endorse the general line of the Congress and refer it to the party for discussion and decision at the next convention. The reason why there was no discussion to amount to anything was that, after reading the documents (Magazine of Nov.-Dec. 1951), almost everyone found himself in agreement with the documents. I myself was probably the last to go through this experience. At the 1950 convention I had abstained on the Yugoslav resolution, and I still had many doubts at the time of the World Congress about the Theses. But when I had a chance to study them and the other documents in January, 1952, I experienced practically a revolution in my thinking and came to realize, I think as well as anyone else, what a valuable contribution they were to our movement. In my branch I discussed this new understanding at some length, tried to analyze the reasons for my previous errors and slowness in seeing them, and have since done my best to help educate other members and contacts along the same lines. I assume other members who were slow like me did the same. I think I understand the line of the Congress as well as those who reached it before me, and better than some of them, and I hope this party is not going to be divided into first-class citizens, who accepted the line before a certain date, and second-class citizens who somehow didn't make the grade in time.

Does this mean that there have been no differences over the Congress line aside from the American question and some secondary formulations? No. In applying any line, there usually are and will be differences of interpretation between those who apply it rigidly and those who apply it loosely, between those who understand it fully and those who understand it narrowly, between those who approach it mechanically and those who approach it dialectically, between those who regard it as a complete break from a previous line and those who regard it as a modification of a previous line, etc. That has happened during the last year too. In a more normal atmosphere nobody would have considered it worth talking about.

With the outbreak of the factional fight, suspicions grew on each side that the other didn't understand the line or was trying

under cover of it to work in a contrary line leading to charges and counter-charges, most of which have not been proved and which I think cannot be proved. What has been shown is that there is a factional situation, not that there are important differences over the Congress line. In my view the Hansen-Frankel debate over Stalinism is an example. Hansen made a groping-probing attempt to demonstrate that there are crucial differences on this question, and Frankel responded in kind. Hansen stressed one side of the question, Frankel another. On the whole, there was little wrong in what both said; the trouble was that they were talking about different things. Both may feel they scored quite a point in this debate, but it does not seem to me that either contributed much to a clarification of the issues in the present dispute.

### The Charge of Conciliation to Stalinism

But what about the charges of conciliation to Stalinism on one side and of Stalinophobia on the other? Without questioning the sincerity of these charges, I must reject them both. There is no evidence to support them. The fact that members make excessive statements about Stalinism being counter-revolutionary through and through or about Stalinism no longer being able to betray is proof only that these members were carried away by factional zeal or do not understand the issues clearly; it does not conclusively establish anything about the character of the group they support. In fact, a group that is labeled conciliationist to Stalinism will tend to attract real conciliationists, just as a group that is labeled Stalinophobic will tend to attract real Stalinophobes; this is part of the dynamics of a factional situation, but by itself it does not prove anything about the groups.

Conciliation to Stalinism is a political charge, and can be sustained only with political evidence, not by "implications" in political positions (extended out to its so-called logical conclusion, almost any position can be said to have dangerous implications). I have sat and listened to long discussions in the editorial staff and elsewhere and I have carefully read the articles of the Minority, and I have not found any conciliation to Stalinism in them. I realize that any group representing a genuinely conciliationist tendency would be careful not to bring it out all at once in this party, and I have given due consideration to this possibility. But I cannot tell what is in someone's mind, and I can only go on the basis of the evidence. And where I cannot find any, I cannot support this charge.

Does this mean that the charge is "woven out of the whole cloth" and is maliciously offered? I don't think so. I think the charge was believed by those members of the Majority who made it. Looking back now at the history of the thing, I think I know why they made this error. This is hindsight, of course; I did not understand what was happening at the time:

The PC Minority evidently interpreted the line of the World Congress, and then later the Political Resolution at the 1952 convention, as automatically dictating or sanctioning a certain new orientation to the Stalinists in this country, and expected our press to act accordingly. Most of the members of the PC Majority evidently

had a different interpretation. Leaving aside the question of which interpretation was correct, the point is that there was a difference in interpretation on this matter, although it was never raised as a matter for discussion and decision along these lines.

With every new incident in the cold war, with every new diplomatic maneuver, a dispute would occur in the editorial staff. Members of the Minority would argue that there should be such-and-such an emphasis, in accord with the orientation to the American CP which they assumed was in effect. For lack of another word, let us call it a "soft" emphasis -- one that was written especially for readers in and around Stalinist circles, one that sought to establish a basis of contact with them and their ideas. Members of the Majority would argue against such an approach; unaware of the Minority's assumption of a new orientation to American Stalinism, they began to think that the "soft" emphasis was a sign of political conciliation to Stalinism, and insisted on a "hard" approach, a head-on conflict with Stalinism. How many scores of times this scene was repeated in the editorial staff I do not know, but it was plenty, and the atmosphere grew more bitter all the time. The basic reason for much of this friction, I realize now, was that there were two different assumptions about orientation in articles about Stalinism which was never debated and decided as such. If they had been discussed and decided, then perhaps much of the bickering and suspicion might have been avoided. Unfortunately, nobody realized what was causing these disputes.

Now the members of the Majority may have had reason to feel uneasy about the Minority's approach to these articles about Stalinism, since as far as they were concerned no decision had been made to follow a different way of treating Stalinism in the press. But they made a mistake in equating a "soft" tone to the Stalinists with conciliation to Stalinism. A "soft" tone is consistent with conciliationism, but it is also consistent with an orientation to Stalinism that does not have a single trace of conciliationism and that is motivated entirely by the belief that we can win over more Stalinists to our part by use of a soft tone than otherwise. This belief may be right or wrong, depending on the circumstances, but it does not necessarily connote conciliationism.

Let us take an example from our own party history. In 1935 we decided to adopt a new orientation to the Socialist Party; it was not at the start an entry orientation as we did not know if entry would even be possible. As a result of this new orientation, we began to write about the SP in a "soft" tone. We put in the background our condemnations of the Social Democracy as the murderers of Liebknecht and Luxemburg, we sought to create a basis of contact with them at their own level of consciousness. To Oehler this was evidence of a capitulation to Social Democracy, or at least of conciliation to it. But most of the party understood it otherwise -- as an orientation for certain tactical purposes, completely devoid of conciliationism.

Now, of course, there is one important difference between 1935 and 1952-53, and that is that in 1935 there was a clear-cut decision that we should make the new orientation -- which was, to put it mildly, not the case in 1952-53, where one side assumed that it had been made and it never even entered the mind of the other side that the first side had this assumption. Here, I believe, lies one of the

real differences in the present dispute, pointing to what we should be discussing: should we have a different orientation to the Stalinists in the press than we had before (not necessarily an entry orientation either), and if so, what should it be, how far should it go, etc.? That is what we should be discussing because it is a real problem, unlike the charges about the World Congress, conciliation to Stalinism and Stalinophobia. And until we do begin discussing it concretely, the discussion will remain unclear and confusing.

### The Charge of Stalinophobia

The charge of Stalinophobia is of more recent origin (it was never raised before January of this year, when a decision to hold a plenum was made) but it has no more merit than the charge of Stalinist conciliationism. In fact, it was originated as a reflex action against the other charge, in this spirit: "There must be some reason why we are wrongly called conciliationists to Stalinism. It must be Stalinophobia -- what other reason could it be?" I have already shown, by recounting the history of the development, what the real reason was, but the Minority was in no mood for such a "simple" explanation. Instead, it hastened to construct a new theory that required a wholesale reinterpretation of the history of the party during the last six years. To fully analyze the reinterpretations in their document would take a document of the same size, or longer. I confine myself therefore to just a few of its points relating to the Stalinophobia charge, things that I know about, perhaps even better than some signers of the Minority document who could only get them second-hand.

The Auto "Crisis": We are now told that the auto "crisis" of 1947 started the present conflict. This is the first time in almost six years that I have ever heard the discussion over auto policy in 1947 even referred to as a crisis. The reason is that no one to my knowledge ever called it that before. There was no crisis whatever about the change in our auto policy that year. There was a discussion, there were questions and differences raised about the proposal to shift our support away from the Reuther group, and there was a decision, almost unanimous, in fairly quick order. It is true that the Michigan members were the first to favor the shift, but it is poppycock to assert that it was they (as distinguished from practically the whole NC) who saved "the Marxist integrity of the party" on this issue. With one or two exceptions, the PC was unanimous in favoring the change. At most three or four members of the NC expressed opposition or reservations during the discussion at the August 1947 plenum that decided the question. As one who strongly favored the proposal as soon as it was made, I followed the discussion closely before and at the plenum and there was never any doubt in my mind that it would be overwhelmingly accepted. The discussion at the plenum was healthy, democratic and fruitful. Is every discussion in which Cannon and Cochran express minor differences while voting alike to be classified as a "crisis" from now on? The Minority may pride itself on making a shrewd factional point by this dragging in and reinterpretation of party history, but I think it has done a disservice to the education of the party and to the clarification of the present dispute by this distortion of an episodic discussion over union tactics.

After all, we had a similar discussion on policy in the NMU where, after working with Curran against the Stalinists, we worked for a while with the Stalinists against Curran. Why isn't that dragged in too by the Minority? Because it doesn't fit the needs of their factional alignments? We had a dispute, much sharper than the auto discussion, over policy toward the Progressive Party in early 1948. Can't they find any seeds of Stalinophobia in our opposition to supporting the Progressive Party? I think they could, with as much justice as they did in the auto "crisis," but it doesn't serve their factional needs. Does the wrong designation of their group as conciliationist to Stalinism really warrant such a miseducation of the party and such a confusion of the present discussion?

The Korean war: Art Preis has written an article on this question which presents the facts. All I want to do is add a few remarks. In the first couple of weeks we made a serious mistake on this question, for which I take my share of the responsibility, for I was the last member of the PC to realize my mistake and held the others up from correcting it by almost a week. But I deny that the mistake arose out of Stalinophobia: it arose primarily out of ignorance about Korea, failure to realize that its basic character was civil war, lack of all information about the mass movement in North Korea, etc. This was the case with all the members of the PC who made this mistake, and as soon as they had the right information, they changed their position. We were then in the midst of the discussion on Eastern Europe; yet at the start of the war Bartell and Hansen, who had the right position on Eastern Europe, made the same mistake as I did, while Cannon, the No. 1 "Stalinophobe," who then had the wrong position on Eastern Europe, instantly took the right position on Korea. How does all this fit in with the reinterpretation of Korea as a manifestation of Stalinophobia?

When we decided to make the change, I wrote an article for the paper calling attention to the mistake we had made, explaining it and the reason why we were revising our position. Cannon, however, thought it was unnecessary and better to make the change in the form of his open letter to Truman and Congress. I bowed to his judgment and did not print the article. Since then I have felt this was an error, that there was no contradiction between my article and his, and that the educational effects would have been better if we had printed both. Now I have an additional reason for thinking so: If we had printed my article, expressing the common view for our mistake, it would have been harder for anyone to misinterpret that common view, which is recorded now only in the PC minutes, which the members do not see.

The theory of the progressive character of the anti-Stalinism of the American workers: The Minority document calls this theory a myth. That's true. But equally mythical is its charge that this theory, as presented by the Minority, is accepted by the Majority. Nobody that I know says that the anti-Stalinism of the workers today is primarily progressive. But many of us hold the view that it is not the one-sided thing the members of the Minority make it appear. Aren't there tens and hundreds of thousands of workers who are against Stalinism partly because of their wartime betrayals and bureaucratic rule? Aren't there many workers who are hostile to the Soviet Union partly or mainly because they associate it with slave labor, frameup purges, concentration camps? Are we to ignore this



element in their thinking and dismiss them as one big reactionary lump whom it is hopeless to talk to today? Naturally, we must address ourselves to them without making any concessions to their wrong ideas and prejudices, and no one can show the slightest evidence that our press has ever made such concessions. No, we must not "go out of our way to differentiate ourselves from Stalinism," but we must differentiate ourselves from it, mustn't we? No, we must not "ever be preoccupied with avoiding being 'tarred with the brush of Stalinism,'" but we don't want to be tarred with the brush of Stalinism either, do we? When we talk to a worker about our aims and goal, we don't want him to mistake them for the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Union, do we? How can we make contact with workers unless we differentiate ourselves from Stalinism -- how can we recruit them to our party and keep them from joining the CP instead, unless we differentiate? The Minority's one-sided attack on this myth reveals a danger that could be as harmful in practice as acceptance of the myth itself -- unless our main orientation is to the Stalinist movement, which the Minority assures us it does not propose.

The Rosenberg case: I prefer to think that the Minority injected this issue without thinking about it. Since I am introduced as an anti-Stalinophobe in this case, let me relate the history of our attitude on such matters. We do not support espionage, stealing of documents, etc.; that is not our way of defending the Soviet Union, and we don't want anyone to think it is. Consequently, we have always faced a problem in handling such cases in our press, in finding journalistic pegs to introduce our defense of all victims of the witch hunt without at the same time seeming to endorse espionage, etc. When I raised the Rosenberg case in the editorial staff in 1951 it was to urge that we seek a satisfactory means of presenting our position, on which there was no difference. It was discussed in the staff, but nobody had a satisfactory proposal, and so it was dropped with the agreement that we would continue thinking about and looking for a method of proper presentation. I should add here that at that time the Daily Worker also was completely silent about the case. In fact, nobody wrote about the case until the National Guardian ran a series of exposes and helped organize the national Rosenberg committee. With that, both the Daily Worker (were they Stalinophobes until then?) and we, among others, began to handle the case.

The "peg" seems simple now that we have worked it out -- nobody accused of any Stalinist or subversive associations can get a fair trial in the present rabid witch hunt atmosphere in this country -- and we will be able to use it in many similar cases in the future. It is simple, after the fact, but everyone on the staff knows that it was not easy to reach. Call us slow or stupid on this account, but don't call us Stalinophobes unless you are intent on showing that you will grab any old stick to beat the dog. (I should also add that this problem has bothered us all along; it bothered us in 1948 too, when the leader of the Minority was editor, during the start of the Hiss case; with our present approach, we could have done much better on the Hiss case then, but our apparently standoffish attitude on Hiss was not due to Stalinophobia, I can testify, but to a difficult problem of presentation, as any member of the staff should testify.)

If anyone challenges what I have written here and denies the problem of caution raised by such cases, then I must ask him to explain: Why is it that some members of the Minority, who say that the Rosen-

bergs are class heroes, also say that we should not designate them as such in the press? Is their failure to propose such a designation in the press a sign of -- Stalinophobia? I am quite sure it is not.

### Orientation and Propaganda

The real issue of what orientation we should have to the American CP is of course only a part of the larger question: what is and should be our main orientation in this country today? We thought we had reached agreement on this in the Political Resolution at the last convention, but evidently it was either a formal agreement or an agreement on generalities, and further discussion is needed.

Formulations like independent party versus propaganda group, propaganda must have priority, etc., have not helped us much in the present situation. I see the problem of the relation between propaganda and our main orientation somewhat differently than those who have expressed themselves on this question so far. Though we are an independent party and aspire to become a mass party, objective conditions have at times in the past restricted most of our activity to that of a propaganda group; similar conditions prevail for the time being today and are likely to continue for a while. No one is willing to openly deny that where we have the opportunity, we should engage in those other activities that distinguish an independent party from a propaganda group. And no one should deny that an examination of our work during the past several years will disclose that in most spheres it has been mainly propagandist in character.

This apparently was not realized by Stevens and Ring when they made their criticism of Bartell's report in the New York Local. What they did was to confuse two entirely separate things -- the activities of the Local in the recent period, and some of the ideas and formulations Bartell used to explain and defend those activities. (I leave aside Bartell's charge that the reason they criticized his report was that they were trying to line people up in anticipation of the national controversy. If this is true, it is to their discredit. But Bartell too was lining up people in anticipation of the national controversy long before the New York discussion began.)

On the whole the New York Local's activities in the recent period were good, as good as could be expected under the circumstances (with one exception, to be noted later, which was not unique for New York, but which applied to most of the party). The things it was undertaking, mostly propagandist in character, were also being undertaken by other branches throughout the country, in some cases even earlier than New York; and most of the branches that did not or could not engage in such activities undoubtedly suffered some stagnation as a result. The failure of Stevens and Ring to recognize and acknowledge this at the very least obscured whatever was worthwhile in their criticism.

But the problem is not solved by saying that our work is mainly propagandist in character. The real question, which I think was raised by some of the remarks in Bartell's report and more noticeably in his defense of the report, remains and it is this: Where are we to direct the bulk of our propaganda? (This is one of the concretizations of "what is our main orientation?")

We must "propagate our ideas to people who are equipped to understand them and are willing to listen," said Bartell in his report, adding in his defense of the report: "The American population in general is neither able to understand nor is interested in studying the conceptions of the 3rd World Congress. But since we are only able to recruit or expand our circle of sympathizers today on the basis of our world program, we are of necessity very isolated."

I have no interest in putting the worst possible interpretation on these remarks, and I am willing to take them as a rough approximation of what Bartell was trying to say. But with all due allowances for polemical exaggeration, I find his thought disturbing and misleading.

Bartell will agree of course that nobody in the party is proposing that we direct our propaganda at the level of the population in general (which has never even heard of the Third World Congress and which has never been the main target of our propaganda). The convention decided on an orientation to the "leftward moving militants among the organized workers -- especially in the CIO." They also have never heard of the Third Congress, it is true. But is it true that they, or large numbers of them, are not "able to understand" the ideas of the Congress? The answer to that question depends, in part, on how energetically and skillfully we seek to present those ideas to them. I think, for example, that tens of thousands of them would be able to understand Cannon's presentation of these ideas in his Los Angeles lectures; they wouldn't all agree or accept these ideas, but they could understand them; that is, if reached with these ideas, they can become contacts today and possible recruits if not today then next year.

On the other hand, if we start out with the notion that our ideas, merely because they are complex, cannot be grasped by anyone except the most advanced and "equipped" elements, then we will condition ourselves to the idea that there is no use in our talking to anyone but the most advanced elements. If that's true, if our isolation is so extreme that we can talk only to the most advanced elements, then let's say so frankly and quit wasting time on other things; let's not maintain one orientation in words in our resolution while thinking and proposing to act along different lines. (I know that the Minority document expresses agreement that "our main orientation continues to be toward winning the leadership of the mass of non-political trade union and Negro militants." But such expressions of agreement are brought into question by arguments about the need for propaganda which can have the effect of promoting tendencies in the party away from that orientation in practice.)

Yes, we are isolated. But our isolation is not complete and our audience is by no means limited to the specially equipped elements. A danger I see is that we may add a self-created isolation to the isolation already forced on us; in one sense, we have already done this.

#### Where Should We Direct Our Propaganda?

What is our audience, where should we direct most of our propaganda? Not the population in general. And not the average or ordinary worker, even in the CIO. Does that by a process of elimination

leave us only with the "politically conscious circles"? Not at all. There is still a large area of work for us among the non-average and non-ordinary workers, and other sections of the population who don't fall under the category of politically advanced. There are thousands of workers who are not yet for socialism but who agree that the two-party system is rotten and who favor a labor party; they will listen to us if we know how to talk to them and if we try to talk to them. There are thousands of workers who have gone through the CIO experience from the beginning without being corrupted, who today do not play an active role in the unions because they don't think it can achieve anything, who do not run for office because they don't want to get mixed up in clique fights; they will read our propaganda and they will hear what we have to say about perspectives if we think the effort is worthwhile. There are thousands of people who are consciously against war although they are not yet radicals and who want to discover an effective anti-war program; some of them will be eager to learn what we have to offer and some will be attracted by it. There are thousands of youth who are repelled by their prospects under capitalism and who can be won to what they consider the most extreme alternative to capitalism -- to the Stalinists or to us, depending on which makes first contact with them.

Now working among the more advanced or radical elements is not inconsistent with working among these broader circles, or not necessarily so. But in terms of our propaganda, it can present a certain problem. If we write and talk in such a way that only radicals can understand what we are saying, then our propaganda among the others will be worthless. If our propaganda is aimed mainly at people who are already against the war from an advanced position, who favor defense of the Soviet bloc, etc., then we may cut ourselves off from the others who are confused about the war, who are still half-deceived and taken in by capitalist anti-Soviet propaganda, etc. (To carry on effective anti-war and anti-capitalist propaganda capable of persuading workers to join the struggle is, I believe, one of the best ways of building a bridge toward the more advanced, already anti-war elements.) If we fail to produce propaganda that takes into account the level of consciousness of these workers (not the general population or even the average worker), then we really will be isolating ourselves.

I agree with the Minority when they point to the need for work among politically conscious circles (and would go further and say that even if they are not proletarian in character, we can decide under special circumstances and for a limited time to concentrate most of our work on them without thereby bringing our main orientation into question -- this of course should be a conscious decision, carefully motivated and discussed). But I don't like arguments in favor of such work that minimize and tend to discourage our other and on the whole more important work today.

Moreover, I think much of the discussion on politically conscious circles and our work among them has been too narrow in one respect, and too abstract in another. The impression one gets from reading and listening to the New York discussion is that the politically conscious circles are limited to the Stalinist movement and the forces in and around it. Actually what I would call the political conscious circles among whom we can do some worthwhile work in this country are considerably broader than the Stalinist, semi-Stalinist and dissident-Stalinist groups; in fact, nationally speaking, the latter represent only a minority of these circles. These other politically conscious

groups are not as radical in their program, and most of them are committed formally to support of the war or capitalist politics; but they have the advantage of being bigger, of attracting more people, including youth; and it is very important to remember that the people they recruit regard these groups as "the left" or even "radical."

In Newark, for example, these groups include Americans for Democratic Action, NAACP, a housing committee, tenants organizations, League of Women Voters, etc. The ADA is the spearhead, has been growing since the election, and includes young people, some of them still in high school. Under the leadership of the ADA, these groups, together with the CIO and AFL, have organized two militant campaigns in Newark this year -- to put over a reform in the municipal government's form, and to mobilize action for rent control. Their prestige has grown greatly as a result. We should be in these groups because they are politically conscious and active, are closely tied to the labor movement and will probably form an important part of the labor party when it is organized, and because the young people attracted by them, who think they are radicals, are potential recruits for us. It would be just as wrong not to penetrate these groups merely because they have a program that includes support of the war as it would be to abstain because they are not mainly proletarian in composition.

The Minority will of course not disagree with what I am saying on this matter. But I fear that some of the arguments they have made in the present discussion have confused some of their supporters. By "willing to listen" (in Bartell's phrase "propagate our ideas to people who are equipped to understand and are willing to listen") some of them mean only those who are willing to listen to our full anti-war program, that is, mainly Stalinists and dissidents. This can lead to sectarian ideas and practices of a different kind from Stalinophobia, but just as surely, and everyone should be alert to re-educate such members.

I also believe that the discussion of the Stalinist and semi-Stalinist sectors of the politically conscious circles has been too abstract. What is actually happening in and to the CP? What is the meaning of their present internal campaign against sectarianism, of their proposal to junk the Progressive Party and go back into the Democratic Party? So far as our own tactics are concerned, these things are at least as important as our (correct) generalizations about the contradictions between the CP bureaucracy and the membership. We need a lot of discussion on this. Here is what I think is happening:

The CP leaders have decided that their front organizations and the Progressive Party are more or less worthless because they cannot achieve anything in terms of the CP's goals and are less and less able to influence anybody, and therefore should be disbanded. They are sending their members into the broader politically conscious movements such as the ADA, Liberal Party, NAACP, etc. (and of course into the factories and unions). By this they hope to kill two birds with one stone: (1) put their members in a position where they overcome their present isolation by building new circles of support around themselves; (2) provide some measure of protection for their members against the witch hunt, which is lacking in the highly vulnerable front organizations. The CP, we must realize, is four-fifths underground; the problem of security is a grave one for them; the new tactic, already being applied, makes it easier to get activity from their

members, whose orders are to keep their political identity secret, keep quiet about the war, concentrate on immediate issues like housing, discrimination, etc., and win contacts on that basis primarily.

As a result, we are going to find less and less of a distinctly Stalinist movement to work on in the coming period. I say this not in order to minimize work on and among Stalinists, but to indicate the difficulties and limits of such work which will more and more have to assume the nature of personal contact activity; in fact, I won't be surprised if it turns out easier to contact them through our presence in groups like the ADA and NAACP than otherwise. I also call attention to this development because I think it motivates our paying more attention than we have been doing to the semi-Stalinists and Stalinist dissidents who want to resist the CP's line of returning to the Democratic Party and whom it may be possible to still reach in groups, rather than as individuals. (This applies to New York especially; I can't understand why eyebrows should be raised at Bartell's comment that New York has certain unique characteristics.)

When I said we were already isolating ourselves in a certain sense and when I said I saw one serious shortcoming in the work of New York and other branches, I was referring to the same thing: namely, our relative neglect of work in the unions during recent years. I am grateful to Dobbs for raising this point in the present discussion, although I want to treat it somewhat differently than he did. I also want to subscribe to his statement that "The leadership of the party is collectively responsible for this mistake."

What has been happening, not in all branches but in many, is this: The difficulty of doing work in the unions has become an excuse for paying less and less attention to such work, sometimes to the point of complete neglect. Our inability to lead masses in action has in many cases become the rationalization for abstention from practically all kinds of work in the unions. The policy of caution dictated by the witch hunt has in too many cases become in practice a policy of do-nothing. And the leaders of the party and the branches have not actively resisted this trend; in fact, we have often gone along with it, even justifying it in some respects.

I am not talking only about participation in union work as such; I am talking about party work in the unions -- political work, propaganda, recruitment. Caution is a necessity; reckless disregard of this necessity can lead to being cut off from the workers whom we hope to influence in the plants; but caution that leads to nothing but continued existence, that confines us to fruitless inactivity, is just as bad as recklessness. A member who does no political work in the plants might just as well not be there. There are too many members in the plants who are not known to anyone around them as socialists, even after many years; some of our members are not even known to a single fellow-worker as advocates of a labor party. I hope no one will misinterpret this as an appeal for devil-may-care recklessness and indifference to the problem of remaining in the plants. What I am talking about is a self-imposed isolation, necessary perhaps in some cases, but by no means on the scale now in effect. Often, in fact, it is ironical to note, someone may be known as an SWP member by management or the authorities at the same time that he is quite unknown in any political sense to his fellow-workers. I detect a similar tendency among members who don't work in plants. Many of us are politically

virtually unknown outside of the party; our political identity is a secret to our neighbors, sometimes even to our relatives; after years in the party many of us cannot name five people who know our politics and with whom we engage in political discussions; many of us cannot boast of a single person we are now working on with expectations of bringing him into the party. Are objective conditions so unfavorable as to warrant such a situation? I think not. We are hemmed in by outside forces; that's bad enough without hemming ourselves in still further, without doing voluntarily or unthinkingly just what reaction wants us to do.

Maybe I exaggerate somewhat, but not so much that the picture is genuinely distorted. We've got to be conscious of what is going on; we've got to break our members away from the TV sets to which they retire too often with the rationalization that nothing can be done or that there's no sense in taking risks these days when the returns are so slim. I am not proposing inspirational pep-talks to the members, I am proposing help by the party leaders in grappling with these problems. Help in the form of "literary and propaganda material," as the Minority document puts it -- yes. But just as important, help also in the form of recognition of these problems, guidance, practical participation, attention to opportunities, demonstration by example.

We cannot become a mass party today no matter what we do because the objective conditions prevent it. But if we do not consciously resist isolation in every form today, if we allow ourselves to be diverted from our main orientation because of difficulties that are not absolute and still can be surmounted in part, then we will find it much harder to become a mass party tomorrow when the objective conditions will be more favorable.

### The Internal Situation

For the last year or so the leaders of the Minority have been recruiting people to their banner with the story that they are threatened with a split and expulsions because they dared to present differences. Since this charge has now been made before the party, where it serves as an additional diversion from the real issues, I propose to discuss it.

The keystone of this charge, according to the Minority's document, was "Cannon's threat of a split" at a meeting of the PC in March 1952. "It took the form of his reading a projected 'personal' letter to Pablo which was also to be sent to all members of the NC. The letter concluded with a postscript saying that he (Cannon) was pessimistic about the internal party situation and that he believed we were heading into a split because of the existence of an 'unprincipled combination' (meaning Clarke and Cochran) or an 'incipient faction.' Taxed with this ominous threat, Cannon innocently declared that he was merely making a prediction. This has been the alibi for the document ever since. The alibi is refuted by the letter itself. The body of the letter contained a pledge of support to Pablo, while making reservations on Eastern Europe and on Pablo's tactical qualifications. But the last line of the postscript was an admonition to Pablo to keep his hands off the internal situation. Unless words and politics have lost their meaning, how else could this letter be interpreted than as a threat to split? It was a quid pro quo offer to

Pablo: support in return for non-interference in the drive for a split."

How else could this letter be interpreted? This way -- the way it was interpreted when it was read, before it was decided to make use of it as a factional platform:

Cannon's letter to Pablo was an obvious attempt to call attention to a situation that Cannon regarded as very dangerous, for the purpose of bringing it out into the open where it could be discussed and acted on. As I remember it, the letter was not arranged in the order the Minority puts it. Cannon sent his greetings to Pablo, expressing his warm appreciation for Pablo's valuable contributions to the work of the movement. It expressed Cannon's agreement with the line of the World Congress; I believe it restated Cannon's difference on the designation of the East European countries which he said was not major or worth fighting about, in his opinion; it said nothing whatever about Pablo's "tactical qualifications." The essence of these remarks was the solidarity of views, not "reservations." This was underscored by Cannon's reminder to Pablo how he had fought against the false conception invented by the Johnsonites about a struggle between "Cannonism and Pabloism." (Incidentally, this conception, which all of us opposed in 1951 because we all knew how false it was -- who is resurrecting it today? And why?)

Cannon's letter stated that there was a grave situation developing in the party -- the threat of incipient factionalism not based on recognizable political differences and of an unprincipled combination. He said he had seen such things develop in the past in our party, and before that in the CP, and he knew how destructive they could be. He wanted Pablo to know about this danger, to understand that our party had been confronted by such things in the past, that it knew how to handle them, and that it would meet the present danger properly. He never made an admonition to Pablo to "keep his hands off the internal situation" either in the body of the letter or the postscript. The sense of his remarks was that while it was a grave situation the party would be able to cope with it. All the postscript said was that a split was possible or implicit in the danger he pointed to.

That Cannon was trying to prevent such a danger became clearer yet in the course of the discussion when he asked members of the Minority to tell him openly what they thought he should do to help remove the frictions and clear up the situation, and when he agreed not to send the letter because the Minority said they would consider it a declaration of war which would bring on a premature struggle.

I am not defending the wisdom of the letter; what I think Cannon was trying to achieve by it was not achieved; and since then the letter has been misinterpreted for factional purposes. But I strongly condemn the misinterpretation put on the letter. According to the Minority, Cannon was proposing a dirty deal with Pablo in which Cannon would support a political line he did not really accept in return for acquiescence in a drive to split the party. This will not be easily accepted by members who do not permit their subjectivism and frustrations to make them forget the history and traditions of the party and the fact that most of us learned what we know about principled politics from Cannon's example and teachings. More than that: how can any member retaining a shred of objectivity believe that Can-



non would call people into a room for the purpose of reading them a letter in which he proposed an unprincipled deal directed against them? The absurdity of this charge will not be covered by calling the letter a possibly "irrational act." If Cannon is capable of acting so irrationally, then he doesn't belong on the NC.

The Minority says that the political differences are still in an "embryonic stage" and they deny "responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict." Along this line they say: "We do not deny that we have vigorously -- perhaps sometimes even over-vigorously -- presented our point of view in the PC and weekly paper staff on current political and organizational questions. How can that constitute a reason for a faction fight to the death, unless the price of peace is complete silence?"

The question of who is responsible for starting a fight which I said at the time was still premature is not the same as or as important as the question of who is right or wrong over the political differences. But since the Minority accuses the Majority of being responsible, I think the party should know the facts.

After the last convention, in August 1952, when signs of factionalism were increasing to the point where they threatened to hamper the presidential campaign, the PC, on the initiative of Dobbs, warned the party against factionalism because no political differences had been advanced to warrant it, and decided to open the bulletin after the elections to discussion by anyone who had anything to contribute or criticize on political and organizational problems. This was agreed on unanimously.

The Minority claims that "Dobbs proved incapable, or unwilling or both, of making good on his big promise" to try to create the kind of atmosphere that would facilitate an objective discussion of political differences. He did prove incapable -- for the following reason:

With the end of the election campaign, Cochran began a series of provocative and disruptive attacks. For example, we started to discuss a criticism by an NC member from Los Angeles of an article in the magazine (a criticism that I did not agree with) and Cochran used the occasion not to discuss the criticism, the article or political differences in an objective fashion, but to launch a vitriolic attack on the educational methods of the Los Angeles Local. It was plain to me that if such violations of the spirit of the August agreement continued, that it would be harder than ever to get an objective political discussion. I did not object to the vigorousness or over-vigorousness of Cochran's remarks -- nobody was demanding "complete silence" from him; in fact, we were looking forward to whatever he would have to say in the discussion bulletin. But I did object to his introduction of a spirit that was bound to sharpen and embitter the atmosphere. I spoke to other members of the Minority about this, but they were either unable or unwilling to curb him.

This continued until the last week of December when it became obvious that it could continue no longer. At that week's PC meeting there was action on the request of the Los Angeles Local for approval to enter the municipal election. The majority of the Secretariat thought the proposal politically justified, but wanted to urge L.A. when making the decision to consider whether the costs involved might

seriously restrict their ability to help solve our national financial difficulties. The Minority objected to the campaign on the grounds that the money involved should be used to carry through our plans for improving the magazine, which had been put aside two months before, when it became necessary to retrench financially. (L.A. promised to raise the money for the local campaign and to meet all its national financial obligations as well.)

Cochran took the floor to oppose the L.A. campaign as an attempt to determine national policy by a series of incidental branch decisions (money should be used for the magazine project first, he said). Then he made a half-threat to go to the branches to interest them in projects that he considered more important than the L.A. election campaign, and he in effect charged that the washing out of the magazine project, the party's financial crisis and Clarke's removal from the full-time staff were due to factional manipulation of funds.

These charges created an impossible situation. No committee can function normally under such conditions. Dobbs, Stein and Hansen submitted a statement calling attention to what was happening, giving their view of the causes and calling for a plenum to discuss what should be done.

I am in no position to judge the truth of the charge that the L.A. election campaign proposal was part of an underhanded plot to divert funds from the magazine project (although it strikes me as rather fantastic). But I do know about the financial crisis and Clarke's removal from the staff. I myself was the first to warn that we were heading for a financial crisis -- in the late summer of 1951, before the World Congress -- and I still think we should have started retrenching that year rather than in 1952. As soon as Clarke came back to the office in the fall of 1951 he was notified that there would have to be cuts and that he might have to look for a job. But he was kept on the staff for another year, not because of his editorship of the magazine, which had been edited for the previous year by a member with an outside job, but because he was needed as election campaign manager.

When the decision was made to retrench in September or October of 1952, Clarke raised no objections whatever to being removed along with some other people and indicated that he too regarded it as a necessity. "We did not even fight over Clarke's removal," says the Minority document as a sign of their reasonableness. That's true. In fact, they did not discuss it at all, they never said a single word to indicate that they were any more upset by it than the rest of us were. But soon the rumors were circulating around New York and elsewhere about how Clarke had been "penalized" for daring to express independent views. Looking back, I am sorry now that we removed Clarke. If I had known how they were going to feel about this and what use they would make of it, I would have favored taking extraordinary measures to retain him. But how could we know, at a time when the August agreement was presumably in effect, that they were going to have such a factional reaction to a step they did not criticize or even question when it was proposed? Even at the end of December I would have favored reconsidering the matter if it had been brought to my attention. But how was it brought to our attention? By a charge of financial manipulation. Is that the way to get an objective and non-factional consideration of a problem? Not in my book. It looked to

me more like an effort to embitter the atmosphere than an attempt to get a possible mistake corrected.

I repeat that the question of who provoked the present situation is not as important as who is right politically. But I don't like to see the Minority absolving itself of responsibility that it deserves, and I think they would have been wiser not to bring up a matter that reflects no credit on them and that serves only to distract attention from the real issues.

I hope that no one's judgment on the political issues will be influenced by the year-old charge of split. Nobody has ever been expelled from this party for presenting his views and trying to win the party to them, and nobody is going to be expelled for such a reason now or in the future -- not in this party, whose members would rise up in arms against any politically unjustified expulsions or splits. The members of this party -- and yes, the leaders too -- can be counted on, as they have done in the past, to preserve democratic centralism, to guarantee all of the democratic rights of minorities, wherever they are, and to secure the submission of minorities to the decisions of the whole. (I hope the six-point program at the end of the Minority's document is not put forth in the sense of a demand which must be met in full or in part as a condition for the continued unity of the party.)

We are at the beginning, not the end of a discussion. This explains the lack of clarity over what the real issues are, a lack that is unfortunate but cannot be blamed on malice. Let us get rid of everything that is irrelevant, let us withdraw or at the very least subordinate what is suspected but cannot be proved, let us concentrate as objectively as we can on what I consider the chief issue: where and how we are to work in this country in the present period.

Newark, N.J.  
April 19, 1953